

FROM STUDENT TO PROFESSIONAL:  
ONE SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHER'S NARRATIVE

by

Patti JoLynn Daughtry Baran, B.S., MEd

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Council of  
Texas State University in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
with a Major in Education-School Improvement  
October, 2014

Committee Members:

Dr. Michael Boone, Chair

Dr. Patricia Guerra

Dr. Paul Stewart

Dr. Sherry Adrian

**COPYRIGHT**

by

Patti JoLynn Daughtry Baran

2014

## **FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT**

### **Fair Use**

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgment. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

### **Duplication Permission**

As the copyright holder of this work I, Patti JoLynn Daughtry Baran, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my father, James Edward Daughtry. His belief in me never faltered and his love for every human being continues to be my inspiration. Thank you for sharing your joys, your adventures, your life experiences, and your fears with me. I love you, Daddy.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I first give acknowledgement and great thanks to Dr. Mike Boone for his willingness to adopt me as a researcher. Dr. Boone's continued support and prodding has been invaluable. His mentee did not always move at a pace he hoped for and quite often needed to be reminded to stay on the right track. But he stuck with me and for that I will always be grateful. It is my understanding that I am the last of his PhD candidates to complete her dissertation before his retirement. Dr. Boone, please know that every one of your students has been touched by your dedication and commitment to improving the world of education. To my other committee members, I do so appreciate you providing me space on your busy calendar and supporting me through this process. To Dr. Sherry Adrian, you are the greatest teacher and mentor ever! I am indebted to you for helping me see the world in a new light. Thanks to you, my eyes are open and my mind is ever churning with thoughts of how we can help make this a better, more just world for every person.

My list of family and friends who have supported me on this very long and arduous journey is unending. To anyone who has said to me, "How's that writing going?" or "When will you be done?" I offer my thanks. I know that your questions implied you cared even though I may not have always expressed as much with my frowns and moans. To my two wonderful sons, Joshua and Travis, who have supported me through many trials and triumphs through the years, please know you are my reason for being. You have grown to be superb men with promising careers and years of happiness ahead of

you. But more important to me is your compassion toward others, your love of family, and your ability to bring joy and laughter into this world. Along with that I offer you a tremendous thank you for being such wonderful fathers to my grandchildren. I will love you forever, I will like you for always....

To my mother, I cannot begin to express my appreciation for your support and love all my life. I know that you and Dad faced many hardships while raising four girls. It is the dedication to family and continued support through my own hardships that has given me the desire to continue my learning and share my knowledge with others. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

To my greatest love, Joe Shaffer, you are what matters most. Because of you I am the most I have ever been; because of you I see a future filled with joy, laughter, and content; because of you I know what matters. I have completed this journey because you are beside me pointing out the importance of my beliefs. Your commitment to bring opportunity and hope to those who are victims of our society fills my heart with pride. Your ability to find value within every person helps me see the possibilities for a better world. I believe we will forever be together—first here on earth beneath the moonlight, and then amongst the stars. That is what matters.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	ix
ABSTRACT .....	xi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background of the Study .....	1
The Place of the Researcher.....	2
Purpose of the Research.....	4
Research Questions .....	5
Philosophical Perspective .....	5
Significance of the Study .....	7
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	9
A Brief Perspective .....	9
A Personal Definition of Teaching for Social Justice.....	9
Teaching for Social Justice .....	10
Six Principles of Teaching for Social Justice .....	14
Enabling Significant Work Within Communities of Learners .....	14
Building Upon What Students Bring to School.....	15
Teaching Skills and Bridging Gaps .....	16
Working with (Not Against) Individuals, Families, and Communities .....	17
Diversifying Forms of Assessment.....	18
Making Inequity, Power, and Activism Explicit Parts of the Curriculum .....	18
Research on Teaching for Social Justice Within Stages of Teaching Experience.....	19
Teaching for Social Justice In Pre-Service Education Programs.....	19
Novice Teachers and Teaching for Social Justice .....	23
Experienced Teachers and Schools.....	25

3. METHODOLOGY .....	29
Data Collection Techniques.....	30
The Uses of Reflection.....	31
Participant Selection .....	32
Context of the School.....	33
Context of the University.....	34
Data Analysis .....	37
Trustworthiness.....	39
4. BEN’S STORY .....	43
Introduction to the Narrative Format .....	43
The Prequel to Ben’s Professional Life .....	43
Year One, First Semester .....	46
The Cultures that Create the Setting .....	46
A First Attempt to Introduce Social Justice Issues through a Lesson.....	54
Where Are You Now? .....	56
Wrapping Up the First Semester.....	59
Year One, Second Semester.....	64
The Testing Months of Year One .....	66
Reflections on the First Year .....	70
Summer Reflections.....	74
Year Two, First Semester .....	77
Renewed Intent .....	77
A Second Year Teacher Shares His Beliefs.....	80
Plans for Social Justice in the Classroom .....	81
Managing Time, Deadlines, and Expectations through the Semester .....	82
Year Two, Second Semester .....	84
Moving Away—Maintaining Beliefs Despite Seeing Little Change.....	87
5. LEARNING FROM BEN’S STORY .....	95
The Professor Considers Her Findings .....	95
The Long Drive Home- Realizations.....	102
Recommendations.....	104
The Unending Story.....	110



APPENDIX SECTION .....	112
LITERATURE CITED .....	134

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Description</b>
IB	International Baccalaureate
TAKS	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
TEKS	Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

## **ABSTRACT**

New teachers enter their profession with passion and philosophical beliefs about what good education looks like. The desire to teach is often born from positive experiences in their own education. During their pre-service training education, students attending universities and colleges which espouse to create social justice educators are learning that school and learning are not as positive for many of their future students. They learn that equitable learning opportunities must be created and inequities are found in abundance. They are also learning that our American school system is built upon white dominance theories which profess that successful learners must learn to abide by the expectations and demands created by white dominant policy makers and leaders. These unjust expectations and demands upon minority groups often go against children's cultural norms and family capabilities. There is, therefore, a clash between what new teachers come to believe about justice in education and the practices in place in public education.

This research follows one such new educator through his first two years of teaching. Through narrative story, it brings to light the typical struggles of a new teacher such as: learning the curriculum, meeting paperwork demands, managing time, and managing behaviors. It also reveals how these typical struggles are compounded by internal struggles regarding fair treatment of students and philosophical dissonance between beliefs and practices in place.

## **CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the Study**

The movement from university student to professional teacher is one of both celebration and anticipation. For the most part, within a short amount of time after entering the classroom, anxiety becomes the overwhelming emotion identified by new teachers. William Ayers states, “For new teachers the hard realities of schooling can come as a slap in the face: too many kids and too little time—the structuring of predictable failure—not enough support and inadequate resources, a sense of terminal isolation” (2004, p. 22). Among these “realities” are standard teaching expectations such as implementing school routines, meeting expectations from the administration, participating in extra-curricular activities, conducting assessments, and learning a packaged curriculum (Ayers, 2004). By mid-year many first year teachers describe their experiences and their current acts as teachers as simply trying to survive. Linton et al. (2000) describe this phenomenon as the tension created by new teachers struggling between what the demands of their work are forcing them to do and their own identity development. Succinctly put, they are realizing that reality within schools does not always allow personal beliefs, dreams, and goals to be met. They begin to consider the possibility that who they thought they were and the teacher they had envisioned becoming may not survive in this profession (Cherubini, 2009).

Cherubini (2009) further investigates the incongruent practices and beliefs between teacher preparation programs and the schools hiring the new teachers. Current philosophies found within colleges and universities support growth in identity and the development of teachers as change agents seeking to overcome social inequities, biases,

and prejudices—issues of social justice. However, when new teachers enter the school there is a great possibility that the system they are entering has yet to realize and adopt the same practices. Having heard, read, and believed in one or many best practices for teaching in their coursework, new teachers often find themselves feeling overwhelmed with “real world” teaching demands and end up leaving their plans and newly formed philosophies behind in order to survive their first years as teachers. As a result many new “surviving” teachers revert to the way they had been taught as children or choose to adopt what their more experienced colleagues suggest and model. Therefore, there is a great collision between the cultural, social, and political elements within the school and the new teacher’s theoretical and personal identity (Cherubini, 2009; Ayers, 2001). Their espoused theories of learning and teaching become distant from their actual practices—and can remain so. Understanding the culture within a school is imperative to success; changing to match that culture or seeking to change the culture can become the greatest challenge (or the greatest celebration) as new teachers gain experience and reclaim their chosen identity (Ayers, 2001; Friere, 2005; Kohl, 2004).

### **The Place of the Researcher**

Continuous growth and a desire to learn have always been within me. In 2006, I began my pursuit of a doctoral degree at Texas State. Coursework in the program was intense and I often struggled to find my place in discussions regarding how to improve schools, how to be an agent of change, and how to use research as a vehicle for change. It was the creation of a visual and written autoethnography that helped me begin to locate my own position and my own philosophy of who I was as a learner, as a human, and as one who could be a part of positive change in this world. This autoethnography, along

with continuous experiences which forced me to look at the world through the eyes of others, opened my eyes to the reality that there were many aspects of our schools and the school system as a whole that did not benefit all students. Then, as timing would have it, I accepted a teaching position which included a role that supported these new understandings and introduced me to the idea of teaching for social justice.

As a contracted visiting instructor at a small Central Texas university in 2007, I was asked to participate in a co-taught seminar in which senior education students from both elementary and secondary certification programs delved deeply into what it meant to become a teacher for social justice. This experience was, I dare say, one of the most impactful and disconcerting events of my life. There is no doubt that I, as co-instructor, learned more from the readings, the experiences, and the revelations than most of the students themselves. Granted, life experience and age were major factors in the difference in my learning and that of the students; however, I found that these same factors were the most difficult to reconcile. How could one who has lived through so much, learned so much through work as a teacher, and been celebrated as a master teacher been so ignorant and unaware of the truths surrounding inequity, biases, and prejudice? Did I do this to myself? Did someone else do this to me? And, most upsetting, have I perpetuated such evils as classism, racism, and ableism with my own children? How has my own lack of awareness affected the students I have taught, their parents, and the schools I have worked in? I found myself in a constant state of turmoil as I participated in this teaching/learning process, and I made a bold move to consistently share this turmoil with my teaching colleagues and with the very students I was supposed to be teaching. That was my “saving grace” and the impetus for my continued search for any means to

continue learning and to continue believing in the imperativeness of developing more teachers for social justice.

Having worked with university students who are moving into the field of education, I have seen many future teachers struggle with the day-to-day expectations and challenges within the profession. As a classroom teacher I had many similar experiences, and as a school administrator I assisted many novice teachers in overcoming challenges. Whether it be time management, assessing learning, creating valid and creative lessons, behavior management, or working with parents, all new teachers have struggles. Recently, the pressures to meet testing standards have increased to a point where teachers have to fight for quality teaching time over testing prep time and benchmark tests. New teachers also have the challenge of how to fit into an established culture within schools. They question who to turn to with questions or concerns, as well as who will be most supportive during times of feeling overwhelmed or defeated. These are all valid concerns which I have witnessed. What I did not experience or even consider as a new teacher, a mentor, or an administrator is what it looks like or feels like when all these expectations and challenges take place under the philosophical umbrella of one who is determined to practice social justice education.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of what happens when new teachers who have adopted the philosophy of being teachers for social justice enter their classrooms.

## **Research Questions**

Initial research questions used for this qualitative study include the following:

1. How does a new teacher incorporate teaching for social justice into the classroom?
2. What environmental factors (social, cultural, economic, and political) support or impede a new teacher's ability to teach for social justice?
3. How do a new teacher's reflective practices affect his or her ability to teach for social justice?
4. How does a new teacher's view of teaching for social justice change in his or her first two years of teaching?

## **Philosophical Perspective**

Working towards an understanding of what happens when someone attempts to become a teacher for social justice within his new profession points this research toward a constructionist epistemology with an interpretive theoretical perspective. Each of my research questions sought to understand “the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning” as described by Crotty (1998). For example, my participant's view or perception of what it looks like to be a teacher for social justice was consistently analyzed over his first two years of teaching in search of revisions and refinements as a result of his experiences. Using the interpretive stance provided the framework for looking closely at how this new professional made sense of his experiences.

Crotty (1998) defines constructionism as the belief “that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction, between human beings and their world, and



developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” ( p. 42). Working from beneath this umbrella, I looked for ways in which this new teacher made meaning of his profession through his espoused beliefs of social justice education; how he interpreted and acted (or failed to act) upon social justice issues in this new cultural setting; and how his perception of teaching and social justice education evolved through experience. In the effort to make sense of possible dissimilarity between this teacher’s desires and his environment, I attend to the current realities within the education system and the teaching culture.

An important element of this study is the social constructionist lens (Crotty, 1998). Such a social constructionist lens, Crotty explains, takes note of the social and cultural environment and realities within which we live (and work), compares it to new, possibly contradictory learning, and then applies new meaning to the environment. The results of these new meanings are new realities and new opportunities for change. The participant’s philosophy of teaching for social justice evolved through experiences, coursework, and a willingness to critically evaluate his past realities. From there he navigated and negotiated towards new realities which would lead him in a new and challenging direction. In this research I considered cycles of change and growth which occurred as the participant, new philosophy and beliefs in hand, faced the realities of the teaching profession. I also considered the possible effects such a teacher imposed upon what others may consider a fixed, or tried and true, school culture. Alternatively, I looked at how school culture, the teaching profession, and other environmental elements affected the participant’s evolution and practice as a teacher for social justice.

## **Significance of the Study**

While teacher preparation programs across the nation are integrating critical pedagogy and social justice learning and experiences into their coursework, the preparation for the real world of teaching must also be a focus of concern. New teachers are typically overwhelmed by the demand of teaching and allow their philosophical beliefs and understandings of progressive teaching to be hidden or abandoned when attempting to meet the challenges of grades, assessments, parents, paperwork deadlines and the other responsibilities of everyday teaching. For many, teaching for social justice is a powerful and important component of teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2008) and, often, because it touches the heart and soul of people dedicated to children, a source of great anxiety for new teachers. It seems that by bringing to the forefront such a statement of position pre-service teacher programs are also adding what seems to be one more challenge for these new teachers. The challenge then becomes how to prepare teachers for these professional responsibilities and how to empower them to be the just persons and activists they want to be. In an effort to support and help alleviate such anxiety and sense of guilt for not practicing what so many new teachers believe to be important, this researcher hopes to identify barriers that come between what these professionals want to do and what they actually do in their schools and classrooms. Once identified, possible solutions or revisions to current practices will be considered including how teacher education programs can support, or mentor, new teachers and/or how school and district leaders can develop programs of support for those who wish to be teachers for social justice.

By closely following one new teacher's initiation into the teaching profession, by interviewing and observing the challenges and triumphs of a teacher for social justice, I hope to inform other teachers and future teachers, teacher educators, and administrators of the elements and characteristics necessary to meet the challenge of teaching for social justice. Perhaps there are modifications necessary in teacher education programs which will provide realistic encounters with new teacher challenges; perhaps there are induction and orientation seminars for new teachers that can be supportive of negotiating between the newness of teaching and the development of teachers for social justice; perhaps the work of learning about teaching for social justice needs to be brought directly into schools to the experienced teachers as well as administrators.

## CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

### A Brief Perspective

#### A Personal Definition of Teaching for Social Justice

Herbert Kohl (2004) defines social justice teachers as “those who care about nurturing all children and who are enraged at the prospects of students dying young, going hungry, or living meaningless and despairing lives” (p. 42). This, at first glance, seems to be a very daunting task. One must attend to the fact that to be ‘enraged’ requires awareness of the problem at hand and to be equipped to nurture ‘all’ children means to understand where every child is coming from with respect and with humility. There is a definite process of becoming aware that is necessary to becoming the teacher described by Kohl. It is this process of becoming aware that I find to be the key element of becoming, then *being*, a teacher for social justice and maintaining the beliefs needed to address the change necessary to end injustice within schools. Therefore, within my definition of teaching for social justice I place first and foremost the development and unending growth of awareness of the trials, the challenges, and the celebrations of every child.

Awareness goes hand in hand with a constant, persistent, and the often troubling act of critical reflection. Effective, successful teachers are constantly reflecting on their past classroom decisions while contemplating future ones. The effective and successful teacher of social justice, however, goes beyond such typical reflection and questions how events, expectations, and roles within the entire school and community affect each child and each child’s family. The critically reflective teacher places herself and her actions (or lack of actions) under constant scrutiny possible only with the awareness of the fact that

every choice she makes may affect the life of a child. A teacher for social justice is constantly questioning who is the oppressed party and how can she change this.

The declaration of being or becoming an agent of change is, I believe, the most challenging characteristic of being a teacher of social justice. To risk being the sole person who asks the hard questions about status quo or ‘because we said so’ practices is often seen as professional suicide. A social justice vision or collective belief within a school or a community is, therefore, a valuable asset. However, in the absence of such a collective belief, the teacher of social justice must work toward change sharing and celebrating each opportunity to bring equity and justice to the forefront of education.

Concisely, I define teaching for social justice as the adopted and practiced philosophy that one through awareness, critical reflection, and constant change can positively affect the lives and experiences of students under her charge and within her community.

### **Teaching for Social Justice**

To examine and analyze the term and the beliefs of social justice as it is represented in literature and research is an impossible task for this dissertation. Even the attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of teaching for social justice is overwhelming. For the purpose of this research my literature will focus upon the writings and research of well-known teaching for social justice authors including, but not limited to, William Ayers, Bill Bigelow, Marilyn Cochran-Smith, and Herbert Kohl. Within the discussion of these experts’ beliefs and understandings, the reader will also find references to others’ whose work contributes to the creation of a framework for my research. These are writers and researchers whose work is closely related to, or an

element of, teaching for social justice. For example, culturally responsive teaching as theorized and researched by Geneva Gay (2000) provides a look at the dissonance between cultures students bring to school and the traditional cultures engrained in schools and the school system. Through such concise yet precise focus this dissertation examines the teaching of social justice in a real world application.

William Ayers' (2001) efforts to help teacher's develop as social justice advocates and change agents within an often cynical education system informs us that conscious efforts toward justice in education, "arouses students, engages them in a quest to identify obstacle to their full humanity and the life chances of others, to their freedom, and to drive and move against those obstacles" (p. 142). In Ayers' view the teacher serves as advocate for the students' voices. For it is the student who can change the world...once given the voice (Ayers, 1998; 2001).

Bill Bigelow and others have provided many social justice teachers with curricular support and lessons through publications in Rethinking Schools, Inc. Bigelow's and fellow editors' vision of social justice education includes curricular and classroom practices including:

- Teaching grounded in the lives of the students;
- Critical questions and real-world inquiry;
- Multicultural, anti-biased and pro-justice curriculum that pushes boundaries;
- Participatory and experiential curriculum including choice and challenges;
- Hopeful, joyful, kind, and visionary environments that are safe and democratic;
- Activism, change minded dialogue and reform;

- Academic rigor to bring critical thought to the forefront;
- Cultural sensitivity, and awareness of differences (Bigelow, B., Christensen, L., Karp, S., Miner, B., & Peterson, B., 1994).

This vision provided by Rethinking Schools, Inc. editors was adopted by the Department of Education in the university that the participant in my research attended. It served, therefore, as the reference and the standard for understanding and developing his philosophy of teaching for social justice.

Returning to Herbert Kohl's (2004) definition of teachers for social justice as "those who care about nurturing all children and who are enraged at the prospects of students dying young, going hungry, or living meaningless and despairing lives" (p. 42), we learn that he shared illuminating and less daunting suggestions to achieve being a successful teacher for social justice. First, don't teach against your conscience. Do what you believe is best and don't let others force you to change. Second, learn how to teach well. Being a good teacher provides a foundation for being a better social justice advocate. Third, use effective practices and curriculum in your classroom. Know what works for your students and meet those needs. Fourth, be an active and positive part of the community outside the classroom. Finally, take care of yourself as teacher, human and citizen (2004).

Attempting to answer the difficult question of what it looks like to be a teacher for social justice, Cochran-Smith (2004) proposes that to be a teacher for social justice requires one to consider the context of specific situations and to make decisions accordingly. To address these questions, she delineates six principles drawn from a large body of research and leading theorists who, like her, are focused upon social justice

teaching. It must be noted that Cochran's intent is to assist student teachers, future teachers, to gain perspectives as to what it looks like to teach for social justice. However, her principles provide a sound framework for any teacher seeking to develop, practice, or improve their skills and beliefs as teachers for social justice. The principles include:

1. Providing opportunities for all students to engage in significant intellectual work,
2. Building upon what students bring to school with them—knowledge and interests, cultural and linguistic resources,
3. Teaching skills and bridging gaps,
4. Working with (not against) individuals, families, and communities,
5. Diversifying forms of assessments, and
6. Making inequity, power, and activism explicit parts of the curriculum.

There are many overlapping or congruent themes running through these social justice definitions, visions, and principles. One might argue that the most efficient route to follow would be that of Bigelow given it was used by the university at which the participant was trained and the researcher served as professor. However, given the great overlap of themes (i.e., academic rigor v. significant intellectual work) I found the more comprehensive explanations and the realistic examples of application in Cochran-Smith's principles to be most supportive of this research. Using Cochran-Smith's six principles, I will create a path meant to allow the reader to gain understanding and perspective as to what it means to be a teacher for social justice.



## **Six Principles of Teaching for Social Justice**

### **Enabling Significant Work Within Communities of Learners**

Several important components are encapsulated in the first principle provided by Cochran-Smith (2004). This includes the belief that all students are capable of complex thinking and meaning making. Teachers who hold such beliefs resist and stand up against practices of deficit thinking, providing every student the opportunity to be successful during intellectual learning opportunities. These practices of students taking responsibility of their own learning oppose the pedagogy of poverty as described by Haberman (2005). Such a pedagogy of poverty relegates students creating their own learning and determining the outcomes of their learning to the easier practice of teachers dominating over students, transmitting knowledge, and blaming students for not achieving at predetermined levels.

Teachers practicing social justice in their classroom hold high expectations for every student just as they hold high expectations for themselves (Cochran-Smith, 2004). These teachers strive to deepen their own understandings of curriculum in order to provide their students valuable and enduring understanding of their learning experiences.

Also considered imperative in this principle is the use of learning communities made up of students of various needs and levels of understanding (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Such classroom practices provide students the ability to learn from each other, challenge each other, and practice supportive acts with their peers. Such shared responsibility that is found in learning communities are lessons for life and the acceptance of others' strengths and weaknesses.

## **Building Upon What Students Bring to School**

To understand the lives and histories of students means to become familiar with the students, their families, and their community. Cochran-Smith (2004) brings cultural relevance to the forefront of teaching for social justice within this principle. Students bring both cultural and linguistic identities into the classroom—both of which teachers must recognize and appreciate.

Within the classroom, social justice educators connect their students' lives to their learning, making the curriculum relevant to their lives. This includes instructional strategies such as questioning techniques, narrative styles, and social participation opportunities (Gay, 2000). In her research of African American students and their teachers, Ladson-Billings (1995) found that teachers with culturally relevant practices integrated student interests into their studies—allowing students to recognize the value of their culture and make connections to the academic standards they had to meet. In doing so teachers enabled students to see that their strengths and values outside of the school could, and should, be valuable in the school setting as well. For many of these students, appreciation and recognition of what is important to them, and what gives them power to control their lives has not been acceptable practice within school walls (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Making students part of the creation of the curriculum and, therefore, sharing ownership for the learning is an important factor in students' success in school (Banks & Banks, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995). By providing such multicultural opportunities students see success within a system that is often not inclusive of their cultures, and they learn that they are valued by their teacher (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Cochran-Smith (2004) also recognizes the fact that within most classrooms the teacher and the students do not share the same culture or ethnicity. Social justice teachers understand the importance of continuously checking their own perspectives and identities to ensure they are addressing the social, cultural needs of each student in the process of preparing them for success in the classroom (Banks et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995). These teachers work to eliminate stereotypes from within themselves and within their school community. They work to create opportunities for students to learn about differing cultures and beliefs despite stringent and demanding curricular and systematic expectations (Banks et al., 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004)

### **Teaching Skills and Bridging Gaps**

As students move through school curriculum they are expected to progress through predetermined stages, each year's learning building upon previous learning. Cochran-Smith (2004) recognizes that some students do not begin school with experiences such as being read to, working with numbers, or having had social interactions that school systems deem as foundational. Therefore, these students, often seen in urban areas and within low socio-economic groups, can begin their education behind or lacking in basic skills. It becomes, then, the role of the educator to learn what their students bring with them and to fill in any gaps that may become evident. To do so requires the teacher to evaluate students' prior learning, make connections to what students know with the current curriculum, and consistently check student understandings as new information is introduced. Identifying and eliminating students' gaps in learning increases opportunities for success within a system that can often leave such students behind (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

## **Working With (Not Against) Individuals, Families, and Communities**

As teachers for social justice learn about their students' lives and cultures Cochran-Smith (2004) states the need to be cognizant of what is important to the students, families, and communities they serve. Teachers who work to understand holidays, celebrations, and socialization patterns within a culture other than their own often find their judgments and pre-conceived beliefs to be invalid. Cochran-Smith does, however, provide support for the integration of new information to bring to light injustices within curriculum and common practices. One example provided by Cochran-Smith reveals how one of her participants took a mandatory activity/celebration of Columbus Day and provided alternate perspectives of Columbus' explorations, including the introduction of African slaves to North America and the eradication of natives due to the introduction of illnesses new to the "discovered lands". The teacher followed mandated expectations but offered different views of Columbus' affect on many people (2004).

Teachers of social justice should work to be a positive and not opposing part of their school and community. To do so means a delicate balance between understanding the beliefs and practices in place and critiquing the issues that need to be changed. Cochran-Smith (2004) explains the need to facilitate issues of race and inequity to the students through dialogue and exploration of issues that students face. The key, Cochran-Smith states, is to allow the students to be co-creators of their learning, connecting to what is important in their lives and addressing what is not just in their lives. Providing such opportunities shows students that they have a voice in their world and opens the door to more critical inquiries (2004).

## **Diversifying Forms of Assessment**

Standardized testing within schools has had a detrimental effect on the success of minority and poor children in the United States (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004). Curriculum has turned into an ends based program with the end goal being success on a high stakes test as opposed to an end goal of students becoming lifelong learners and developing as democratic participants (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Haberman, 2005). Such testing situations also tend to not be considered learning opportunities but a separate entity, not revisited, not used to plan for future learning, and often quickly forgotten by the students (Ayers, 2001). Cochran-Smith (2004) argues that the diversification of assessments is necessary to refocus curriculum on individual student learning—teaching where the students are.

More appropriate assessments that allow students to demonstrate their learning include formative, performance based, and portfolio collections. These assessments allow teachers to measure growth and understanding not only in a less stressful environment but in an environment that is more aligned with real world practices and student interests (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ayers, 2001). Such assessments are easily analyzed to determine student needs and hold value for both students and teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

## **Making Inequity, Power, and Activism Explicit Parts of the Curriculum**

Introducing topics of inequity and power into the classroom curriculum is a difficult task for teachers (Ayers, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, French & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). To do so requires a teacher to be first comfortable with the critical dialogue that will ensue (Cochran-Smith, 2004). To introduce, for example,

literature that includes issues of inequity and bias' may bring to surface minority students' feelings and reservations that the typical white teacher cannot connect to or share a true sense of understanding. Cochran-Smith (2004) argues for the importance of providing a safe and respectful environment where questions can be asked and inequities, often overlooked, can be criticized. Banks (2010) defines this as an antiracist perspective which permits students to speak about their personal connections to issues such as racism, prejudice, and other biases. To do so, according to Banks (2010) breaks down the "colorblind" practices currently in place in schools; thus, giving validation to students' lives and challenges as they strive to be or become antiracist and activists.

Cochran-Smith (2004) acknowledges that teachers of social justice face institutional barriers when attempting to bring about change in regards to inequity and dominance. She proposes activism within the established structures which brings awareness of inequities, oppression and advantages. Such awareness is the beginning of conversation and possibly change in the status quo (Banks, 2010; Kohl, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2004).

### **Research on Teaching for Social Justice Within Stages of Teaching Experience**

#### **Teaching for Social Justice In Pre-service Education Programs**

To become a teacher is no longer solely about learning to teach the basic subjects. Teacher education programs across the nation are working diligently to develop and improve social justice pedagogy throughout their programs (Cochran-Smith, 2008; Darling-Hammond, French & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Poplin & Rivera, 2005). In many of these programs there is a strong belief that future teachers will have the ability to bring positive change into schools as advocates for social justice.

Such movements are founded on the belief that “social justice should figure prominently among the motivating factors underlying the choice to teach” (Nieto, 2004, p.91).

Students within such programs are being prepared to become change agents as they share and practice their philosophical beliefs regarding teaching for social justice.

The importance of understanding how a teacher’s life experiences lead to the formation of their social, cultural, and political “self” is a recurring topic of research within teacher education programs that seek to develop social justice educators. Johnson (2007) sought to understand pre-service teachers’ perceptions of socially just education by connecting the participants’ life histories to their experiences in literacy (experiences in learning, using, and observing forms of reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Johnson was able to demonstrate how these future teachers’ life experiences have helped form their current beliefs about diversity and equity issues in schools.

Johnson’s (2007) research revealed how these pre-service teachers’ experiences had led not only to their desire to become teachers but also to assumptions about schools, learning, and teaching which needed to be further addressed as they developed as teachers for social justice. Johnson, like Nieto (2004), points out the need for teacher educators to be aware of such findings and to include critical engagement in their social justice agenda. This period of development within future teachers contributes to my own research as I sought to understand how, and if, these new awarenesses and understandings are brought forward and acted upon in the novice teacher’s classroom. Johnson points out the importance of such development in future teachers for social justice:

Without the goal of critical engagement, an ethics of access does not adequately address the concerns of the social justice agenda, such as how access is linked to the organization of society and the interplay among individuals' racial, class, cultural, gender, and language backgrounds and their institutional participation, and a commitment toward reconstructing society so that opportunities and resources are distributed more equitably (Johnson, 2007, p.312).

Morales (2005), sought to learn how future teachers' definitions of social justice—diversity, equity, and democracy—evolved throughout one semester in a Cultural Diversity course. In regards to the role of teacher education programs in the development of social justice educators, Morales (2005) writes:

Teacher educators focused on social justice enculturate their pre-service teachers to critically examine the experiences that led them to choose teaching as a profession and how those experiences have and continue to shape their understanding of the cause and effect relationships within school structures. They also want teacher candidates to acquire new, inclusive and expansive ways of thinking about the world by challenging their traditional ways of thinking (p.20).

Morales' (2005) research demonstrates how pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice can be developed using narratives and reflective practices. Such reflective practices are important to my own research as I followed my participant from the end of his pre-service training through his first two years of teaching, asking him to reflect upon his practices and decisions related to social justice.

Whether such understandings of social justice education are integrated into the participant's actual practice, and how the existing culture affects the participant's



attempts to act as a teacher of social justice were both important elements of my own research. Unlike my own research, neither Morales (2005) nor Johnson (2005) follow their participants beyond the scope of one semester's course, leaving one to question how (or if) their participants actually put their understandings into practice.

While much research on teaching for social justice focuses upon individual courses within teacher education programs, research on how such programs are integrating social justice education into their overall vision and practices is limited. Many teacher education programs have historically included multicultural and diversity components in their coursework in what McDonald (2005) considers an “add-on or piecemeal approach” (p. 419). McDonald shares that research shows such practices as ineffective namely because of the failure to provide consistent connections between the ideology of multicultural/ diversity education and the practice of teaching for social justice. In response to such research some teacher education programs are now working to integrate a social justice orientation across their program, creating “a vision of teaching and learning focused on social-justice principles in a more so-called coherent approach” (p. 419).

Seeking a rich description of the implementation of social justice within teacher education programs, McDonald (2005) studied two teacher education programs that “make social justice and equity central to the preparation of prospective teachers” (p.422). The two programs chosen for her research purposely differed. One was situated in a private college which had practiced a philosophy of teaching for social justice for ten years; the other was a large public university in its first year of implementing an integrated social justice strategy. Analysis of data gathered from ten teachers from these

two programs revealed that both institutions intended to integrate social justice through their program; however, such implementation varied in practice in regards to prospective teachers' opportunities to learn (McDonald, 2005).

Two key findings from McDonald's study inform my own research. First, participants at one site reported feeling as if they were overloaded with theory and lacking in opportunities to put these theories into practice. McDonald referred to the need for identified connections between learning concepts and actual practice in placements (opportunity to put their espoused philosophies into practice). Second, McDonald's evaluation of one program and course syllabi revealed that the social justice agenda failed to address how issues of equity, diversity, and justice have come about in the school system and how teachers can bring about change within the system. Developing such awareness and adopting the philosophy of being a change agent is an important part of being a teacher for social justice (McDonald, 2005). Examining whether or not new teachers are able to act upon their philosophy and be change agents is a large component of my research.

### **Novice Teachers and Teaching for Social Justice**

Given that most teacher preparation programs now include components of social justice education (although some programs use other terms such as culturally responsive teaching or diversity education), schools are now employing teachers who have, through their education, come to see themselves as teachers for social justice. By introducing these new teachers into the well ingrained practices of schools, it is hoped that they will be the catalysts needed for creating equitable and socially just schools and classrooms (Flores, 2007).

Many new teachers report a collision between what they had learned in their education programs and what was occurring in their schools (Chubbock, 2008; Johnson, Oppenheim, & Younjang, 2009; Flores, 2007). This incongruence between their espoused beliefs and the practices they had adopted brought about feelings of failure and a possible need for leaving the teaching profession (Argarwal et al., 2009; Flores, 2007). Examples of challenges faced by these new teachers include state-mandated standardized testing and the resulting campus mandates of test preparation and ability grouping (Chubbock, 2008; Flores, 2007). In order to be deemed as successful teachers, these new teachers felt obligated to follow guidelines which they felt contradicted their beliefs about equitable learning opportunities.

Chubbock (2008) and Argarwal et al. (2009) found the need for pre-service education programs to prepare new teachers for the many ways in which their new found beliefs about social justice would be challenged in school systems. While many education programs work towards getting their students to adopt the philosophy of teaching for social justice, these researchers found the need to also bring forward the difficulties that these new teachers might face in schools (Argarwal et al., 2009; Chubbock, 2008; Johnson, Oppenheim & Younjang, 2009). Working as change agents means challenging existing practices of many experienced teachers and administrators, as well as challenging norms in school cultures and communities (Flores, 2007). These ideas are central to my own research as I followed one participant throughout his first two years of teaching seeking to understand what happens when he is faced with these challenges.

New teachers often feel alone or isolated as they attempt to put their beliefs into practice. For this reason, Johnson, Oppenheim & Younjang (2009) call for pre-service

programs to present teaching for social justice as a process that is constantly changing according to the context of situations. This concept of a continuum of change allows new teachers and others practicing social justice education to reduce the need to bring immediate change to all situations and provides opportunities to celebrate small steps toward change. Argarwal et al. (2009) found such celebrations to be important in the case of new teachers who already face so many challenges in their new profession.

### **Experienced Teachers and Schools**

For many experienced teachers an understanding of the philosophy of social justice education comes from professional development opportunities within their school or district. Parks (2007) sought to understand how teachers' perceptions of their identity (defined as an ever changing placement of self within a given context) were revealed in discourse regarding social justice education. Her study included seven experienced teachers who had participated in a multidistrict program meant to bring the theories of social justice education to the forefront of discussion within the schools. The program, directed by Parks, included awareness experiences such as the privileges of Whiteness (the assumed but often unnoticed expectations afforded to the majority population and not the minority populations), recognition of biases and how they are portrayed in schools, and how cultural differences are acted upon in schools.

Parks' (2007) analysis of interviews with the participants revealed how teachers utilize multiple identities according to situations and environments. For example, one participant reported having held back from speaking out about biased conversation between other professionals on her campus, stating that she could not change their beliefs. Yet, in another situation she purposely spoke out against what she considered acts

of racism within her classroom. Participants recognized these multiple identities, indicating, according to Parks, the presence of reflective practices and continuous desire to change. The process of transformation towards becoming the social justice educator that each participant strived to become took different paths for each teacher. Parks attributed this to differing experiences and beliefs as well as teaching environment. In regards to when and how to bring social justice education to teachers in the field, she argues that acceptance of the theories of social justice education would be best introduced through stories of how other teachers have accepted and practiced social justice within their schools and classrooms as opposed to a presentation of expectations for change. She states, "...teaching philosophies and practices are likely to evolve along with one's identity well past college [opening] up possibilities for change and transformation that teachers may not have been receptive to relative to their self-conception as teacher" (p. 145). Parks further argues for support networks in which open dialogue allows for sharing of celebrations and challenges within both the classroom and the system.

While Parks' (2007) research focuses upon the experienced teacher, her findings reveal theories important to my own research. Conversations and other data sources provide an important understanding about how my participant's philosophy, practice, and identity evolved in these first two years of teaching. The role of support networks (or lack of one) was an important factor in this evolution.

Young (2010) studied the practices and beliefs of five teachers and two administrators in one elementary school who identified themselves as committed to social justice in order to learn how they defined and practiced culturally relevant pedagogy. Young's collaborative action research utilized the definition of culturally relevant

pedagogy provided by Ladson-Billings (2006), described as inclusive of three criteria: academic success, cultural competence, and social or sociopolitical consciousness. Young reported encountering obstacles to the group's effort to define, implement, and assess the practice of culturally relevant pedagogy. Such obstacles as a clash between the traditional educational expectations in place, the pressure to meet timelines in curriculum, standardized testing expectations, and the lack of time to plan substantial lessons seemed to keep the participants from being able to practice their beliefs.

Young also found that four white teacher participants, while attempting "to utilize culturally relevant pedagogy in their lesson planning, actually displayed biases towards what they expected students to know and what knowledge was important" (p. 257). In regards to such biases, Young quotes Gay and Howard (2000), "Unless European American teachers seriously analyze and change their cultural biases and ethnic prejudices (toward self and others), they are not likely to be very diligent and effective in helping students to do likewise" (p. 8, in Young, 2010).

In her discussion of the systemic roots of racism, Young (2010) cites literature on critical race theory which argues that the persistence of racism in American schooling contributes "to the suppression of intellectual rights of minority children (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and how culturally sensitive rhetoric often masks the interest-convergence agenda of the dominant group (Chapman, 2007; Milner, 2008)" (p. 257). In her analysis of data, Young (2010) found that the district's dialogue about being culturally responsive to student needs clashed with their policies on standardized testing—namely, the expectations to teach all students the same thing at the same time in order for all students to be successful on standardized tests. Young argues that the No Child Left Behind Act of

2001 “seeks to maintain, rather than to alter, the racialized status quo, which flies directly in the face of culturally relevant pedagogy” (p. 258). One great challenge that Young and her co-researchers repeatedly faced was determining how to integrate culturally relevant pedagogy into their school practices, given the challenges of time to plan and implement, and the curriculum in place. Young concludes:

Although the existing literature is inundated with research that demonstrates how racism is prevalent in schools, how teachers are underprepared to address issues of diversity, and how a rift exists between theory and practice, this study reveals how the researcher and the practitioners can address these very issues at the ground level through inquiry-based discourse and ongoing reflection (p. 259).

Such discourse and ongoing reflection require cultural and policy shifts in a deeply established system. Without the commitment of policy makers, administration, and teachers such a paradigm shift will struggle (Young, 2010). Whether or not one new teacher was able to find and use the voice necessary to begin such change (or even bring awareness of the need for such change) is an important question addressed in my own research.

### **CHAPTER 3- METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative research followed a single participant through his first two years of teaching. Through data collection and analysis I worked to understand and evaluate his perceptions of what happened in his classroom, as well as how he acted upon his beliefs as a teacher for social justice. I located myself within the world of the situation by observing the participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.3) as he works. Studying the phenomena in its natural setting allowed me to bring what I saw in observation together with what the participant perceived as happening. Utilizing other data such as reflections, interviews following observations, and observations of the school and community allowed me to analyze how this new teacher's perceptions and actions coincided or collided with reality (see Appendix A for Data Analysis Matrix). Realizing that my interpretation is just that—an interpretation—and not fact, I utilized the research of others, applicable theories, and perspectives of others to better understand my findings and to share with others how this single participant, in his particular setting, revealed himself through the research (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

A case study is described as an exploration of a bounded system over time “through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2007, p.73). The bounded system in this research consisted of the physical space of the participant's classroom, school, and surrounding community and the emotional or cognitive space of the participant and researcher. This internal space was attended to as we dialogued and reflected upon events and perceptions in the effort to gain understanding. The choice of using a single participant is supported in that a single case study allows for depth in understanding and the opportunity to gain “rich” data for



analysis which might not be possible with multiple participants (Creswell, 2007; Lichtman, 2006; Patton, 2002).

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Methods of data collection I used in this research included interviews, observations, reflective writings, documents pertaining to the research, and video recording. Interviews were both semi-structured and unstructured (see Appendix B for examples of interview questions). Semi-structured interviews were designed according to the initial research questions and modified according to needs identified through continuous analysis. Informal interviews took place following observations and served as a reflective process to better understand the participant's intentions and perceived outcomes of his teaching practice and classroom interactions. Each of these interviews and oral dialogues were recorded whenever possible. Observations consisted of the researcher sitting in on classroom instruction and meetings between the participant and fellow teachers. These observations were audio recorded in order for the researcher to have details, quotes and intonations during analysis. Field-notes served as documentation and provided opportunity to pose follow-up questions or reflective dialogue meant to gain more insight into connections to the initial research questions. Sessions of classroom instruction provided data regarding events such as teacher-student interactions with students, and the teacher's management of behavior. This data provided insight into how the participant acted upon his beliefs about social justice education and the opportunity to compare changes in his practice.

Other artifacts such as lesson plans, photos, and memos were collected and analyzed with the intent of finding out how the actions of the participant aligned with his

beliefs. I also used data and historical records derived from known coursework and experiences of the participant while in college. This information provided a foundation for where, when, and how the participant came to realize and practice his beliefs, philosophies and theories of teaching and learning as a teacher for social justice. It also provided evidence of change or development in regards to the participant's perceptions of being a teacher for social justice. These numerous data sources were valuable during the process of analysis and increased validity of the findings through triangulation.

My role in this qualitative study was that of active participant as described by Adler and Adler (1987). Such participation placed both myself and the participant within the learning process as we dialogued together and as we reflected on actions and decisions made individually. Having the time and access to one classroom allowed me to be deeply engaged in the classroom and teaching duties and outcomes—seeing the many responsibilities and challenges of the new teacher. Participating in critical inquiry and supporting the work of a new teacher also brought about new learning opportunities for me. Such new learning was an important part of the data collection in the form of analytic memos and personal reflection.

### **The Uses of Reflection**

The use of reflective practice is found in several areas of this research. First, I asked the participant to reflect upon his practices each time we met for interviews, post observations, and in e-mail responses to questions. Second, as researcher, I was constantly reflecting upon my own techniques, my own understandings, and my own bias' toward situations that appeared in the process. Third, because of the reflective process' significance to professional growth and continuous learning in teachers, one of

my research questions asked how this teacher's reflective practices affected his ability to teach for social justice. Research participants regularly practice reflection simply by being knowing participants (Cole & Knowles, 2000). They prepare for observations by reflecting on past experiences and determine what might be the best situation (i.e. lesson, experience) for the purpose of the observation. Following the interactions both parties then reflect on the outcomes, and move on to predict and plan what might happen in the future.

The significance of reflection in this research makes it necessary to point out the effect that reflection for the researcher and with the researcher may have had on this teacher/participant's reflective practice. In other words, it must be clear that this researcher understands that not only did her presence affect the environment being researched, but her presence also affected his reflective practice. For this case study research to separate the act of reflecting from the research was considered detrimental to truly understanding the phenomena at hand. In the end, such a metacognitive act, thinking about our thinking, was a valid and vital part of this research.

### **Participant Selection**

The participant for this study was selected based on several criteria, the most important being his commitment to becoming a teacher for social justice (see Appendices C and D for consent forms and IRB approvals). During his pre-service training the participant took part in numerous course activities, dialogues, and consistently reflected on his understandings of issues of power, equity, and bias within the classroom, school, and the world. Critical pedagogical practice within his coursework, as adopted by the Education Department of this Central Texas University, supported his development of a

strong belief in the need to consistently question the placement of power and domination within his new profession. The participant stood out to this author and other department professors during coursework and field placements as one who consistently questioned and reflected upon his learning experience and the practices he observed in classrooms and schools. Artifacts from this period have been used to provide a foundation for his development toward becoming a teacher and coming to the decision to become a teacher for social justice.

### **Context of the School**

Another criteria for this participant's selection included the place and population of the school. Much has been learned from research on teachers within urban schools where the teacher, while believing in the importance of social justice education, does not match the ethnicity, economic class or other cultural factors found within the school. Fortunately for me and my research this white, middle-class male chose to work in a rural farmland city of South Texas where over ninety percent of the students in this school and in his classroom are of Hispanic ethnicity and over seventy-five percent of the students from a low income family according to school data reports. While the students are all United States citizens, many are first generation citizens having been born in the United States to immigrant parents. Many of these parents work in local fruit producing farms and many parents migrate around the southern states to harvest fruit for farmers for several months of the year. The participant reported having actively sought this population in seeking the position.

Within the kindergarten through twelfth grade charter school where the participant accepted a fourth grade position, the participant was one of three new teachers

and the third male teacher to be hired for the grade level. The male to female teacher ratio was not typical for an elementary campus in the state of Texas. But for this new teacher the male/female ratio was one of the enticing factors for accepting the position. His move to the area, however, was precipitated by his future wife's acceptance into a graduate program in the area.

In choosing a graduate from this small university as the participant, I understood that the coursework and experiences of the participant are not typical of every new teacher in the state of Texas or in the nation in that it is a small private liberal arts college. However, the participant represented the product of many universities and colleges of education who are utilizing critical pedagogy and social justice education within their coursework. Furthermore, in choosing a graduate from the same university where I taught allowed a common understanding between the participant and me as to his preparation for teaching. Such a common understanding allowed me to identify to some extent how actions and beliefs of the new teacher were formed and also provided an opportunity for me to reflect and improve upon my role as professor and scholar. Finally, having developed a relationship and mutual respect with the participant during college coursework, I was able to place myself as mentor, colleague, and co-participant in the research. Maintaining a dialogue regarding the changed roles from student and professor to researcher and teacher was necessary to remove issues of power and barriers to collegial dialogue.

### **Context of the University**

Striving to maintain anonymity of the participant's university, the university is described as a small university in Central Texas. With only thirteen hundred students on

campus class numbers are low and faculty-student interactions are high. This particular university centers its institutional philosophy around a set of core values which include:

1. Cultivating academic excellence.
2. Promoting lifelong learning and a passion for intellectual and personal growth.
3. Fostering diverse perspectives.
4. Being true to oneself and others.
5. Respecting the worth and dignity of persons.
6. Encouraging activism in the pursuit of justice and the common good.

Each college, department, and group within the institution is held responsible for creating learning experiences which reflect these core values.

The Education Department at the university considers each of these core values to be especially important for the students who are seeking teacher certification and have adopted a program which addresses each of these core values. Each year a small number of students (typically 10 to 20) graduate from the university with either elementary or secondary education certifications in hand. Dependent upon their certification or major many of these students will have spent over three hundred hours in schools and in classrooms. According to the guidelines of Texas' Teacher Education Standards and as an accredited teacher education program, future teachers who graduate from this university have participated in extensive field placements. During these placements students are expected to demonstrate understanding of differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students; develop and teach constructivist lessons in which student understanding of concept is assessed before and after lessons; utilize Texas Essential

Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in their lesson planning and assessments; and have successful completion a minimum of twelve weeks of student teaching under the supervision of university professors and certified cooperating teachers.

Beyond state mandates and standards, understanding issues of diversity, social justice, and equity is a well-established expectation for the university as a whole, and is well engrained in the philosophy of the Education Department. Graduates of this program have participated in numerous courses which have incorporated elements of addressing social justice issues in schools, communities, and the world. Such experiences begin with the first Foundations of Education course and are purposely placed in each semester after students declare an interest in becoming teachers.

Utilizing the theories of critical pedagogy throughout all coursework, the Department of Education of this university has established a mission to make all students aware of social, political, and educational injustices. Through such awareness, hopefully students will become activists seeking to identify and remedy unjust issues in the schools, communities, and in society as a whole. Beginning their sophomore year students wishing to become teachers are required to participate in self-reflection, research and participation in awareness activities which bring to light issues of social justice. These types of expectations are in place in every course pre-service teachers take up through their last semester as student teachers. In their senior year students are required to attend a seminar entitled Teaching for Social Justice in conjunction with field-based experiences in classrooms. As seniors having had numerous opportunities to raise awareness about inequities, oppression, environmental biases, and prejudices in the school environment,

the students are asked to develop their own plan and personal commitment toward becoming teachers for social justice.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis of the data collected for this case study is considered as narrative analysis in the sense that I seek to help the readers understand my research through narratives. These narratives were prepared chronologically throughout my study, providing richly descriptive events, revelations, and changes that took place both within and around my participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Jacobs, 2008). Such a presentation of my findings is desirable and most fitting to this research for two reasons. First, narrative writing is how I, the researcher, enjoy learning about the world around me. Stories and reflective pieces about how we as humans learn and grow are key ways I have experienced literature. I prefer to be placed within the life and tales of others as opposed to being held at a distance as many scientific and research writings are presented. Therefore, a personal preference for sharing my own research is in authentic stories built from my data. Second, within the fields of teaching and social justice education learning and sharing learning is typically formatted within story. This single participant case study presented itself as an opportunity to present the knowledge learned as it was “constructed in the ordinary world through an ordinary communicative act—storytelling” (Riessman, 2008, p.14).

Following along the lines of most qualitative research, analysis of the data for this research followed an inductive design as described by Patton (2002) with a focus on finding elements of narrative presentation as described by Clandinin & Connelly (2000) and Jacobs (2008). Each research question provided a guide for analysis of data



collected. For example, when considering how the participant's perceptions of teaching for social justice changed over the course of the research data gathered during interviews and observations during the first year of teaching were compared to that gathered during the second year of teaching. More specifically, comparisons were made in how the participant prepared for the start of the first year in regards to creating a classroom community with his preparation for the second year. Also, the participant's philosophy of teaching written his senior year of college was compared to how he responded to interview questions regarding this philosophy at various times. Narrative elements such as problem situations and their solutions or resolutions were constructed from such information and then woven into stories which help the reader understand the situations at hand.

While the initial research questions served as guides for the research, findings throughout the data collection and analysis process determined new paths of inquiry or points for emphasis. For example, only one research question clearly identifies culture as a possible factor in new teachers being able to act on their beliefs about teaching for social justice. This resulted in the need to adapt my approach to future data collection processes, questions. These cyclical exercises of revisiting and building narratives were common place throughout the processes of collecting and analyzing data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008).

Reflective processes were key to the analysis of the data. Recording a holistic view of interviews, conversations, and observations, for example, provided important factors such as setting, emotional state, or outside elements. Non-verbal cues were recorded in writing and added to analytic memos of transcripts in order to ensure

consideration in analysis. Also, important within this reflective process was the researcher's placement of herself within the situations and the data collection. Reflecting consistently on how my presence and actions affected the participant and the setting were all important elements of this research, its significance, and its trustworthiness.

Interviews and observations have been transcribed and attached to reflections, analytic memos, and a holistic summary of each episode. Transcriptions were read and reread in order to gain clarity and allow themes to be identified and connected to research questions. Elements of story were considered as themes arose so that the reader gains a sense of how data is connected to the original research questions (Riessman, 2008).

It has been the intent of this researcher to present her findings in a narrative format which allows the reader to be placed within the story line. While the tone of the narratives were those of reflections and conversations of the participant, the reader should realize that the stories themselves were made up of data collected through interviews, artifacts, and direct observations of the participant at work. The use of narrative analysis, looking within the stories told by my participant in search of stories that teach us new information, is described by Goodall (2008) as creative narrative and similarly by Gutkind (1997). This method of writing research provides an opportunity for the audience to be presented the data collected through creative narrative (Goodall, 2008; Riessman, 2008).

### **Trustworthiness**

The purpose of this study was not to provide a generalized means of helping new teachers be successful as teachers for social justice. It did, however, provide an opportunity to examine the phenomena at hand as I saw and interpreted them. By

providing sufficient details and verified analysis of data collected I believe the reader with similar interests and/or experiences will be able to place himself or herself within the narrative and gain an understanding of the participant's perception in the moment. Such transferability was attended to and checked through participant and non-participant reviews of the narrative as it was developed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

The researcher's knowledge of teaching as a profession provided an opportunity to understand layers of actions taking place that the non-teacher, or inexperienced teacher may not perceive. For example, when the participant shared his desire to spend less time grading papers and more time creating valuable social justice lesson plans I was able to imagine the details that the non-teacher may miss. Such layers of actions necessary to grade one set of papers may include finding the appropriate answer key or rubric to use in grading paper, looking at and making notes on each student's paper individually to determine new growth or new misunderstandings, recording the grades in a gradebook, and possibly making subsets of papers to use in re-teaching. Having this knowledge allowed me to recognize the importance the participant placed on time and different tasks. However, my own experiences as teacher also gave reason to check for bias. In this regard, I verified my perceptions of the participant's responses with reflective checks. For example, when the participant seemed to lose patience with one student during an observation of a lesson I made the field note of "tired of interruptions". However, when reviewing the observation I asked the participant about his frustrations toward the student. He responded with his disappointment that he had forgotten to give the student his behavior chart before the lesson. The chart was created to help the teacher and the student keep record of his disruptions to the class' learning. The teacher's loss of

patience, as I had seen it, was actually frustration with himself. The recursive checks were important parts of the analysis of the data and also opportunities to improve the credibility of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Merriam, 2009).

As described by Merriam (2009) case study research provides an in-depth look at one situation at one given time and place. The use of one participant in this case (N=1) is not considered a weakness of the study but a reason for validation of the trustworthiness of the study. By using one participant I was able to follow my participant closely for a longer period of time. Having developed a respectful and professional relationship with this one participant, I was able to gain a vast amount of data over the two years of my research. This rich and descriptive data lead the way to a valuable understanding of the participant's reality.

Understanding that I may not have had the same perceptions, beliefs, and intentions as the participant, my analysis of data was shared with the participant to ensure outcomes, themes, and concepts were credible and to serve as a check for possible bias or lack of clarity. Keeping in mind that this dissertation process has been embedded within my own learning process, I asked other scholars and researchers to review the writing, sources of data, and process of research to further check for importance, task orientation, and possible misconceptions. These triangulations supported my argument of having developed a narrative analysis that is both credible and transferable.

Finally, but most importantly, I understand that my placement in a position of privilege and dominance at times kept me from seeing important points and experiences that took place in the research process. With this in mind, I sought consultation and reflective opportunities from much respected friends and colleagues who have and have

not been situated in such positions. Critical evaluations were constantly sought and reflected upon throughout the entire research process.

## **CHAPTER 4- BEN'S STORY**

### **Introduction to the Narrative Format**

This creative narrative is told through the lens of the participant's revelations and reflections in his first two years of teaching in chronological layers. Each layer will share data through a third person narrative, and will portray the researcher as the participant's professor from the university from which he graduated. The researcher was indeed the participant's professor. Such a connection provides readers an opportunity to be drawn within the story, and builds interest in the outcomes and analysis (Goodall, 2008). Within each narrative section—information, connotations, and nuances are held true, guided by actual data collected as perceived by me, the researcher. However, the creative narratives may not follow actual non-crucial facts, such as setting of conversations, or direct quotes in order to support the flow of the story being shared.

### **The Prequel to Ben's Professional Life**

Exhausted yet invigorated, Ben walked out of the elementary school pondering the wonderful experiences he had as a student teacher here. He laughed aloud at some of the goodbyes he had just received from his, correction, his cooperating teacher's students. It had been difficult to reconcile that he may never see these children again. Unlocking his car and slipping into the seat, Ben began to think of all the things he needed to complete before graduation in just a few days.

Ben pulled into his parking spot at the campus resident hall and unloaded his teaching bag and tons of homemade "Good Luck" cards. He recalled the interview he had recently undergone with one of his professors. The interview had been on his mind for a

few days and now that his semester of student teaching was done, he decided to do what his mind had come accustomed to—reflect.

Sitting on his balcony and sipping a glass of water, Ben took out his journal and began looking back at entries from the beginning of this final semester of his undergraduate life. The entry that quickly caught his attention was titled “What is Social Justice?”

He began to read, “Today I was asked some really tough questions about social justice. We are beginning student teaching and I have been hearing this term since my freshman year, however, I still don’t feel like I have a grasp of what social justice really is. Or more specifically what it looks like in a classroom....”

Ben’s mind wandered as he recalled his last few months as a student teacher. Had he learned anything about what social justice looks like in a classroom? When the semester began, he had determined that he would bring social justice into the classroom by showing children how to question inequity in their lives and their schools. Ben believed that by exposing children to issues, he might inspire them to think about what they knew, or believed, and whether or not their current beliefs were in need of change.

Quickly, Ben had learned that getting to kids to question what they knew or what they believed was not an easy task. There were challenges to telling children, “What you learned from your parents is not always the correct way to think or act.” No, Ben had to greatly modify those thoughts. What he was able to do, however, was to provide critical thinking experiences that allowed the students to come to their own decision about what they felt to be “just” and “fair”. One such opportunity came through exploring stories in which the main characters were challenged to make good decisions. Students were asked

to determine what decision should be made and why. By having to critically consider what would benefit one person versus many, Ben's students learned about the consequences of poor choices.

By the end of his student teaching, Ben had learned that there are many facets to becoming a teacher for social justice. He had learned that even though he believed strongly that every child should experience a school career in which equity and fairness are priority, this is not always an easy task. He also learned that to act on injustices in schools is a very difficult task if the teacher or administrators are not supportive of the ideas. Ben cringed as he remembered his teacher's reaction to him wanting to talk about prejudice in an upcoming social studies unit. "Oh we don't want to bring that up. It has the potential of creating a big mess with parents." She had suggested, instead, a less volatile unit on being kind to the earth. Realizing he was a guest in this teacher's classroom, Ben followed her suggestion all the while wondering what experiences had led to his cooperating teacher's fear of critical dialogue. Smiling, he remembered that by the end of his "Be Kind to The Earth" unit, there had been some critical dialogue about how some people polluted in parks and on roads because they did not think it hurt anyone. Ben made a mental note to not let fear of controversy rule his decision-making within his own classroom.

Hearing noise within his apartment, Ben turned to see his fiancé walking in. He closed his journal and joined her. She also was graduating and had been accepted to a program in South Texas to become a Physician's Assistant. They spent the rest of the evening looking online for apartments near her campus and researching schools where Ben could apply to teach.



## **Year One, First Semester**

### **The Cultures That Create the Setting**

Ben sat back in his teacher's chair and took a deep breath. He had five minutes left of his lunch and so much more to do before his fourth grade students returned to his classroom door. Packing his banana peel and sandwich bag into his lunch bag, Ben looked around the room. He noticed the empty spaces on the wall that he yearned to fill with posters but his new teacher salary had yet to begin so funds were low. The posters he had picked out were multicultural, showing students of many colors and places other than White America. He was eager to show the kids that he considered their Hispanic culture, and all other cultures, to be important and relevant to their learning. Since ninety-nine percent of the school's students and families were Hispanic and most of the teachers in his school were not, Ben always felt an urgency to show his appreciation for different cultures. It struck him that the students may not even consider the differences between themselves and their teachers. Perhaps they thought white people taught what we have to learn. That was one thing he needed to remember about his students and their families, something he needed to let them know—you can do anything I can do. No, he corrected himself. They can do anything they want to do. Ben shook his head. Do I impose my whiteness on them? How do I change that?

His desk, Ben determined, was a total wreck. He recalled seeing such stacks and disarray on teachers' desks during his college observations and wondering how they could live with such disorganization. Standing up and thinking he had just a few minutes to straighten the mess, Ben began to rustle through the stacks. He was certain that once his students returned all of the back-to-school paperwork he had been asking and asking

for, the order would be restored. It had been two weeks since school began, surely those parents would get those papers all filled in soon. He hated to have to call them to remind them to do their “duty” as the administration had described the paperwork. So many of his students’ parents, or guardians, worked two jobs. Who has time to complete such unimportant paperwork?

Ben took a quick glance at his lesson plans and noticed that the next day he would be teaching a lesson on systems that he had talked his other grade level teachers into also teaching. He had been trying to get some social justice type lessons into their inquiry period and this was the closest he had been able to fit in thus far. He was happy his school was participating in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program this year. The inquiry aspect of the program seemed to be one of the few places in the school’s curriculum that students could somewhat determine, what they would be learning. He believed it would be the perfect place to get the students thinking about diversity and inequities. While the focus for this nine weeks was systems, Ben had decided to show students how different disabilities interfered with the way we abled bodied persons took for granted. This would be a good lesson. Thankfully, Ben’s professor from his university was coming to observe, and hopefully, help out.

The hallway began to come alive and Ben took a deep breath before letting the students enter the classroom. This was a different class than his morning group and these students seemed much needier. Perhaps it was his imagination but they always seemed to seek attention, often in the wrong way. Ben was finding it difficult to build relationships with all the students in this group because of the few who took so much of his time and

energy. He would have to ask his professor for ideas. But for now the afternoon must continue.

Ben opened the door and welcomed each student with a hello and a handshake. He was proud of this ritual he had established with the children—every day is a new day, a new and positive day. Each child looked him in the eye and said good afternoon. They looked quite official in their school mandated uniforms of white or blue polo shirts and khaki pants. Almost too “uniform” for Ben’s liking. But then he noticed one, no, two students with their shirts turned inside out. Ben shook their hands but only motioned for them to enter the room. It broke his heart to not welcome these boys as he did the others, but, he was standing in the hallway, along with other teachers, so Ben knew he had to follow the school’s discipline management protocol, called Porching. As the last student entered the room, Ben closed his door and began to give instructions to those who seemed to have forgotten that they were supposed to go straight to work on the warm-up problems on the board. He then walked by the two boys with inside out shirts, patted them on the shoulder and wished them a good afternoon with a smile. Each boy smiled back and one offered to shake his hand.

Porching was a part of his new school’s culture that Ben did not agree with. In fact, he adamantly opposed the premises of this practice. Porching not only punishes a child, but the school community participates in the consequences of their bad choices as well. A student who is porched is sent to the restroom with another student to turn their shirt inside out. From that time until the end of the school day (which ends with detention and a parent phone call), anyone who comes near that student is supposed to ignore him/her. No one can talk to or even acknowledge the child except the adults. The child is

also banished from talking to anyone except, when granted permission, the adults. The belief is that the misbehaving child will learn that society does not accept bad choices and that they will not be accepted as an equal member of the community because of the choices they have made. The community, which ignores the student, is responsible for making the porched student understand that they have made poor choices that resulted in isolation. Therefore, they are not a member of the community. Students could be porched if they were disrespectful to teachers, did not follow school rules, or failed to do their homework.

From what he had learned, the practice of Porching was introduced to the school a few years back; unfortunately, the woman that brought the program into the school was the team leader of his grade level. She was also his mentor. When Ben had questioned the purpose and philosophy of the practice, she was the one to respond. He immediately became aware of his colleague and leader's passion for this practice as he watched her demeanor become defensive and she explained the philosophy. Ben's description of the situation to his fiancé later that evening left her enraged and befuddled how teachers could adopt such a practice.

To Ben, this practice was incredibly unjust. He cringed every time he saw a student being placed in such a lonely, and degrading position. From his perspective, there was no positive outcome to the practice. Ben believed the punished students were learning the worst of lessons from the practice. Students were learning that people with power can be destructive to those with less power. They were learning that the school society, like other societies, does not accept even the smallest of mistakes; nor do they accept differences. Ben understood the idea of Porching as a means of setting hard

boundaries in the effort to change behavior. But for his students who were consistently not doing homework or forgetting to raise their hand, the practice was nothing less than demeaning, even demoralizing.

As the students settled into the warm-up math problems he had on the board, Ben picked up the data sheets on the top of one of the stacks on his desk. He looked quickly at the types of problems he needed to reteach during the day's lesson. This group of students performed, for the most part, very poorly on the school's latest interim assessments. Most students missed more than half of the questions, indicating they had not grasped the last six week's math curriculum. Ben had looked at this data many times only to become frustrated and feel as if he had not been doing a good job with his teaching. The night before, he decided that he would spend a little time in each class reteaching the missed problems. He had determined there was no way possible to stop his current curriculum to reteach all the concepts he needed to readdress. However, he felt he could spend a few minutes during each class reviewing. He took a deep breath and moved toward the front of the classroom, determined to put a fresh spin on old problems.

Unfortunately, Ben's plan for review and his lesson for the day left much to be desired. He had a handful of students who seemed to consistently make poor behavior choices—calling out, making fun of others, and basically disrupting the learning of others and his teaching. He had worked hard to maintain his expectations and felt he was constantly reminding students about the class rules. These few students seemed to take a large amount of his attention away from his other students. Ben believed he knew the reasons for these disruptive choices. These were the students who performed very poorly on assessments and who did not seem to have high self-esteem. Whether they were

seeking attention or working to keep others from knowing how very hard the lessons were, these students were a source of great concern for Ben.

Lately, Ben had decided to work on building better relationships with all of his students. He felt he knew these few disruptive students very well but it was bothering him greatly not knowing his other students, the ones who sat quietly and didn't demand so much attention. Many of these students were also struggling with the math curriculum, but they were the types of students who wished to struggle alone and not gain attention. Those were the students Ben needed to know more about, to show them that they were important to him and that they could begin to speak up and ask questions. Ben was greatly bothered by the feeling that he wasn't able to reach every student every day.

These types of issues were something Ben talked frequently about with a few of his colleagues. Two of the teachers on his grade level were also first year teachers and were having the same struggles. Unfortunately, none of these teachers had solutions to their problems. If nothing else, these conversations let Ben know he was not alone in his struggles. Ben had tried to talk his mentor about these issues early in the year but had learned that she felt strongly about the Porching system but he could not bring himself to use these techniques. He wanted the students to learn that their behavior choices affected their learning and the learning of others. He wanted to help them see how being responsible for their actions would help them learn and become good citizens. He wanted, also, for them to enjoy school and to see the value of learning. In this respect, Ben felt as if he was not being successful and he was failing as their teacher. He felt his instruction was not at the level these students needed and wondered if he was competent enough to give the students what they needed.

Ben watched his last student get onto her bus and then turned to return to his classroom. It had been another long day and he had three students waiting outside his classroom for tutoring. He began after-school tutoring the previous week hoping to give some extra help to his students who were failing math. He had sent home letters to many parents offering this extra help for their children but only a few parents responded. This was disappointing to Ben but he knew that transportation was an issue for many of the families. All but three of his students rode the bus home and many of them went home to an empty home. Some students went home to siblings who they had to care for until an adult came home. Ben even knew of a few students who cooked their own dinner and put themselves to bed before their parents came home from work. Ben knew he could never fully understand the lives of these low-income and, mostly, non-English speaking families, but he worked hard to support the families the best he could. During tutoring, Ben was able to review some of the previous school-wide assessments and as well as what they were currently learning. This was a successful learning time and Ben ended the hour celebrating with this handful of students. If only he could make such progress during his lessons in the regular school day.

After making sure the tutoring students were loaded into their cars Ben returned to his classroom to prepare for the next day. He pulled a snack out of his backpack and opened a bottle of water, then sat down at his desk to try to grade papers. Deciding to put those into his backpack so he could grade them at home, Ben looked at his lesson plans for the week and remembered his professor would be visiting for the day. He knew she would appreciate the inquiry lesson he had planned and looked forward to catching up

with her. Taking a deep breath, Ben decided it was time to clean up the room and get ready for the next day's lessons.

The next morning went by quickly and Ben was happy to see his professor walk in just a few minutes before the team meeting he was hosting in his room wrapped up. The school's instructional coach was reminding the team of the need to stay on schedule with their planning in order to allow every team member the time they needed to review and prepare for lessons. She also spoke of a list of things that were due soon, and some that were past due. Items such as data disaggregation of the last benchmark tests and student reading levels were high on Ben's priority list. As the group dispersed, Ben reminded the instructional leader that she was going to train him on the assessment the school used for determining student reading levels. They agreed to meet the next day during planning time. After all the other teachers had left, she told Ben that she hoped the early planning discussion would help him with an issue he had been having. Ben smiled and agreed. He then introduced his professor to the instructional leader as she walked out the door.

With only a few minutes left before his students returned, Ben briefed his professor on the meeting that just ended as he prepared for the next lesson. He explained to her how for the last several weeks, he had been challenged by the lack of time to prepare for his lessons. The grade level practice was for different teachers to prepare plans for each subject and disperse the lessons to the other teachers. Ben was in charge of Language Arts plans and he enjoyed creating those plans. The curriculum was one he was familiar with since his college courses in Language Arts instruction had matched that of his school's curriculum. Using the writing and reading workshop modeled by Lucy



Caulkins fit Ben's philosophy of teaching reading and writing perfectly. Ben's problem was that other teachers were not sharing plans in a timely manner and Ben felt he never really had time to prepare for his other subject lessons. He was feeling ineffective during instruction time because he was unable to prepare and review the lessons.

As a first year teacher, Ben realized he was not as familiar with the curriculum as his fellow team members. He understood that his colleagues did not seem to be as concerned about the timeliness of sharing lesson plans since most of them were experienced teachers who had taught the curriculum before. Recognizing this early on in his meetings, he asked questions frequently. Before long, however, his colleagues seemed to tire of his questions. Even his mentor seemed to not have time to sit with Ben and walk him through curriculum or assessment requirements. Eventually, he went to the instructional coach for help. He made sure to let her know he was not complaining but merely asking for the support he so desperately needed. She had agreed to help him out and after a few weeks of noting that not all of the grade level teachers were turning in lesson plans as expected, she decided to bring it up at this meeting. Ben was glad for the help and hoped it would fix the problems.

### **A First Attempt to Introduce Social Justice Issues through a Lesson**

Ben's lesson was an introduction to a new unit called Systems Around the World, one of the IB units his school had adopted for its Inquiry curriculum. Ben felt this introductory lesson would provide a transition between the last unit titled "All About Me" and this new unit. In the last unit the studies and explorations had focused on how the students' lives, bodies, and environment were affected by changes around them. Ben termed this unit as the "Me, me, me" unit when he described it to his professor. The new

unit's goal was to get the students to explore how changes within systems require adaptations in order to continue. For this specific lesson, Ben wanted the students to experience what happens when the human body experiences changes and adaptations are needed to be successful. Ben explained to his professor that he felt this lesson would give the students more insight into the challenges that many people with disabilities learn to overcome. He hoped they would grasp how abilities they take for granted are not always available to others, however, with learning and adapting the systems actions and tasks can be successful. Ben hoped the students would walk away with an appreciation and better understanding of the challenges people with disabilities might face. He also hoped that with future inquiries, the students might want to learn more about how they can bring about changes in social systems to allow those with disabilities to have all the life opportunities available to the non-disabled. From there Ben hoped to move toward social and economic inequities. That was his desire and he realized the goals were high.

The inquiry lesson was scheduled to take only thirty minutes. However, Ben struggled to hold the attention of his students as they transitioned from the spelling lesson to the inquiry lesson. Quickly he skimmed through the introduction of the unit to get to the lesson. To help students understand the concept of systems, Ben gave them examples from their life. Some examples were: bike chain being loose on their bicycle, a virus that interrupted their normal body functions, and a lost key to a bicycle padlock that recently kept a young man from being able to ride his bike home from school. The students seemed to understand these connections so Ben moved on to the types of systems they would be looking at, such as; the water cycle, animal food webs, the importance of the sun to us on earth, and the systems at work in our bodies.

Fifteen minutes into his lesson, Ben was able to begin giving instructions and arrange groups for the experience he had planned. He walked over to his professor, who was observing, and whispered that this was definitely going to spill over into his math time. They shared a smile and his professor offered to help in any way he needed. He accepted her help and handed her a roll of tape.

Each student was given a role that placed him or her in a position of losing one or more ability types. Some lost the sight with a blindfold; others had to use only one hand; some lost the use of their fingers when taped together; and others lost the ability to speak. Ben then gave them a sheet of paper with various tasks listed. Students laughed and groaned as they tried to accomplish each task. It quickly became apparent to them that some tasks were more difficult than others and each role presented different challenges.

Ben called the activity to a halt and students immediately began to share the challenges both they and their peers experienced. Ben asked them to identify these challenges in a written response. Students began to ask questions about how people with permanent disabilities, such as those they only briefly experienced were able to perform daily tasks. The use of Braille to help those without sight was discussed as was different appendages available to those who had lost a limb. Because of time constraints, Ben had to end his lesson and move on to math. He ended the lesson by recalling that each of the roles they had just experienced could represent a missing or damaged part on one of the many systems found in our bodies.

### **Where Are You Now?**

Ben joined his professor after school at a local restaurant to discuss his year thus far. On his way home Ben reflected on their conversation. It had been nice to be able to

talk about the things that were surprising to him in these first few months of his teaching career. He shared that he felt he should have better relationships with more of his students by this time in the year. Many of his students needed his attention and Ben felt they were being slighted because of the large amount of time he was having to spend with just a few students with behavioral and academic challenges. His professor acknowledged the fact that she had noticed these students and how he had tried to make efforts to connect with them despite the demands of his more needy students. She had congratulated him on recognizing these challenges and continuing to seek ways to reach out to every student.

Watching a family walking down the street beside him, Ben thought about how parental relationships and community relationships were something Ben was still working on. His teaching peers seemed to be satisfied with the idea that few parents seemed involved in their children's activities and few communicated with the teachers. Ben had learned during his college courses that there could be cultural or educational barriers that kept parents away from schools. His only contacts thus far were made with parents regarding missing work or low grades. He made a mental note to find other ways to learn more about his students' families to build better relationships with them.

Thinking about his discussion about the culture of the school, Ben felt there was much he had to learn. While there were some things that Ben did not agree with, such as the school-wide discipline of Porching, he felt a sincere desire to do what was best for all the students throughout the school. His principal seemed to demonstrate this belief in his actions with the students and with the faculty. Ben was unhappy with the strong focus on state mandated testing but he knew that most schools faced the same issue. He hoped to

have more conversations with his principal to get a better understanding on how these tests truly affect the school.

One of Ben's greatest challenges continued to be his mentor/mentee relationship. He felt his first semester could have been more productive if his mentor had more time and a greater desire to help Ben learn the expectations and curriculum of the school. Ben wished he felt comfortable enough with his principal to discuss this disappointment. Fortunately, the school's instructional leader was someone he could go to for help.

Instruction and behavior management were two areas that Ben shared he had been well prepared for. He now understood the importance of planning lessons, asking good questions, and predicting problematic areas of instruction. He also believed that by starting the year setting and teaching classroom expectations, he had avoided many instances of misbehavior. His students understood acceptable and unacceptable choices, and were able to identify classroom procedures that maximized their learning time. Well, most of them did.

As Ben neared his home he recalled the question his professor had asked about social justice within the classroom. He had admitted that the lesson he taught today was the closest he came to talking about differences between people. But he also revealed that he was constantly helping students become better citizens by showing them how they also had different needs and no one should be valued less. As he turned his car off, Ben decided to look for more ways to help the students become more aware of inequities in their world.

## **Wrapping Up the First Semester**

Ben ended the call with his fiancé with a sigh and a smile. He could hear the stress in her voice and was relieved to know their wedding was only three weeks away and then the stress would end. She needed him home in an hour to have a telephone conference with her parents and the florist. Planning a wedding to be held three hundred miles away from where they were currently living was definitely something he would not recommend to friends. But soon, the big day would be here and their lives would go on. The wedding day would be wonderful, however, his future wife seemed to be worried it would fall apart. Ben needed to wrap up things at school and head home.

Looking at his lesson plans for this last week before the holiday break, Ben was excited to see how his newly organized reading groups would allow him to spend time with every student. This was the chance he had hoped for to learn more about every child and become more familiar with their needs. His campus instructional leader had been very helpful in helping Ben look at all the diagnostic assessments he had completed in order to determine his students' reading levels. She had also helped him determine how to fit these groups into his schedule as well as how to organize the tasks his other students would be doing while he was teaching small groups. Tomorrow, he would begin this schedule and introduce the students to his expectations. Ben considered the fact that some of his students would take advantage of what they would see as free time. His plan was to have some type of product they had to finish each day so they would be held accountable for their learning while he was teaching small groups. For now, a reflection on what they had to read in their chapter book would be their independent assignment.

Ben put his lesson plans down and picked up some notes he had taken during a recent professional development. His entire grade level had attended this meeting, which had focused on the fourth grade writing assessment from the state. Ben was frustrated about this meeting and he could see in his notes how he had become quite irritated with the language and instructional strategies the meeting leaders, and some of his colleagues, had used. He had used quotation marks to make unstated stabs at parts of the presentation: “Two weeks before the test give them multiple chances to write to prompts...”; “Repeat test taking strategies often”; “Some other instruction may have to be set aside as the test gets closer”. All of these ideas put a knot in Ben’s stomach. No wonder his students moaned whenever a test was mentioned—any test. This is the atmosphere Ben felt most passionately opposed to and now he, too, was feeling the stress.

A few days after this training, Ben was sharing some of his data with his principal and decided to bring up his concerns about the pressures to perform well on the state-mandated tests. He learned quickly that he and his principal did not see eye to eye on a few things. First, his principal believed that every child in his school needed to be well prepared to enter college upon leaving their school. The principal was adamant that college was the way that the school’s population could “move up” in the world, out of poverty and lower-paying jobs. Ben did not share the same belief. He believed that not all people would be successful in college, and he knew that college was not necessary to be successful in all careers. But Ben also knew that “Every child will be prepared to be successful in college...” was a part of this charter school’s vision. He let that argument lay.

Ben also learned that his principal, and the corporation that the school belonged to, depended on high ratings from these tests to draw both community support as well as increased numbers of students wanting to enroll. He reminded Ben that while the school was rated as Recognized the previous year, this was not the highest rating. He also pointed out that it was Ben's grade level's scores on one test that kept the campus from being rated as Exemplary. Ben immediately felt more pressure as he walked out of the principal's office and felt as if he had just lost a major battle. But then again, he was determined to prepare the students for the test without the learning becoming all about the test.

After putting his notes away, Ben looked at his calendar and counted the number of weeks he had left before the writing test. He had eight weeks left after returning from the winter break to help his students become as comfortable as possible with writing. Some of his students loved to write and could organize and edit anything put in front of them. However, more than half of his twenty-four students, according to the examples he had seen at his writing training, were not writing at the level required to pass this test. He smiled as he recalled one boy who, when he began fourth grade, refused to write. Now the same student recently wrote a six-page story. He brought it to Ben with a huge grin on his face and declared he had never written so much in his life. This was one of the students Ben was constantly redirecting to stay on task and had to reteach skills the student forgot overnight. With time, Ben thought, this was the beginning of a turnaround for this one student. Hopefully, this young man would begin to see the value of learning and participating in class lessons with more purpose.



One of those eight weeks, Ben remembered, was going to be filled with an intense writing unit. This was a practice his grade level leader thought to be extremely important. Evidently, the other subjects would be set aside for numerous writing skill lessons and drills on how to address different prompts. Ben could only imagine how the students would perceive this week as test preparation and added pressure to do a stellar job so they could go to college. Feeling his head begin to throb with this anxiety, Ben set those thoughts aside.

While organizing the stacks on his desk so the handouts for the next week were in order, Ben came across the shared reading he had used for last weeks' inquiry lesson. He was quite happy his teaching peers had agreed with him about presenting global warming through this shared reading. They were wrapping up their unit on systems by looking at the sun's effect on earth. Ben thought this would be a perfect way to bring up social justice in a roundabout way. The article discussed how this change in the system was affecting animals and their climate. He was able to encourage his students to consider how it might also affect humans. They talked about several environmental issues but didn't quite make it to the point of how these issues affect some people in different ways due to poverty or culture. Ben was pleased to see the children's desire to create posters and give speeches to build awareness of the effects of global warming. He was tickled when one student declared that everyone should have to read this same article.

Social justice, Ben had decided lately, was difficult to bring into the curriculum. First, his team of teachers needed to agree with his ideas. This part was difficult for Ben because whenever he brought up the topic, others declined to follow his ideas. He felt he had really been pushing the envelope and needed to hold back on bringing these ideas to

the group. Perhaps it was the way he approached the group. He observed his grade level leader/mentor shift in her seat the last time he used the words “social justice”. Ben felt nervous about bringing the global warming article to the group, but he didn’t present it as a possible social justice issue. That, Ben felt, was the difference. What a sad situation, he thought, when I have to disguise my passion to gain others’ interest.

It was now five months into his first year of teaching and Ben was beginning to recognize several injustices he was faced with every day. The school-wide practice of Porching students as a form of punishment was one that Ben struggled with daily. He had determined that this was not going to be a consequence he would use in his classroom. Students who did not bring their homework did not have to turn their shirts inside out and be ignored by peers and teachers. Ben did not assign after-school detention as part of his consequences either. He had, instead, implemented after-school tutoring to help students who were struggling with their work. This seemed to be helpful but many students did not have the luxury of being able to stay after school. Many students had to get home to take care of younger siblings until their parents came home from work. Other parents did not have the transportation needed to pick their child up from tutoring.

Ben also chose not to use another school-wide consequence that was being used more and more often. Students were being assigned sentences to write as a consequence for bad choices. Sentences, such as, “I will respect my teacher and my peers” and “I will make responsible choices in my school” or “I am a responsible student and will complete my homework everyday” were assigned frequently by other teachers. Ben found these assignments to be anything but helpful since some students spent their entire evening writing pages of sentences and never had the time to complete their homework. Or, more

importantly, have time to play with their friends. Ben also knew that, for some of these students, this writing for punishment would destroy their chances of ever seeing writing as enjoyable.

Packing his bag with papers to grade, Ben looked around the room to make sure it was ready for the new week. He walked into the dark hallway, knowing no one other than the custodial staff was around this late he locked his door. Making his way out of the school, Ben thought about how this system was broken for so many students. He believed that school should be a place children were eager to attend, it should be a positive social environment where students learned to get along with others and understand the different needs and desires of others. This was not what Ben had seen happening in his work place. He remembered one of his professors tell a group of future teachers that they needed to be able to remove themselves from the ‘noise’ that is present in our schools today. That is what Ben needed to remember on days like this. The ‘noise’ of punishment, isolation, and undue testing pressures needed to be replaced by the things Ben believed in—every child deserves to learn in a safe, enjoyable, and memorable place. Ben resolved to keep this at the front of all the ‘noise’ and focus on his passions.

### **Year One, Second Semester**

Hitting the Enter key on his keyboard, Ben sent his email reflection to his professor. He felt guilty about the negativity within his reflection. However, he knew she would understand where this was coming from. They had last talked before the winter holiday, before his wedding and she had asked him to share how he was feeling about starting this second semester of his first year. It had taken him a few weeks to sit down to write the reflection and he knew it was because of the way he was feeling about himself

as a teacher and as a person, who began his career believing he would always do what is best for his students.

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test was the crux of Ben's frustration. With the beginning of the new semester came an onslaught of expectations from the school's administration and his grade level leader, including: teacher training on how to administer the tests, what strategies every student should use to answer questions and write their essays, and an additional after-school tutoring session for students who were at risk of failing the test. Ben felt overwhelmed, frustrated, and afraid.

It was easy to attribute the feeling of being overwhelmed to his being a first year teacher. It was already extremely difficult for Ben to find the time to accomplish the everyday tasks of teaching such as: planning, grading, preparing small group lessons, and analyzing data. Now he felt like he had no control of his time in class or after school. He was constantly being handed new testing strategies to teach the children, his assessments were no longer performance-based according to student needs, and his planning consisted of which practice worksheets to tell the children to complete.

In his reflection, Ben shared his realization that he had lost his attitude that all children could succeed. He was no longer focused on student growth but on how he could get the test scores his administration expected him to get. Ben had become frustrated with students who simply did not demonstrate an understanding of what he taught and re-taught them. He asked himself why these students did not retain what he was teaching them, why were they not making the correct changes in their writing, why were they not trying? He was frustrated because no matter what he did, the students did not meet his

expectations. But then he realized that what he believed to be frustration could also be a sense of fear.

Underneath these thoughts of the students' failure to achieve at the level he needed, was Ben's fear that he would not be seen as a valuable teacher if his students did not perform well on this test. He realized that others would look at his students' success on these tests as a measure of his own abilities as a teacher. More importantly, Ben realized that he had begun to measure his success in the same way. Passing the test had, over just a few weeks, become Ben's obsession. This realization left Ben in a state of disillusionment with himself, with his profession, and with the educational system.

It seemed that as Ben wrote his reflection and put all his concerns and realizations into the email, he began to find clarity. He needed to do a better job at putting his students' needs ahead of the 'noise' of state-mandated testing. He had to look at his own instruction for answers to why his lowest students were not being successful and stop laying the blame on the students' effort. Ben knew the next few months would test his patience with himself as well as the school system he worked in, but he knew he must focus on making the students comfortable and not pushing his own fears and frustration upon them.

### **The Testing Months of Year One**

Ben dropped the huge piles of tests on his desk in disbelief. Here it was May, all the state-mandated tests were over, and now his school's benchmark tests were supposed to be given. He could not believe that his students were going to lose three more days of instruction to take more tests. Moreover, these were tests that determined what students learned during the last nine weeks. Ben knew the last six weeks, no twelve weeks, had

been filled with instruction on how to be successful on the TAKS test, leaving little time to fit in the school's pre-determined curriculum.

He sat down and looked at these new tests. After a brief look at the tests, Ben determined that these tests were not going to reveal anything he didn't already know. The questions were difficult. The concepts had been taught but the way that many of the math problems were written, Ben knew many of his students would struggle with the wording and miss what the questions were really asking them to do. This had been an issue all year. The language of these school tests, just like the language of the state-mandated tests often proved to be confusing for Ben's bi-lingual students. And that included all but three of his twenty-four students.

Since Ben could already hear the complaints and resistance coming from his students when asked to write responses to questions or complete short essays, he could predict how they would respond to this prompt in the writing test. He smiled as he tried to mimic one of his boys, "Awwwee, really, Mister?" The reading passages were some the students had seen before during all their practice to prepare for the TAKS tests. Ben decided not to mention this to his teaching peers and would wait and see if the students' responses improved.

Ben thought about what could be the purpose of this last round of testing. It occurred to him that the only scores anyone would be concerned about next year would be those of the TAKS test. Then he recalled how his team had gone over these benchmark test scores at the beginning of the year to determine their new students' needs. He remembered being a brand new teacher and looking at the low scores of the students he would have for nine months. His first bout of anxiety surfaced that day. Today,

though, Ben thought perhaps at the end of their third grade year they were just as tired of testing as they are now; perhaps their scores reflected their exhaustion. He would need to remember that possibility at the beginning of next year.

Ben decided to straighten his desk. Again, there were piles of papers, lesson plans, copies, and parent notes covering the desk. His exhaustion was showing, but at least he had met all the pending deadlines. No one else needed anything from him but, he needed to catch up on his own paperwork and organization. This had been the way his year had gone—meeting deadlines one at a time. Ben’s personality wouldn’t let those type of things build up. He would put other things, like lesson planning and learning about what he was about to teach, aside until he completed the things that others needed. This was something Ben had realized early in the year that he needed to work on. Often, he felt as though his instruction was not at his best because he did no more planning other than looking at the page numbers and types of concepts he would be teaching in math. He did not look at previous knowledge the students needed to have in place. He didn’t come up with a good introduction to a lesson on editing nor did he plan for materials he would need to complete a task. Those lessons were often lacking in depth; good thought provoking questions were not asked and the students suffered the consequences. Ben had developed a plan of action in the middle of the year, but it had faded when the pressures of testing came around. His plan had been to dedicate one hour each weekend to looking only at his next week’s lesson plans. This was to take place before he worked on data analysis, replying to emails, or writing the required reflection on areas of need for each student after the data on school benchmarks.

There were other things that also were put to the wayside. The summer before Ben had begun a weekly blog about his move to South Texas, his new career, and his new wife. But he decided that his blog was something that was going to have to be put on hold when the stress of work began to take a toll on his physical and mental health (or sanity). He also gave up some of his pleasure time and favorite activities to stay on top of his work. But now, as Ben looked back at the last three or four months, he admitted that he didn't think his continuing to blog would be anything but rants about testing and the pressure it placed on teachers and students. Rants about how many instructional hours are lost due to testing and preparation for testing. Then more rants about how the people who have to give the tests to have completely different ideas than those who demanded the test about what children need.

One of the effects of all the preparation for the state-mandated testing was the loss of time for untested subjects. For Ben's grade level, that meant science and social studies, which for his school were called inquiry. The inquiry unit which was slighted in time and planning was titled "Conflict Leads to Injustice" and was focused on the Texas Revolution as well as and other conflicts in Texas' history. Ben knew this would be a wonderful opportunity to bring social justice issues into his classroom. He had ideas on how to discuss oppression and class segregation as well as ethnicity conflicts. When Ben had learned what this unit entailed earlier in the year he was excited to see the opportunities arise for his students to explore social justice, however, he didn't realize that it would be replaced and overshadowed by TAKS preparation and testing. In the end, Ben was only able to skim the topics, leaving little time for thought provoking questions and probes. Feeling as if he needed to escape, Ben decided to go home and relax. He



grabbed his computer and lunch sack and headed for the door. Then he stopped, let out a big sigh, and turned around to grab one of the stacks of papers he really needed to grade that night before finally heading home.

### **Reflections on the First Year**

Ben met his professor for dinner to celebrate the completion of his first year of teaching and to discuss how he felt about this first year. He was happy to hear several positive things she had observed him doing in his classroom. Her compliments about how he applied strategies such as wait time and positive reinforcement for good behavior, made him feel upbeat after a long day. They also discussed his students and their achievements over the year. He was elated to hear that she could see changes in the students since her first visit at the beginning of the year. She pointed out that he seemed to have developed good relationships with each student and, even though some still had behavior issues, they knew what he expected and could make the changes needed to bring order back to the class. When dinner drew to an end and they had said their goodbyes, Ben's professor reminded him that he was a great teacher and it showed in his classroom. She told him to enjoy his summer and they made a plan for her visiting again when the next school year began.

As Ben drove home, he reflected on the conversation over dinner. His first thought was that he needed to see if any of his colleagues would be interested in meeting over the summer. He wanted to see if any members of his team shared his belief that they should be incorporating more social justice topics into their curriculum. Ben knew that their inquiry lessons could be adjusted and reorganized to include issues of equity, oppression, and prejudice with just a little effort. But more than effort, Ben would need

his team to be a part of these changes. This last year Ben had felt as though his thoughts or ideas would require too much change and were often not accepted by the group. Ben often felt like he was pushing the envelope of change during the team meetings where lessons were discussed. His grade level leader in particular was someone who lacked interest in Ben's ideas. This was difficult because she was also his mentor. He realized that he could have always taught what he wanted and not followed the grade level's plans however, he just wasn't comfortable enough to make that decision. Ben also didn't want questions raised about his instruction being different from his peers, particularly because he was unsure he would have support from his team or his administration. He was certain that his mentor would be unsupportive. Ben had admitted to his professor that these hesitations could just be him being unwilling or unprepared for controversy as a first year teacher, or he could just be making excuses for not taking the risk.

If Ben could build a stronger relationship with his teaching colleagues, especially those his age, he felt like he would be more comfortable asking the critical questions that he wished he had asked this past year. He also hoped his familiarity with the curriculum and the culture of the school would give him more confidence in himself. Such confidence, a year's experience, and a stronger support system made Ben feel optimistic for the next year.

Ben did plan to enjoy his summer. He needed some down time without deadlines and without expectations that conflicted with his ideas about educating children and helping children see the social issues around them. His professor had reminded him about an interview he had participated in at the end of his college courses. In that interview, Ben had described his plan to use social justice in his classroom. He had described it as

introducing issues and social problems to the students and showing them all sides of conflicts so that they, the students, could become aware and develop their own ideas as to what was unjust or unfair. He wanted to make his students aware and informed so that they could go out into the community and the neighborhoods and notice the issues that should be changed. Thinking about that initial plan and where it fit into this past year, Ben was well aware of the fact that he was not a part of the South Texas, Hispanic culture that most of his students were born into. He did not want to assume that he should lead the changes in a culture so different from his own, but he did want to provide the space and the opportunities for his students to ask questions and propose ideas without fear. Holding to the same ideas he had at the end of his college years, Ben realized that his own fears had kept him from accomplishing his goal completely; however, he felt he had made effort despite many barriers.

There were cultural differences in both the community where Ben and his new wife lived and worked as well as cultural barriers in the school. The communities where Ben grew up and attended college were predominately white middle class with conservative religious and political views. While Ben did not grow up in a privileged household, he now knew that he did have many more privileges than the students and families he now worked with. The economic situations in his community were often poor, with most parents working two jobs or long hours in their one job. This made it difficult for parents to help children with their work or to participate in school events and conferences. Many parents were not educated beyond high school and many did not complete their high school education. Some were not educated in the United States because they were recent immigrants from Mexico. There were also many non-English

and bi-lingual speaking people in the community. One thing Ben had noted often about this Hispanic culture is the fact that every parent he met had a deep respect for the school their child attended and had high expectations for their children. Each parent wanted the best for their child and their children were expected to work hard to get a good education.

Within the school there was an expectation that practices set into place would remain the same. Change was not seen as positive within this culture. Many of the teachers had been at this school for years and those teachers, even more than the administrators seemed to have established the culture currently in place. The punitive nature of the school's discipline was one of those expectations. Ben was adamantly opposed to the negative and demeaning nature of these practices and he felt a dire need to find a way to bring change to that practice. Yet, he had not found the means, or the support, of beginning that change in his first year. This would be something he could work towards in his second year. This was a place where an awareness of oppression and inequities might bring about change.

Changing the state-mandated testing system was something Ben knew would take many people, not just himself. This, along with his school's frequent benchmark testing, had a big effect on Ben's ability to address the curriculum and his ability to embed social justice themes into his instruction. Ben did not find the curriculum to be a barrier that kept him from being a teacher that integrated more social justice lessons and ideas into his lessons. He did find the loss of instructional time due to all the testing and preparation for testing to be a difficult hurdle to overcome. He calculated a loss of over thirty instructional days to testing and that, to him, was an enormous barrier against good instruction time.

Time was a huge obstacle that kept Ben from implementing more social justice lessons and experiences into his instruction. Ben attributed this partly to the loss of instructional time due to the tests and partially because of all the paperwork and non-teaching expectations he was responsible for. These ‘many hats’ that Ben learned teachers wore were exhausting to him and very distracting. He wished he had spent more time learning about the curriculum and planning quality lessons. Time was something Ben had felt slipping through his fingers all year long.

The summer, Ben felt, would give him time to rest and invigorate his body so that his second year would be smoother. He would have fewer surprises, as far as deadlines and school expectations. The summer would also allow him to make plans for integrating more social justice lessons into his teaching. He wanted to read many leveled books in search of books with themes about equity and prejudice. Ben also yearned to look for ways to teach math using social themes, such as salary inequities or household expenses. But currently he wanted to talk to his peers to see if they were interested in getting together over the summer.

Ben was making this mental list in his head as he drove home from dinner. Just as he arrived home his new wife met him at the door and began to share all her ideas about how they could spend their time during the summer. Ben laughed and thought to himself, so much for time to rejuvenate.

### **Summer Reflections**

Over the summer break, Ben continued to reflect upon his first year of teaching and shared his thoughts with his professor. Ben had begun the year believing he was working in a collaborative team. Before long, he realized that while other grade level

groups seemed to work very well together, his team struggled with communication and they had a very outspoken team leader. The team leader, also Ben's mentor, began the year informing everyone that she intended to be assertive in decisions about what they would teach and how they would teach it. During the entire year, Ben seldom felt as if his ideas were seriously considered. This led to Ben seeking help outside his grade level and, often, doing his own thing in his classroom. Ben also noted that lesson planning was a struggle. Different members of the team planned different subjects and often the plans were not shared in a timely manner, leaving Ben, a new teacher, feeling unprepared to teach.

The relationship between the campus administrator and the teachers seemed to be open and positive when the year began. However, as the year progressed, Ben began to see changes in this communication. Surveys sent out by the charter school's corporate offices asked for input regarding facilities and management did seem to get attention and results. But Ben was often disappointed when his administrators asked for input on changes that had already been decided on. Ben was disappointed to receive follow up emails, basically stating this is what we are going to do and this is why. Campus-based decision making seemed non-existent the more Ben learned about the campus.

The campus's focus on high test scores was certainly disappointing to Ben. However, he understood that such a focus was present on most Texas campuses. Ben came to feel as though his role as teacher was to produce successful test takers. He truly resented being forced to teach in this fashion and not be able to teach using the research based, best practices he had learned in his college courses. Ben felt like there might be a few teachers who, like him, believed that there were better ways to teach and that the

students in their school were not being taught in the best manner. He believed there were many important things that children should learn about in school, such as: how to treat others fairly, how to think critically about issues and problems, and how to be good citizens. He knew of one teacher on the campus that he wanted to observe and talk to about how she kept from focusing just on the test.

The school's discipline system was strict and Ben did not agree with the consequences for students who stepped out of bounds. The ostracizing of students was something Ben found to be oppressive and demeaning. He drew the line when it came to using the Porching system in his classroom, as he did other practices as well. Ben realized that his choice to not follow the structure set by the campus was going against the grain but he held strong to his philosophical beliefs on how children should be treated by teachers or anyone else.

When asked if any of his beliefs about education and teaching had changed over his first year, Ben did not have any big philosophical answers. He still believed that every child can be successful in school. He believed that the public school system had the potential to be the place where change takes place and inequality is eliminated. Ben learned that teachers who want to create change are up against huge barriers. He could see how difficult it was to bring new ideas into a place where the demands are overwhelming and time is against you. He also shared the way he had gone from a mindset of working to make a difference to filling out paperwork to make a living. Ben had also learned that even though he did not always feel as if he was successful, he still went to work each day believing that he could make a difference in the lives of his students.

## **Year Two, First Semester**

### **Renewed Intent**

Ben began his second year of teaching with many ideas of how to improve his classroom environment. Since he rearranged his room several times the previous year, he hoped this new arrangement would last a while. His physical space within his classroom was revamped to allow his students to move about the room more easily. His cabinets and classroom library were more organized and student friendly. Ben had learned where he tended to stand during instruction and had created a space that allowed all students to see both him and his whiteboard. His desks were arranged as before in collaborative groups but, to him, it seemed there was more space for these groups because of his new arrangement.

Ben also added new things to his walls. During one of the beginning of year professional developments, all the teachers were given a list of posters they should have on their classroom walls. This included several chants adopted by the charter school that were to be recited regularly. Ben liked the ones that were, to him, motivational and he felt like he could use them to focus his students on their learning. One of the chants, however, did not set well with Ben but he put it on the wall anyway. That did not mean he would use it like the others, and he never did. This chant began with, “You gotta read Baby read”, which Ben found cute. However, as the chant progressed, it moved to phrases such as, “Reading leads to knowledge, which leads to power, and power leads to money.” That was the part of the chant that Ben disagreed with. He did not want his students to think that not having money, as most of them did not, meant they had no power as individuals



in a society. Ben felt that particular chant, was not appropriate for his classroom, or his beliefs.

Understanding the curriculum used by the district along with a knowledge of where his new group of fourth graders should be at the end of the year provided some comfort to Ben as the new year began. He hoped that this meant he could plan lessons with more ease and be more aware of areas of possible need. Last year he was often surprised to learn that his students did not understand third grade concepts and were not, therefore, ready for the fourth grade concepts. Ben had learned the value of finding out where the students were in their learning before introducing new information. Ben hoped he could use less time planning and re-teaching this year since time, or lack of it, had been one of his biggest struggles his first year.

One of the major changes in Ben's second year of teaching was that his grade level was now departmentalized, meaning Ben was only teaching math and science. He and another teacher were switching students so that they each taught two groups of students. This meant less planning for Ben, which he found comforting, however, it also meant more students which meant he had no opportunity to incorporate social justice issues into his reading instruction as he had planned on doing. When Ben met with his professor mid-semester they discussed possibilities for integrating social issues into his math instruction. Bringing in graphs to analyze which reflected economic differences in populations, and salary discrepancies in different jobs, were some of the ideas they created. Ben thought those would be great ways for students to learn about inequities, plus he knew students loved looking at, creating and analyzing graphs of different types.

Science instruction was something Ben intended to make a serious effort to incorporate more social justice lessons and experiences in. He had seen many possibilities in the units they taught the previous year but had not felt comfortable with pushing that agenda upon his other grade level teachers. This year, there were only four teachers teaching science and he felt most of these teachers would be agreeable to his ideas. The administration this year seemed to be less restrictive as to the order and arrangement of the inquiry units. Ben felt positive about this new freedom yet concerned that the importance of this inquiry period was waning. This, to Ben, was the one time during the day when students' ideas could flourish and he could ask them to think critically about events and changes going on in their world. The previous year his school had been trying to gain certification as a K-12 IB Campus. They had achieved that certification because of the inquiry period as well as other stipulations. A few months into his second year, Ben learned that achieving the certification was no longer a priority of his charter school's head of operations, meaning his administration had the option of continuing with the program or not. His administrator had decided to continue for one more year.

Something Ben was quite relieved to learn was the fact that he no longer was required to have a mentor. In fact, because of the new departmental arrangements, Ben had few meetings and fewer dialogues with his previous mentor. He was fine with that. Ben had learned early in his first year that his relationship with his mentor was not going to be strong or productive. His mentor was also mentoring two other new teachers as well as being the grade level team leader. This left little time for her to work with Ben and answer the many questions he had had as a new teacher. Ben found other sources of

information and support and ended up seldom meeting or talking to his mentor as a mentee should. As grade level leader, Ben did join her in many meetings and planning sessions and it was quickly apparent that she had different ideas about teaching and student management than Ben did. These philosophical differences were a point of contention all year and in one beginning of the year professional development meetings, these differences became a topic of discussion. This time Ben was not the new teacher and he shared his feelings with the group.

### **A Second Year Teacher Shares His Beliefs**

From the beginning of his first year of teaching, Ben found his beliefs about behavior management to be at odds with the school-wide discipline practices in place at his school. The practices in place included consequences such as mandatory detention after school, writing sentences repeatedly to correct poor decisions, and the practice called porching. A student is porched by a teacher as a consequence for not completing homework, not showing respect to his or her peers or teachers, or disrupting class. When porched, a student is sent to the restroom and is required to turn his or her uniform shirt inside out. This serves as a signal to other people on the campus that the child is receiving punishment. When other students see a peer with his shirt inside out, they are supposed to ignore them. The porched student is not allowed to speak without permission from an adult and is not allowed to leave the classroom without a peer to monitor his or her behavior. After learning about this practice and seeing the effects it had on students' self-esteem, Ben decided it was a practice he would not participate in. In his classroom, he treated students who were porched by other teachers with the same level of respect he did every other student.

During the past year, Ben's mentor tried to insist he follow the porching expectations and Ben tried to talk to her about his concerns. She, Ben admitted, had a valid point in that his failure to follow the school's porching procedures led to inconsistency and could confuse the students. However, Ben did not think the inconsistency was reason to support the practice. The conversations typically ended with no resolution and, eventually, they stopped talking about the issue. Ben spoke to his principal, who listened intently, but still supported the practice. Despite this conversation Ben continued to use means other than porching to handle the discipline in his classroom.

During a discussion of the school's discipline plan, the same teacher brought up the concern that the plan was not being followed consistently by all teachers. Ben spoke up to share his concerns. His biggest concern was the ostracism of students. He shared his belief that the culture of the school should be all inclusive and the practice not only made punished students lose respect for themselves but it also showed other students how to exclude members of their social system. Ben also pointed out that the same students were porched repeatedly throughout the year, leaving him to believe the practice was, for the most part, ineffective. While several of his colleagues agreed with his concerns, the group decided to continue with the current practices in place. Those who had been in the school the longest, Ben noticed, were most resistant to the changes. He had hopes that the conversation might, eventually, create an awareness of the need for change.

### **Plans for Social Justice in the Classroom**

During the summer Ben reflected on how he could improve the social environment within his classroom. The previous year he had put efforts into building relationships with his students with some struggle. He had several students who

demanding a lot of his attention and Ben often felt like his other students were suffering as a result. He felt as if he barely knew some of his students, what they did in their free time, their family, or even who their friends were. These were the students who worked hard in class and had few behavioral or academic challenges. A few of Ben's colleagues also felt the same. This year he decided to begin the year learning all he could about each student and using that to have conversations with them all on a regular basis.

Ben also wanted to focus his energy on equitable treatment within his classroom. Modeling how to treat people and pointing out positive and negative examples of fair treatment was going to be at the forefront of his mind. He began his year talking about differences and similarities between everyone in the classroom. Wanting his students to know each other and to show respect towards each other, Ben formed plans to have class discussions in which students shared things going on in their lives. When Ben talked to his professor, he told her that this was a social justice lesson he wanted to carry on throughout the year and connect to content lessons when possible. They discussed how this repeated practice in awareness of differences and similarities might help students become critical viewers of things going on in their school and neighborhoods.

### **Managing Time, Deadlines, and Expectations Through the Semester**

Having spent much of his summer reflecting on his first year, Ben felt much more prepared to begin his second year. Since he was only teaching two subjects, he was expecting to spend less time planning. He did, however, make a point to spend time making sure he reviewed the plans each day and was prepared with thought-provoking questions and prepared to address any gaps the students might have in their knowledge. It

did not take long, however, to discover that teaching two groups of children meant more grading and more data analysis of the school's numerous mandated assessments.

When his professor visited him, they discussed how the expectations for these time consuming assessments had been revised. Ben was already discouraged by the amount of instructional time that was being lost due to these tests and the state-mandated TAKS test. This year the district tests were to be treated as a TAKS test, meaning an entire day was dedicated to each subject assessment. Students were expected to take their time on the test and, when they finished, they were allowed to do nothing but read a book. Teachers had to put aside their instruction and monitor students all day long. Ben found this to be an extreme waste of valuable time and he observed many students growing tired of testing even before the push for extra practice for the TAKS test. Ben adopted the practice of informing students that the tests were given to help him see what he needed to focus on and whether or not he needed to go back and re-teach some lessons. Telling students to do their best and show him what they know seemed to help the students worry less about the tests. Ben was determined to relieve his students of testing stress as much as he could. He knew that they had many more tests and practices for tests ahead of them.

The focus on testing outcomes was draining and time consuming, but Ben learned to truly analyze the data he received from each test and use that to drive his instruction. This was something he never quite mastered the year before. He also felt more confident about completing all the paperwork that piled up on his desk.

The two groups of students that Ben taught were very different in regards to behavior and academic need. As the semester moved along, he found himself worrying

about the students' behavior towards one another in one particular group and he seemed to be constantly re-teaching concepts to a large number of students in the other group. Before long, Ben shared with his professor that his group the previous year was wonderful compared to these two groups. They discussed the way that every year is a new group of students and some years were easier than others. The other factor, they discussed, could be the difference in working with twenty-four students all day as opposed to just having each of these groups only a few hours each day. Ben also believed that it was very difficult to build relationships with almost fifty students. He worried that he really didn't know many of his students.

Throughout this semester Ben did not find a place to fit social justice lessons into his math curriculum. However, he was able to bring equity into his science inquiry lessons when discussing systems as he had the year before. Ben reported to his professor that he did believe more social justice lessons would fit into his curriculum if he explored it more. He felt like such lessons wouldn't be frowned upon by his administrator as long as they fit the curriculum. That space, though, was very hard to figure out and he admitted he had not put much thought into it.

### **Year Two, Second Semester**

Ben began this second semester of his second year feeling as if he had some idea of the months ahead of him. He continued to work to build relationships with his students and felt he had a much better handle on his classroom management than he had this time the year before. Knowing the curriculum, and being better able to predict areas within the lessons that the children might struggle, Ben felt he was doing a better job with his instruction than he had done his first year. While he knew he was not meeting the needs

of every child every day, Ben believed he was making an impact. This impact, Ben recalled, was something he did not feel he had accomplished for much of his first year.

Ben met with his professor in April and shared his feelings of accomplishments. Time management was one thing he felt had improved. He was able to keep up with his grading and planning with greater ease. However, time had been taken away during his school day with mandatory tutoring both during his conference period and after school. This meant that Ben was forced to spend his personal time for planning and grading. While he acknowledged these accomplishments, Ben also shared how this year he was becoming more and more aware of his disappointment with the public school system.

In his discussion with his professor, Ben spent much less time talking about how he had grown as a teacher in just one year's time than he did the problems and issues he was seeing day to day. The mandatory tutoring was a pull not only on Ben's time and energy but brought to light a philosophical difference he felt growing between himself and his administrator and the system of public schools. The administration had become a source of much negativity in the last few months as the state mandated tests drew near. Ben shared, his administrator had denied fellow teachers time off to go to the doctor suggesting they take only the time needed for an appointment and not a full day. Ben, himself, had been asked to reschedule an appointment so he would not miss a day prior to an upcoming testing.

Ben felt as if he and his colleagues and the students were being treated as robots while at school. Students were being tested and retested to assure they had mastered each small skill. Teachers were being scrutinized for their teaching if it was not considered testing practice. Ben wanted to find ways to relieve the pressure for his students and to



make his classroom back into a positive environment for learning. But he felt this was a battle he could not win until all the state testing was done. This dehumanization of teachers and students, as Ben called it, was a conversation Ben was hearing throughout his school. Teachers felt as if their professional skills were being minimized when the curriculum was reduced to drills, followed by data analysis that led to more drills. He told his professor that his greatest concern was how he saw his students being drawn into the negativity.

Ben was extremely concerned about a new program was being adopted by Ben's charter school organization. The administration, Ben learned, had adopted this program in order to meet the needs of students who were not meeting the state's standards. Ben explained that not meeting the state's standards meant not passing the state mandated tests. The program took away heterogeneous groups within classrooms and would put students with peers of like abilities. To Ben, this meant segregating students and removing opportunities to learn from others. He was concerned that the plan included students who were labeled as special education students were to be placed in classrooms with students at similar levels. This might mean a fourth grade student whose reading level was at second grade would go a second grade classroom for reading class, or a second grade student with good reading skills might go to a fourth grade class for reading. This practice was very alarming to Ben and he wondered about the social and emotional impact it would have on the children. He also wondered how some of these practices would be legal given the special education laws which required students to be in the classroom with peers of their age for as much time as possible. To Ben this practice, which the administration was calling direct instruction, was another example of how

schools were taking away the ability for children to love learning—it was another system failure.

As their meeting came to an end Ben shared his future plans with his professor. His new wife was completing her studies in her medical school and was to begin her final years at a central Texas college beginning in the fall. Ben was currently looking for a teaching position in the area. His job search, this time, was focusing on private schools but also included public schools in the area. Given his current feelings of being defeated as a professional, Ben shared his excitement for change with his professor. They decided to meet again at the end of the school year to talk about his experiences in his first and second year of teaching. As they parted, his professor pointed out the many ways his teaching had already affected many lives. Despite the negativity he felt surrounded by, he needed to remember the way his students had grown to respect the ideas and lives of others. Ben felt this was something he could reflect on and talk more about at their next meeting.

### **Moving Away—Maintaining Beliefs Despite Seeing Little Change**

The year was coming to an end when Ben and his professor met for a final time over a nice dinner. They talked about his upcoming move and his job search. Teacher positions were hard to find due to decreased funding for Texas schools and Ben had been applying at several districts. His hopes of finding a position at a private school had been replaced by a hope to have any position at the beginning of the school year. Ben's professor assured him that he would be able to find a position and to keep his head up.

Ben's professor shared some questions with Ben prior to their meeting so that he could prepare some responses and reflect on his experiences. Some of the questions were

about Ben's philosophy of teaching for social justice. He was feeling somewhat disappointed at his accomplishments as a teacher who wanted to put social justice issues in the forefront of his class instruction and his classroom environment. Ben admitted that perhaps his inability to integrate social justice lessons into the curriculum was due to lack of initiative on his part. He also had come to realize that curricular demands allowed little time, or space, for deviation from what is set in place. He wished for a place in teacher's schedules where they could share their passions and interests with children. That was the place where he would place lessons and inquiries about inequities in society and experiences to build awareness of biases and exclusion of people who are different. Ben held to the belief that social justice education was very important and should be a part of classroom practice; however, he now believed that being able to practice his beliefs meant he needed to have both administrative and collegial support for his ideas. Even though he had believed differently when he began his first year of teaching, Ben no longer felt he would have this needed support in this school.

Within his classroom, Ben had taught social skills that he believed raised students' awareness of how they should treat others. He had paused instruction, or activities, when he noticed unfair treatment of peers or other persons. He shared an example, which had happened recently, when some children were talking about an encounter with a person they called a "hobo." Upon hearing the term, Ben interjected to discuss the use of the term and how this person may have ended up being homeless. He shared with the students that there are many people who have had hard times and have ended up not having a home. Ben believed that the students came to understand that such labeling of a person was insensitive. He was also aware of the probability that the

students had learned the term from adults. He hoped they would in turn share their new knowledge with others.

When asked if his students would be able to talk about or define what social justice means to them, Ben did not think the term itself would be recognized. If it were defined for them he felt they might be able to provide examples of fairness from his classroom. Most, however, would need cues or examples given to them in order to identify social justice. This admission was difficult for Ben.

While he had not put a strong and consistent effort into bringing social justice themes and lessons into his classroom, Ben still held fast to his belief that such a practice is needed in public school classrooms. He still retained the philosophy he had held when he first began teaching despite the new knowledge that there were current systems and cultures in place within schools that placed barriers between what he wanted to do and what he felt safe to do. Ben hoped that his new teaching position would have more freedom to act on his beliefs as well as an established system of support for his philosophy. He brought up the system of discipline management in place at his current school as one he hoped to never be expected to participate in again.

Asked how he would describe his philosophy of teaching for social justice to a new teacher, Ben began with a grimace. Again, he showed his disappointment at not feeling he had acted on his beliefs as he claimed to talk a good game about his philosophy. Moving forward from that initial response to the question, Ben shared his belief that teaching for social justice is about making room for conversations. Dialogue about the world and the events occurring in the world would, Ben believed, create opportunities to see the thoughts of others, creating a safe place to learn about

inequalities and differences. Ben maintained his initial belief that it was not the role of the teacher to push his or her beliefs on students. Creating the space to talk about social justice issues would, though, help students develop awareness. That would in turn help them make their own determinations about what is right and what requires change.

When asked about the role of reflection in his day-to-day practices, Ben felt that reflection on his practices and on his students' academic and emotional well-being had become very important and engrained in his practices. Ben noted the way he had become much more aware of his students' needs in his second year than he had been in his first. He had learned to consider the emotional needs of his students during lessons and informal conversations. Often at night, Ben stated, he found himself thinking of the students who had behavioral difficulties in class. Realizing he had no real idea of what their lives were like at home, any hardships they faced or family issues, Ben found it easy to go to school the next morning. Each morning he gave those children a special greeting and a little extra attention when he could. He felt this was a part of his development as a teacher along with his ability to better manage the work load of a teacher. He predicted that his reflective practices would be more fluid and automatic as he gained experience.

Ben shared his plan to teach for at least three years before deciding if he would continue in the profession. He recalled his professors and the teachers he had worked with during college telling him to not think of their first years as the way every year in the future would be. They had shared the value of experience, and the value of reflection, in order to improve future experiences. Ben was, however, already considering working towards a specialized position such as instructional specialist or reading specialist. He also shared a desire to go into other fields that would allow him to work with children,

such as social work or counseling. At one point during his college education, Ben had actually considered changing from his education major to psychology so that he could go into social work. He recalled the decision to stay in the education program and believed that choice was the best one.

The dinner conversation moved toward recommendations Ben would make to college students preparing to become teachers who shared his desires of being a teacher for social justice. While Ben still held true to his philosophy of teachers being the best means of bringing change in schools and society by bringing issues of injustice, inequity and bias' to the students, he now felt it had to be a common philosophy of the community within the schools. He believed that had he spent his first two years of teaching within a culture centered on justice and fair treatment of all individuals his opportunities to practice his beliefs would have been an integral part of his teaching. Ben also felt that leadership within such an environment would be greatly different than the current leadership that he had come to feel as an adversary. Future teachers, Ben believed, should search for such a place. They should ask questions about the school culture, and they should visit with future colleagues to learn about their beliefs.

While Ben felt this type of environment would be ideal for teachers of social justice, he shared with his professor his doubt that such schools were easy to find. He main reason for the doubt, Ben shared, was the current culture of testing to determine ability. The pressures of success on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the mandated assessment test used in public schools, was the barrier, Ben believed, that would keep teachers like himself from being able to be teachers for social justice. Those pressures affected behavior and choices of all the entities within the schools and the

school district's leadership. Ben felt these tests had become determining factors of success for students and for teachers. The tests kept teachers such as him from being able to show students the value of critically thinking and learning about social, cultural, and environmental issues. Such thinking and building of awareness, to Ben, were essential aspects of social justice education.

Ben's desires for change in this system were strong; however, his knowledge of how to bring about such change was limited. He wondered if the leaders in education, such as school boards or educational directors at state levels, would be amenable to listening to his and other teacher's concerns about how these tests were affecting teachers and students. He was doubtful that parents would come together to speak out about these practices alongside teachers. From his experiences and his knowledge of Texas' public school systems Ben felt these practices were not going to change.

New teachers, Ben shared, have many challenges to overcome and need to focus on learning about the system and cultures of their schools. His experiences in these first two years led him to believe that the best ways to bring social justice into the classroom during this period was to focus on fairness and integrity within the classroom community. Showing students the appropriate ways to treat each other and others in their community through modeling and classroom discussion was one example of how teachers could bring social justice into the classroom. While he admitted he had missed several opportunities to bring experiences into his lessons and discussions, Ben felt he had adequately instilled fairness and integrity expectations in his classroom. Ben recommended new teachers celebrate the small ways they brought social justice into their classroom and strive to integrate as much as possible into their instruction.

Given the struggles of learning how to manage time and paper work along with deadlines and meetings, Ben wondered if new teachers should worry as much as he had done about the many ways he was not able to be a social justice educator. He and his professor discussed whether his relationship with her and their ongoing conversations about social justice education added to his feeling of not accomplishing enough social justice education within his classroom. Ben determined that the conversations may have increased his concerns. He also pointed out that having the ability to talk to someone about his beliefs and his challenges also gave him an outlet, which he never was able to create with colleagues in his school. The reflective practices that took place as a part of his ongoing conversations with his professor, Ben felt, had allowed him to maintain his philosophy, despite the many challenges he had faced. Ben's final thought on recommendations for future teachers was to investigate the cultures in place in their first school setting. He found it important for new teachers to look for indications that the success of students and teachers was not focused on testing results. Ben also recommended that new teachers who want to be social justice educators share their initial conversations with administrators, opening the dialogue and setting the stage for future conversations. Ben's professor expressed her awareness of Ben's resilience—his belief in the need and the importance of social justice education continued as did his desire to find a space for acting on those beliefs.

Dinner had ended and it was time to say goodbye. Ben and his professor assured each other that they would keep in touch although their conversations and visits would be more social and less teacher centered. His professor assured Ben that she would be available if he should ever need someone to listen, but she also assured him that he was



well on his way to being a wonderful teacher and a mentor himself. Ben smiled at this compliment and gave her a hug. He walked to his car and immediately, again, began to reflect on his last two years and how he would apply what he had learned at his first school in his new setting. He hoped he would find the space in his new school to practice his social justice philosophy.

## **CHAPTER 5- LEARNING FROM BEN'S STORY**

### **The Professor Considers Her Findings**

Ben's professor waved goodbye to him as he walked out of the restaurant, sat back in their booth and waited for the waitress to return so she could order a cup of coffee. She had a long drive back to Austin ahead of her. While she knew she would miss the conversations and observations with Ben, she was not going to miss the drives. Her waitress brought the coffee and she sipped it slowly as she thought about the past two years.

Ben was an excellent teacher. His knowledge of the curriculum and ability to motivate his students was outstanding. Classroom management and classroom organization were two of Ben's strengths. His professor was extremely proud of him and his achievements. When Ben's professor began the two year journey with Ben she was wanting to learn how this new teacher, who believed strongly in social justice education, would fare in the education system that she knew well. She had come to know Ben in the courses she had taught and she believed he was going to be a wonderful teacher. Her questions revolved around how his beliefs and intentions regarding being a social justice teacher would evolve in these first few years. How would the systems in place in his new school affect his determination to integrate issues of inequity and power in his instruction? Would the challenges of being a new teacher change his plans for being a social justice educator? She also wanted to know how Ben utilized reflective practices to find ways to improve as a teacher and as a believer in social justice education.

Ben's professor had learned many things during this process. For one thing, she had learned that the ingrained systems and cultural practices Ben faced were often

opposing, or even detrimental, to Ben's desire to freely and confidently teach and practice what he believed to be important—a social justice curriculum. Ben had sought out a school where he could put his beliefs into practice. His interviews and overview of the school had led him to believe he was going to be working in a community where justice, equity for all students, and opportunity to bring critical thinking about issues were supported and encouraged. After two years he had come to understand that his visions for his practices and his beliefs did not always align with those of his school.

The school's established system of discipline management included what Ben believed to be demeaning and oppressive consequences for students. His desire to help children learn the importance of respecting every person was thwarted by a school-wide practice of ostracizing and ignoring students who made poor choices. Ben did his best to not participate in his school's expectations for discipline that was supported by his administration and most of the faculty. He had taken some risks by raising questions and starting conversations about the practice, and he felt he had introduced some awareness of the faults of the practice. However, it still continued.

Ben felt the school-mandated curriculum left little space for him to integrate social justice lessons and explorations into his practice. In his first semester, Ben was able to insert one lesson about disabilities into one of the units, allowing students to think about how others were challenged by tasks the students saw as easy. Unfortunately, time did not allow Ben to follow up with this lesson, nor did his students seek further information or decide to take a stance toward addressing inequities faced by persons with disabilities. To his credit, Ben did bring a new awareness of disabilities which students may or may not have put to use outside the classroom. He also reminded the students of

the experience from time when issues of differences arose in the classroom or on the playground. Ben found few other spaces to integrate actual lessons about social justice topics in this inquiry period in his first two years of teaching. His professor remembered him feeling as if time and set schedules were the main impediments for this. He also had told her that perhaps these were excuses, or cop outs, and not truly impediments. Ben's professor felt Ben's moral desires weighed heavily against his sense of security as a novice teacher in a new job. He often had shared a feeling that the experienced teachers and administration were not open, or inviting, when opportunities to dialogue about his concerns came about. He had also admitted to not feeling secure to initiate the conversations on his own. Whatever the case, Ben had lost this small period of inquiry during which he felt he could insert social justice themes and explorations in the spring of each year. This was when preparation for the state-mandated tests became a priority for his school and his administrator.

Ben had, his professor remembered again, felt a lot of pressure to move students through the fast paced curriculum in preparation for the regularly scheduled grade level assessments. Both years, when the Spring semester began not only was Ben expected to maintain that fast pace for teaching the curriculum he was also expected to teach testing strategies and give numerous assessments to identify and reteach to students not meeting standards. The testing culture was imbedded deeply in the school and Ben's plans to bring social justice lessons and experiences into his classroom were expendable.

Accepting her second cup of coffee, Ben's professor thought of a second major point she had learned throughout this process. Ben's reflective nature called for a space for critical dialogue. Other than his own inner conversations and infrequent journaling,

his safe space, as far as his professor could tell, was limited to a very small group including his wife and his professor. In his college education classes Ben had learned the value of reflection. He had said that he felt it was something that was constantly taking place inside his head. Also, he had attempted, earlier in his first year of teaching to keep a blog. This, however, was one of the extraneous tasks that Ben quit doing when he became overwhelmed with paperwork, lesson planning, and meeting the other expectations of being a teacher. He had written a few reflections which had had sent to his professor. But Ben admitted that sharing his thoughts had felt more like he was just ranting about the profession he had entered, venting frustrations. Ben was not comfortable with the feelings stirred up in these reflections. His professor knew that in their conversations Ben had often stopped himself when his responses to her questions swayed to the negative side. She had often changed the conversation toward a more positive frame such as celebrating the learning of the students or pointing out how he was growing as a professional educator. His professor had to acknowledge the possibility that by creating a safe place for Ben to have these conversations, she may have also introduced more anxiety than the typical novice teacher experiences. She also had to acknowledge that at these critical times she could have probed deeper into both Ben's and her own discomfort. She wondered if there were not some realities that needed to be addressed, pressed upon, and worked through that would have helped both herself and Ben get through those periods of negativity. She considered the fact that she, just like Ben, was in a continuous spiral as a social justice advocate and these types of discomfort were going to be a part of her continued growth.

Within the school, Ben did not feel as if he could open up a conversation about the inequities and injustices he saw around him. He had expressed concern about this issue with his professor. They talked about him spending more social time away from school with teacher colleagues whom he felt might share his concerns. Ben did try this in his second year and he was able to have some conversations outside of the school. However, to Ben's professor, this was a very small step toward Ben feeling comfortable enough to take a stand on the issues that worried him most, such as the school-wide discipline system or the lack of space and lack of support to bring real-world social justice issues into his lessons. Perhaps, had Ben stayed at this campus for another few years he would have developed the moral power that he was missing now. Or perhaps, in his next setting he would begin with a better sense of how to open such important dialogues with more conviction, and self-determination.

Beyond his own introspection, Ben's efforts to begin and sustain critical dialogue with his colleagues and administrators in his school were seldom, if ever, well received. Ben had shared with his professor that conversations he raised about his ideas and concerns were typically cut off or pushed aside. When Ben questioned his mentor about practices in place such as the school's discipline management plan, his mentor became quite defensive and would not acknowledge Ben's concerns. When he proposed lessons with social justice themes few of his team members expressed a desire or need to venture away from what was set in place, leaving him to choose between creating and administering the lessons on his own or putting his ideas to the side. Because of his uncertainty as to whether or not he would have administrative support with some of his ideas, Ben often chose not to go out on his own.

Ben had shared his feelings that this school did not provide all of its teachers a safe place to voice their ideas and beliefs. Again, however, he had followed that concern with a possibility that he just did not push issues as much as he could have due to his insecurities about his lack of experience and newness to this community. He had also admitted to his professor his concern that his job might be at stake, or that he might not get good references from his school leaders if he was seen as going against the culture or the curricular expectations of the school.

Finally, Ben's professor had learned that this new teacher, although he had struggled with learning the many tasks and expectations of his new job, was able to maintain his belief that the classroom is the perfect place to have conversations and learning experiences that would introduce his students to social justice issues that will affect their lives, and possibly have already. He continued to believe that schools have the ability to create change in society by building awareness of injustices in the world. Ben also believed that teachers and administrators who practiced social justice education held the key to creating change within schools and communities. Even at the end of his first two years of teaching, Ben believed that he could inspire children to look at the world critically and bring about change.

The thing that Ben was unsure of regarding his profession was whether there were schools, communities and leaders who were willing, or even recognized the need, to allow such change to take place. He was frustrated by the systems in place that kept him from having the time, space, and freedom to integrate social justice lessons into the curriculum. He was also frustrated that he did not feel safe to express his beliefs or practice what he believed to be so important. Ben had expressed to his professor his

belief that state mandated testing was driving how schools were structured. The mindset, he believed, was not conducive to learning about the world, the people, and the cultures unless the topic was one that would be tested. He believed that critical dialogue and critical problem solving had no place in schools where the testing was a primary concern. He also believed that leaders within schools did not have control over what to teach or how to teach. That control, he believed, was in the hands of district leaders and legislative bodies. He was frustrated with the idea that people outside of the schools were determining the success and failures of schools based on tests. Tests that could not show how much students knew about inequities and biases in the world. Tests that would not bring about change and justice. He was frustrated that he had succumbed to the pressures of the testing mentality because he felt his administration and colleagues would measure his ability to teach according to these tests.

Ben's professor finished her cup of coffee and paid the bill. Walking to her car, she felt assured that this one teacher would sustain his beliefs and continue to make efforts to bring social justice into his new classroom and his new school. His frustration with the systems that were driving his profession may, in the future, cause him to leave the profession or seek another avenue of teaching. She wasn't sure that he would be able to practice his philosophy in the manner he hoped, but she did know he would continue to reflect and grow as a person who considered social justice education to be the catalyst to bringing change in the world.



## **The Long Drive Home- Realizations**

After several attempts at searching for a suitable music station on the radio, the professor decided she should just turn the music off and start listening to all the rumblings going on in her head as she drove.

“Okay, Patti,” she spoke out loud to herself, “What are you going to do about all these things you have learned?”

Many things were running through her mind. How was she going to apply what she had learned in her own teaching? What could she do to help future teachers be prepared for the issues they might face as social justice educators? How should she adjust her instruction and her students’ experiences in their pre-service coursework so that they would recognize the effort and time that will be required in order to put their beliefs into action? And finally, how could she help these future teachers learn to celebrate small steps toward social justice while they were faced with many other tasks?

Having taught many different courses at the university, and being familiar with the way the courses integrated social justice into each course, the professor was familiar with how strands of social justice education were integrated into the education courses. She wondered now what type of changes could be implemented to help the university’s future teachers as they entered their new profession with their social justice philosophies in hand. Ben’s professor knew one thing that she would implement in her subject coursework would be the integration of social justice lessons into TEKS based lessons. It would benefit new teachers to walk into their new classrooms with numerous lessons in hand for each subject; lessons that included social justice ideas and would create opportunities for critical conversations while fitting within curriculum schedules.

Resource lists where such lessons were available would also be helpful for the new teacher overloaded with paperwork and out of time.

New teachers need to experience how to have conversations about social justice education with their colleagues and administrators. Role playing situations in which fellow teachers may not be aware of what it means to be a social justice educator or situations where conversations need to be held about practices in place could help new teachers express their concerns with confidence. New teachers often lack such confidence in their new positions. Ben struggled often with how to start and how to continue difficult conversations. Role playing and reading case studies that reveal possible points of contention for social justice advocates raise awareness of what could lie in a new teacher's future and opens the door for critical conversations within the university classroom.

Overwhelmed and anxiety driven new teachers must survive their first years of teaching. Ben's professor recognized and tried to support him when he was overcome with fear about not doing his job well and not meeting the needs of his students. Ben's stress, his professor found, was compounded by his feelings of inadequacy when he attempted to integrate social justice lessons into his tightly scheduled and frequently assessed curriculum. Furthermore, he was often frustrated by what he felt was a lack of support when he attempted to voice his concerns to peers and campus leadership.

Ben had often struggled to describe how he practiced his social justice beliefs. His professor found he was not considering the small, yet important steps he had taken. Within her pre-service course work Ben's professor determined she would include discussions and experiences that demonstrated small steps or small ideas about social

justice themes which new teachers could take and implement with ease. Ideas such as pictures to stir conversations about abilities, or sentence stems to inspire writing about fairness. Along with these small bits of social justice Ben's professor planned to show her pre-service teachers how to recognize the small things they do in the classroom which promote justice and equity. There are celebrations to be had for even the smallest act of justice and equity and Ben's professor wanted to show these future teachers where to find the celebrations.

### **Recommendations**

Ben's story is just one of many stories of new teachers and the way they struggle to meet the demands of their profession and maintain their beliefs about learning and teaching. The focus of the study, however, was to look at how this new teacher's beliefs about social justice education were able to be practiced the systems and cultures in place within our schools. I sought to learn how this new teacher evolved in his profession, taking on many demanding new duties while trying to maintain his personal and philosophical identity. Some of the findings are supported by other research suggesting that teacher preparation programs help future teachers prepare for the ways their beliefs about social justice education would be challenged in the school systems they are entering (Argarwal et al., 2009; Chubbock, 2008; Johnson, Oppenheim & Younjang, 2009; Flores, 2007). The university program which Ben attended had social justice strands built into every course of study. Whether seeking secondary or elementary certifications, students participated in numerous exercises, readings, research activities and personal examinations that helped them understand the issues of equity, bias, and privilege that affect the lives and histories of children. Ben, as did most of his peers,

accepted his role as teacher to be one which included being a social justice advocate. Yet, there are barriers and there are challenges within our school system that Ben struggled to overcome. Ben reported to his professor that he felt prepared to be a good teacher and he felt passionate about being teacher for social justice. Yet, the realities he came up against such as lack of support administratively or collegially, his lack of knowledge as to how far he could push his concerns and his desires, and his feeling of powerlessness were things he was not prepared to encounter.

Therefore, I recommend that teacher programs with social justice emphasis prepare students for how their newfound philosophies and determinations to be teachers for social justice may be challenged. It is the role of these programs to develop teachers who will be successful in their profession. The development of a program where social justice education is priority without development of plans for successful, timely, and impactful integration does not benefit the new teacher. Future teachers should explore case studies, such as this one, to learn about possible barriers they might face.

Coursework should include panel dialogues with alumni about their concerns and the way they have overcome challenges to drive forward with their beliefs. Professors and course instructors who have not been in a classroom setting should examine their course expectations. Is reading an article about social justice or watching a video equivalent to creating lessons that integrate social justice ideas into current curriculum plans?

Professors also have the responsibility, as this professor learned, to keep what they are teaching the future teachers connected, and real to what these teachers will most likely see in the classroom. Pre-service teacher course creators and syllabus writers have the

duty to develop experiences that ensure that future teachers have a clear understanding of what their new profession expects of them both as teacher and as social justice educator.

In this case study, Ben had the opportunity of continued support since his professor met with him regularly. He knew support was available to him from his other past advisors and professors as well, if he were to ask for it. Ben, however, most often struggled without his university program's support. It is recommended that university programs work more aggressively toward communicating with novice teachers regularly and beyond the first year of teaching. Many programs, such as Ben's, invite first year teachers to return to the university and share their experiences with current students. Ben's university program even provided him opportunities for support if he requested it. New teachers, such as Ben, are well-known to be overwhelmed with their tasks at hand and less likely to reach out for assistance beyond the first semester. Teaching programs where teaching for social justice philosophy is adopted should develop long-term plans for support of their alumni. Such dialogue originating with the university programs as opposed to the expecting alumni to place calls for help could inform the program leaders as to the issues their past students are facing. It would also allow them to better prepare their new students for the current issues at hand.

Also recommended for teacher preparation programs is to build systems of communication such as blogs or group mailings that will allow new teachers to talk with fellow alumni of different years of experience who might also be struggling to maintain their beliefs in such a new and taxing role as classroom teacher. Such collegial communication, even though they may be across different districts, states, and grade levels, would allow these new teachers to continue the critical dialoguing they learned

and practiced in their education programs. These opportunities to seek support and understanding from their peers might help new teachers find solutions to their problems, and more importantly could help them find the power they often feel they lack in their new positions.

Administrative support for new teachers who want to bring social justice education into their new practice was definitely lacking in this case study. Having been assigned to a mentor who had little time and little patience to listen to his concerns and need for assistance, Ben struggled to find support. He was quick to learn that his administration's priority was different than his own, namely high-stakes testing results. As Young (2010) found, bringing culturally relevant pedagogy into a system which prioritized fast paced curriculum and standardized testing left little space for Ben to insert critical dialogue and lessons into his teaching. He felt he had lacked the power and support to practice his beliefs. It is recommended that graduate courses and administrators' professional development include critical dialogues regarding the need for social justice education to be an important element of their school's curriculum.

Administrators and school leaders should be made aware of the social justice strands running through pre-service programs. Knowledge of what their new teachers are learning and how they are developing philosophies which include social justice beliefs can only bring better awareness of the support their new teachers need—including space to talk and practice these beliefs. Awareness of the possibilities in a school where social justice issues and experiences are part of the everyday dialogue will create a culture where learning continues to take place but on a much grander scale. Undergraduate teacher programs where teachers are experiencing social justice courses and developing

social justice philosophies would benefit from reaching out to graduate programs educating future school leaders and policy makers. Researchers could play an important role in bringing about a mindset change in future administrators by following these graduate students through experiences similar to those pre-service teachers have and then following up when the administrators are practicing in their own schools.

Along those same lines, it is recommended that district and community leaders become familiar with the philosophy of social justice education. By sharing knowledge of their graduating teachers, colleges where social justice, diversity, and culturally relevant pedagogy are built into coursework could gain much needed support within districts. Participation in teacher development and attendance in curriculum meetings would allow collaborating teacher programs to share their philosophies and propose lesson integration. This could lead to a space within and between schools for collaborative dialogue with administration and integration of lessons into curricular plans. Including community groups such as those who represent minorities or the underprivileged in discussions about how classrooms can learn about social justice issues is another opportunity to bring schools and community members together to learn. Teacher preparation programs should communicate with local districts to seek spaces where they can participate in cultural celebrations and awareness activities as well.

Ben ended his second year of teaching with much frustration regarding the lack of power that he and his colleagues have within their own schools. His new understandings of the systems within schools made him doubtful that those who held the power over schools and teachers were remotely concerned with the need for social justice education. Ben saw that legislative bodies and political forums held agendas far different from what

he believed to be important. Government and community leaders too often focused on testing results and production of graduates, and not necessarily creating an environment that examined issues related to social justice. This clash between how he wanted to practice his beliefs and how those in power were forcing him to teach led to great anxiety and thoughts of leaving the profession in the future.

This great concern calls for possible areas for research. First, research to learn the most prevalent reasons for teachers leaving the profession is in order. What are the factors that lead to these social justice professionals leaving teaching? Family and new children come to mind as factors that lead to many exits; however, how many teachers are being driven from the work they love for other reasons? Does the lack of support from alma maters and district administration play a role? Are teachers responding to a lack of power within their own classrooms? The findings from this research might prove valuable to schools, communities, and possibly education leaders.

Next, research into what legislative leaders know and how they feel about teacher education programs and the inclusion of social justice education components might be critical. This could bring to light a means of reducing the clash between the social justice philosophy and the high stakes testing mentality in place. How aware are they about social justice education, its promises to our future and our children? Building an understanding of how social justice education adds to the quality of students' experience and builds bridges between ideological differences requires a research-driven dialogue between legislators, university education programs, and classroom teachers, not to mention members of the community at large.



Finally, someone needs to ask the hard questions—through research, dialogue, or collaborative stand—about the systemic problems in public education. How can the inequities in our schools be addressed without focusing on high-stakes tests? What actions would result in every child having the necessary tools for learning, and the necessary tools to feel safe and free of humiliation in their own classroom? How can teachers as professionals begin to bring change to the classrooms and communities of our schools without fear of losing our jobs because we did not teach students how to take a test, but instead taught them how to critically examine their own world?

### **The Unending Story**

There is no end to this narrative. Becoming a social justice advocate in our schools or in our communities means one will be continuously editing our understandings and revising our practices. It also means that we must evaluate our place in settings which are not congruent to our beliefs.

Ben is no longer a classroom teacher. After three full years of teaching he left the classroom to continue his own education and work as a researcher at a state college. In his new setting he is researching and writing policies to ensure the well-being of children and adults with mental illness. Ben has no plans to return to work in schools but has dedicated himself to the working towards the well-being of the underserved and disabled.

Ben's professor continues to seek opportunities for growth as a social justice advocate through community work with children who have been removed from their homes and with formally incarcerated adults who are working to return to their families and be successful members of their community. Each experience provides more clarity as to the many inequities entrenched in our societies while raising more questions as to the

solutions to these problems. Ben's professor knows that her journey will never end and, yet, she is determined to stay on the path she has chosen.

## APPENDIX SECTION

### Appendix A

#### Data Analysis Matrix

Research questions:	Data Source(s):	Data Gathering Techniques:	Analysis:
How does a new teacher incorporate teaching for social justice into the classroom?	Interviews w/ teacher Lesson plans Observations of instruction Reflections/blogs Classroom photos	Digital recordings Field notes Copies Print outs Photos	Teacher intentions Observatons Classroom dialogue Teacher reflections Physical evidence
What environmental factors (social, cultural, economic, and political) support or impede a new teacher's ability to teach for social justice?	Teacher planning session(s) Interviews w/teacher Observation of campus Material culture Curriculum documents School web sites	Digital recordings Field notes Reflections Documents Print outs	Teacher perceptions of influences the environment has on his teaching Background context of environment Reality of influences
How does a new teacher's reflective practices affect his ability to teach for social justice?	Teacher interviews College reflections/philosophy/interviews Reflections/blog Conversations Reflective journal	Digital recordings Documents Print outs Field notes	How experience informs the teacher's next actions. Evidence of change Connections to development
How does a new teacher's view of teaching for social justice change in his first two years of teaching?	College reflections/philosophy/interviews Interviews Reflections/blogs Lesson plans	Digital recordings Documents Print outs Field notes	Comparison of beliefs and actions through time Comparison of perceptions and reality to changes in action

## **Appendix B**

### **Initial Interview Questions**

1. Informal interview questions (Subject to revision according to responses):
2. Describe your experiences thus far as a new teacher.
3. What are your biggest challenges in this new role? What are your greatest celebrations?
4. How do you include social justice topics in your classroom conversations?  
Instruction?
5. At this time, how do you think your students would define social justice?
6. Tell me about your school environment? Who provides you support? Describe the working relationships of the faculty and administration.
7. What events or expectations have surprised you the most about the teaching profession? How do you feel prepared?

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent

IRB # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Informed Consent Form

**Title of Study: A First Year Teacher's Reflective Practice As It Relates to His Convictions to be a Teacher for Social Justice**

**Researcher:** Patti J. Baran, of Texas State University; (512) 635-3861, pb1012@txstate.edu

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. Read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information furnished on this consent form. You will receive a signed copy of the form.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research study is to deepen understandings of what happens when new classroom teachers who have decided to be teachers for social justice, experience their first year of teaching. You were chosen to be a participant in this study given your pre-service teaching experiences and desire to be active in teaching and addressing social justice issues in schools. Your reflective skills and willingness to continue to grow as a reflective teacher also identified you as a viable participant. Data collection for this study may last up to 10 months.

During this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher, observed during teaching, and will share written reflections with the researcher. All information gathered, such as transcripts, will be shared and approved by you, the participant. You will have the option to revise, delete or provide clarifying information upon review of the data. You may refuse to answer any question or complete any request at any time.

The research procedures described above may involve some risks and/or discomforts. Such risks may occur as you think about and discuss your beliefs and understandings about teaching, including concerns that arise within your classroom, school or community.

As a participant in this study you may receive and benefit from support and mentorship from the researcher. This may help you better understand and apply effective and appropriate strategies in my practice. You may also develop a sense of awareness of social justice issues in education that others in my profession do not see.

Information collected in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. No persons other than yourself, the researcher, and the researcher's advisor will have access to your name, the name of your school, or school district, and the name of

your community. Any identifiable information will be kept for a period of three years from the completion of the study and then destroyed. During the study, transcripts, recordings, and other documents will be kept in secure settings including password protected hard drives and secure files.

Participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without prejudice or jeopardy. The researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

If I have any questions about this study, I may call the faculty supervisor of the project, Dr. Ann Brooks at (512) 245-1936. If I have questions about my rights as a participant, I may contact the Chair of the Texas State University IRB, Dr. Jon Lasser at (512) 245-3413 or [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu), or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512) 245-2102.

**I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL  
RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.**

---

*PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE*

*DATE*

---

*PRINTED PARTICIPANT'S NAME*

---

*Researcher's Signature*

*Date*

## Site Consent Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_,

Please accept my gratitude for the consideration of allowing me to spend time on your campus with \_\_\_\_\_ as I work on my dissertation for Texas State University. \_\_\_\_\_ has agreed to be my single case participant for this research. This qualitative study will consist of several (up to 5) on-site visits as well as off site interviews for the duration of approximately one year. During the time I spend on your campus I will be observing \_\_\_\_\_'s instructional practice as well as the classroom and campus environment.

My dissertation is focused upon the intersection of two key events in education—the first years of teaching and teaching for social justice. I am seeking to understand what happens when new teachers who have developed a philosophy and understanding of what it means to be teachers for social justice enter their first classrooms. In other words, I want to know how new teachers navigate between what is well known as the most difficult years of their career (organization, planning, social and school expectations, etc.) and their beliefs about equity, justice, and fairness in their classroom, school, and community.

In the end I plan to walk away with a richly descriptive narrative about \_\_\_\_\_'s experiences in his first years. To gain this information I plan to visit \_\_\_\_\_ in his classroom. During these visits my attention will be solely upon \_\_\_\_\_—his planning, his instruction, and his teaching practice—and not upon the students in the classroom or school. No student will be asked to participate in the research. Nor do I plan to involve any other teachers, parents, or administrators other than performing general observations of the campus in order to gain knowledge about the environment. Other data will be gathered through interviews and blog participation with \_\_\_\_\_. Some documents may be used such as lesson plans, parent communications, and other documents \_\_\_\_\_ feels will help us deepen our understandings of his experiences. While no identifiable student work will be included in the data collection, it may be necessary, in our conversations, for \_\_\_\_\_ to share student work with me to clarify how it has affected his teaching practice.

In regards to your campus, I am planning to center this qualitative research solely around \_\_\_\_\_. During this process I will learn about your campus and community; however, I will use pseudonyms for the campus, the community and any persons referred to. I will also provide a general description of the “region” of the campus and its affiliations without specific names. My request for you as campus administrator is that I be granted access to \_\_\_\_\_'s classroom and the campus for observations and that I have the opportunity to come and introduce myself to you and any other entities you feel should be aware of my research.

Knowing this is a very brief description of my proposal, I welcome any questions or concerns that you might have. I have provided my contact information below. Also, should you have questions regarding this research I invite you to contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Ann Brooks at [abrooks@txstate.edu](mailto:abrooks@txstate.edu) or (512) 245-1936. Should you agree to my proposal I will forward an institutional consent form as required by Texas State University.

I look forward to hearing from you and will be happy to discuss any proposed changes or requirements that might be necessary in order to gain your approval.

Sincerely,  
Patti J. Daughtry Baran

Telephone: Cell: (512) 635-3861  
Institutional Review Board  
Texas State University

Having read the above informational letter, I hereby agree to allow Patti J. Baran, from Texas State University to conduct her research at IDEA Academy, Dona, Texas. I understand that the purpose of the study is to gain understandings regarding what happens when new teachers who have developed a philosophy and understanding of what it means to be teachers for social justice enter their first classroom.

By signing this letter of permission, I am agreeing to the following:

☐ The Texas State University researcher to have permission to be on IDEA Academy premise.

☐ The Texas State University researcher to have unrestricted access to the data collected to perform the data analysis both for presentation to her Texas State University Dissertation Committee and for publication purposes.

Sincerely,

---

Principal

Address



## Appendix D



### Institutional Review Board

### Continuation/Change

## Certificate of Approval

Applicant: Patti Baran

Original IRB Application Number : 2011H6098

Date of Approval: 03/15/12

Expiration Date: 03/15/13

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Blanks".

Assistant Vice President for Research  
and Federal Relations

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Lane".

Chair, Institutional Review Board



## Institutional Review Board Application

# Certificate of Approval

Applicant: Patti Baran

Application Number : 2011H6098

Project Title: From Student to Professional: How New Teachers Negotiate Between What They Know and Believe and What They Practice as Social Justice Educators

Date of Approval: 03/22/11 22:27:37

Expiration Date: 03/21/12

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Blonds".

Assistant Vice President for Research  
and Federal Relations

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Lane".

Chair, Institutional Review Board

## IRB Proposal Application No. 2011H6098

Approval Date 3/22/2011

Patti J. Daughtry Baran

Supervising Professor – Dr. Ann Brooks

Contact information - [pb1012@txstate.edu](mailto:pb1012@txstate.edu), (512) 635- 3861

### IRB PROPOSAL

#### **From Student to Professional: How New Teachers Negotiate Between What They Know and Believe and What They Practice as Social Justice Educators**

1. Identify the sources of the potential subjects, derived materials or data. Describe the characteristics of the subject population, such as their anticipated number, age, sex, ethnic background, and state of health. Identify the criteria for inclusion or exclusion. Explain the rationale for the use of special classes of subjects, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, institutionalized mentally disabled, prisoners, or others, especially those whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question.

There will be a single participant for this study. The participant is the same one used in a pilot study (**Project Title:** *A First Year Teacher's Reflective Practice As It Relates to His Convictions to be a Teacher for Social Justice: A Pilot Study*,

**Application Number:** 2009J743). In conversations about this researcher's dissertation topic and study methodology this young man and 3 others offered their participation in the study. This particular person was chosen out of the population of volunteers because of his skills in reflective practice and his choice to take a teaching position in an area of Texas where the student population and community are different from his own culture and ethnicity. Such a choice places this participant in an environment where he will be asked to examine his personal identity, practices and beliefs as a white upper-class dominant male now situated in a lower and middle class, Hispanic community. Other volunteers did not offer the researcher such an

opportunity because they either chose a teaching position similar to their own personal cultural and ethnic identity or decided to work in a role other than classroom teacher.

This participant is able to give an informed consent to participation in the research. He does not fit into one of the special classes, or groups, as identified in the Belmont Report as needing special consideration for inclusion in the research.

2. Describe the procedures for recruitment of subjects and the consent procedures to be followed. Include the circumstances under which consent will be solicited and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the methods of documenting consent. (Include applicable consent form(s) for review.) If written consent is not to be obtained, this should be clearly stated and justified.

The single participant in this study volunteered to be the participant in his final semester of college. At the time he volunteered he was a student of the researcher. The participant has since graduated from the university, secured a teaching position, and continues to express interest in participation in this study. The current relationship between the participant and the researcher no longer presents a possible conflict of power given no grades, course expectations, or supervisory elements are present. Consent will be documented in the Consent Form created per the expectations of the IRB and outlined by The Belmont Report.

3. Describe the project's methodology in detail. If applicable, detail the data collection procedures, the testing instruments, the intervention(s), etc. If using a survey, questionnaire, or interview, please provide a copy of the items or questions.

Given this study will include a single participant, data used will be generated from this participant, campus documents, and community documents. Data collected from the pilot study, *A First Year Teacher's Reflective Practice As It Relates to His Convictions to be a Teacher for Social Justice: A Pilot Study*, will be used in analysis

and conclusions for the research. The researcher and participant may meet in the participant's classroom, in a neutral location, or may have conversations over the telephone, web chat, or e-mail. Data collection for this study will consist of ongoing conversations, semi-structured interviews, written reflections of the participant, observations of the participant in his classroom, and possible documents provided by the participant. Conversations, interviews, and observations will be audio or video taped along with researcher notes. They will then be transcribed verbatim, including non-verbal intonations, pauses/hesitations, and other intonations noticed by the researcher. Video recording transcriptions will include visual clues not available in audio recordings. The researcher will then analyze the transcripts using both thematic and dialogic methods. Written reflections, as documents, will be analyzed using the same methods using thematic and dialogic methods as well. Other documents that may demonstrate the participant's concerns or actions regarding social justice issues may also be provided by the participant. These may include lesson plans, documents related to school expectations or guidelines, or communications with parents or colleagues. Such documents will be considered supportive and cataloged as artifacts. All artifacts will be analyzed according to theme, placement, and purpose.

Transcripts, reflections, and documents will be analyzed as they become available in order to inform the researcher of points, topics, and areas of interest that should be followed up on with the next interaction between the researcher and the participant.

As themes and categories emerge in the data a schematic diagram will be used to make further connections and show gaps in the data being collected. Based on this information, alterations, or revisions, in data collection methods, interview questions,

and the researcher's stance may need to be made.

At the conclusion of this research the findings will be organized to create thematic narratives about the participant's experiences, personal and professional growth, and any other new knowledge that demonstrate the purpose of the research.

A sample of interview questions is provided to demonstrate the line of thought: Questions below represent a continuation of the pilot study. Interview questions:

1. How were your preparations for the beginning of this year differ from that of your first year?
  - a. What were some areas you felt more comfortable with?
  - b. How did reflection come into play as you prepared? Things you had noted from last year...Ideas that were noted (lesson plans) for future reference....Summer contemplations?
  - c. How did your beliefs about teaching for social justice affect your planning for this new year?
2. At the end of your first year of teaching you stated that you needed to step out and look for others who shared your beliefs about social justice in order to build a support group. Have you made any steps toward this?
  - a. IF SO...How so? What are your plans for continuing or moving this forward?
  - b. IF NOT...What do you think has kept you from doing so? Personal, social, or political?
3. How are you addressing or negotiating issues that you felt went against your beliefs last year? such as frequent accountability assessments? Using assessments to plan instruction? School discipline procedures? Planning? Mentor relationships?
4. Your grade level is now departmentalized. At the end of the year you expressed concern for how you would bring social justice into your curriculum as a math teacher. What are your thoughts about this now?
5. Time, or your lack of it, was a big concern last year. At one point you said you had to put some things aside in order to keep your head above water. (i.e.

thoughtful planning, reflection, making connections with all students). What are your feelings about time at this point?

6. What are your goals for bringing social justice into your classroom, in your instruction, and in your school this year?
7. For my research I am going to be relating your practice and beliefs of teaching for social justice to these principals from Marilyn Cochran-Smith:
  - a. Providing “opportunities for all students to engage in significant intellectual work,”
  - b. Building upon “what students bring to school with them—knowledge and interests, cultural and linguistic resources,”
  - c. Teaching skills and bridging gaps,
  - d. Working “with (not against) individuals, families, and communities,”
  - e. Diversifying “forms of assessments,” and
  - f. Making “inequity, power, and activism explicit parts of the curriculum.”

In addition to these I will add one more principle building upon the practice of reflexivity which is

- g. to continually question and reflect upon decisions made within the school system, including one’s own classroom and how they pertain to socially just education.

I would like to spend a little time with you considering, first do these principals match my beliefs, second how am I practicing these principals in my classroom, school, and community, third, what do I believe would need to be different in order to practice these principal to the best of my ability?

4. Describe any potential risks — physical, psychological, social, legal or other — and state their likelihood and seriousness. Describe alternative methods, if any, that were considered and why they will not be used.

Risks to the participant in this study are considered to be limited to that of psychological and/or social discomfort. Such discomfort might occur as a result of conversations with the researcher in which the participant reveals uncomfortable situations or decisions that occur within his role as teacher, leader, or community

member. Given the nature of the issues of social justice in schools, the participant may have feelings of frustration, anxiety, or even anger when he reflects upon possible dissonance between his beliefs and actual occurrences in the school and classroom settings. Possible differences between the participant's beliefs and convictions toward being a teacher for social justice may result in the risk of social conflict within the school. For example, during the course of the study the participant may come to see a racial disparity between students considered gifted and the general population of the school (a well documented phenomenon in schools). If the participant chooses to raise questions of such a disparity some colleagues might question his lack of experience in the teaching field and choose to distance themselves from the participant.

Given the methodology of qualitative single case study chosen for this study, alternative data collection methods such as surveys and questionnaires will not provide the rich, descriptive and dialogic data desired.

5. Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing any potential risks and include an assessment of the likely effectiveness of those procedures. Include a discussion of confidentiality safeguards, where relevant, and arrangements for providing mental health or medical treatment, if needed.

With the possible psychological and social risks in mind the researcher will provide the participant opportunities to discuss such discomforts and possible solutions. The participant will also be informed of persons and groups to which he may turn to gain further support. Such resources might include his mentor (as assigned by the campus administration), administrators, or school counseling services.

Reflection on practice and action as a first year teacher is considered important to



the teacher's development. Therefore, reflection as a major source of data for this study should not be considered a risk outside the realm of the participant's role. As a mentor and experienced teacher who is familiar with the participant and his educational background, the researcher intends to offer support often not found in the typical new teacher's setting, minimizing both psychological and social risks.

Confidentiality safeguards will include the use of a pseudonym for both the participant and the school in which he works. While information regarding the population of the school and community will be shared and discussed in the study, the population is not one of great difference of other South Texas schools and, therefore, a general statement of the region and schools within the region will suffice in the description. All data transcripts will be shared with the participant in order for him to notify the researcher of any questionable information he feels will increase the loss of anonymity in any way.

6. Describe and assess the potential benefits to be gained by the subjects, as well as the benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the proposed study.

The use of reflective practices in the field of education is well documented as a positive means of personal and professional growth. Often, however, new teachers become mired down in the many expectations and challenges of their classroom and school losing sight of the importance of stopping and thinking critically about their practice and their beliefs. By participating in this research this one new teacher will dedicate time and space for such reflection, enabling him to make well informed and supported decisions about his practice. While new teachers are required to have an assigned mentor to support them in their learning and initiation into teaching, few have the opportunity to continue to work closely with college professors who are

familiar with their educational background and classroom experiences. For this one participant, such a resource will, hopefully, be valuable.

Colleges and universities across the nation are incorporating courses and seminars that include social justice awareness in their teacher preparation programs. While studies of the beliefs and practices of experienced classroom teachers reveal the value and positive outcomes of social justice education, few studies have focused upon the new teacher and how he/she navigates through their first year of teaching and maintains, or attempts to maintain, their passion for being teachers for social justice. Therefore, society, and more specifically the educational field, will benefit from such research as information gained may allow school leaders to develop supportive programs for everyone who wants to become teachers for social justice, and teacher preparation programs can make the necessary adjustments to ensure that new teachers can more successfully integrate their new beliefs and understandings in their classrooms and schools.

7. Clearly describe any compensation to be offered/provided to the participants. If extra credit is provided as an incentive, include the percentage of extra credit in relation to the total points offered in the class. Also, if extra credit is provided, describe alternatives to participation in your research for earning extra credit.

Compensation will not be offered to the participant. However, due to the nature of the study the participant will be provided a video/audio recorder. The participant will also be reimbursed for expenses that might be incurred such as postage, faxes, and copies.

8. Discuss the risks in relation to the anticipated benefits to the subjects and society.  
Assessment of the risks of participation in this study reveals a slight possibility of psychological and social discomfort. Such discomforts may result from the

participant looking beyond the typical first year teacher's expectations and understandings of his/her profession. For example, recognition of personal and institutional incongruencies between what is believed and practiced may result in dissonance as well as the raising of questions that are not typical of the school and community. In this case, the participant may find other professionals questioning his knowledge and stance toward their own accepted practices.

The benefits of such a study have the potential of creating change in school practices in regards to both new and experienced teachers' professional development. By placing the practice of teaching for social justice in the conversations of classroom teachers and administrators this study may have great potential for the entire community—parents, businesses, and , most importantly, students. Further, findings of this study has the potential of furthering understandings of how teacher preparation programs can best meet the needs of their students in their development as professionals and as social justice educators.

Finally, the concept of identity development in teachers who want to work in settings where their own ethnicity and culture differs from the community is one of importance given the changing population of Texas schools but consistent graduation of white teachers. In this study the participant is a white male which place him in a dominant position in society and in some school settings. The study, therefore, offers an opportunity to gain valuable perspective of the development of cultural, social, and ethnic awareness.

9. Identify the specific sites/agencies to be used as well as approval status. Include copies of approval letters from agencies to be used (note: these are required for final approval). If they are not available at the time of IRB review, approval of the proposal will be contingent upon their receipt.

The participant will be observed and interviewed in his classroom. While students may be present during the observations, data collection will consist of the participant's instructional and professional experiences and decisions. Permission to perform the research on the school site, observe practices of the school community, and use documents from the school has been granted by the school administration. The school principal has indicated he has the authority to grant approval for the researcher to work with the classroom teacher and to observe in the classroom. The site consent form and participant consent form are attached.

10. If you are a student, indicate the relationship of the proposal to your program of work and identify your supervising/sponsor faculty member.

This proposal is for my official dissertation research. Dr. Ann Brooks is my dissertation committee chair.

11. In the case of student projects, pilot studies, theses, or dissertations, evidence of approval of Supervising Professor or Faculty Sponsor should be included. Thesis and dissertation proposals must be approved by the student's committee before proceeding to the IRB for review.

Defense of this dissertation proposal is planned to take place in the month of January, 2011. Documentation will be presented when approval is achieved.

12. If the proposed study has been approved by another IRB, attach a copy of the letter verifying approval/disapproval and any related correspondence. If the proposed study has not been reviewed/approved by another IRB, please state this explicitly.

This proposed study has not been reviewed or approved by another IRB.

13. Identify all individuals who will have access, during or after completion, to the results of this study, whether they be published or unpublished.

Individuals who will have access to this research study include the Dissertation Committee, the participant and the researcher.

## Site Consent Form

November 29, 2010

Mr \_\_\_\_\_,

Please accept my gratitude for the consideration of allowing me to spend time on your campus with \_\_\_\_\_ as I work on my dissertation for Texas State University. \_\_\_\_\_ has agreed to continue as my single case participant for this research. This qualitative study will consist of several (up to 5) on-site visits as well as off site interviews for the duration of approximately one year. During the time I spend on your campus I will be observing \_\_\_\_\_'s instructional practice as well as the classroom and campus environment.

My dissertation is focused upon the intersection of two key events in education—the first years of teaching and teaching for social justice. I am seeking to understand what happens when new teachers who have developed a philosophy and understanding of what it means to be teachers for social justice enter their first classrooms. In other words, I want to know how new teachers navigate between what is well known as the most difficult years of their career (organization, planning, social and school expectations, etc.) and their beliefs about equity, justice, and fairness in their classroom, school, and community.

In the end I plan to walk away with a richly descriptive narrative about \_\_\_\_\_'s experiences in his first two years. To gain this information I plan to visit \_\_\_\_\_ in his classroom. During these visits my attention will be focused upon \_\_\_\_\_—his planning, his instruction, and his teaching practice—and not upon the students in the classroom or school. No student will be asked to participate in the research. Nor do I plan to involve any other teachers, parents, or administrators other than performing general observations of the campus in order to gain knowledge about the environment. Other data will be gathered through interviews and blog participation with \_\_\_\_\_. Some documents may be used such as lesson plans, parent communications, and other documents \_\_\_\_\_ feels will help us deepen our understandings of his experiences. While no identifiable student work will be included in the data collection, it may be necessary, in our conversations, for \_\_\_\_\_ to share student work with me to clarify how it has affected his teaching practice.

In regards to your campus, I am planning to center this qualitative research solely around \_\_\_\_\_ and his teaching environment. During this process I will learn about your campus and community; however, I will use pseudonyms for the campus, the community and any persons referred to. I will also provide a general description of the “region” of the campus and its affiliations without specific names. My request for you as campus administrator is that I be granted access to \_\_\_\_\_'s classroom and the campus for observations.

Knowing this is a very brief description of my proposal, I welcome any questions or concerns that you might have. I have provided my contact information below. Also, should you have questions regarding this research I invite you to contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Ann Brooks at [abrooks@txstate.edu](mailto:abrooks@txstate.edu) or (512) 245-1936. Should you agree to my proposal I will forward an institutional consent form as required by Texas State University.

I look forward to hearing from you and will be happy to discuss any proposed changes or requirements that might be necessary in order to gain your approval.

Sincerely,

Patti J. Daughtry Baran

Telephone: Cell: (512) 635-3861

## **Site Administrator Letter of Permission**

November 9, 2014

Institutional Review Board  
Texas State University

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I hereby agree to allow Patti J. Baran, from Texas State University to conduct her research at IDEA Academy, Dona, Texas. I understand that the purpose of the study is to gain understandings regarding what happens when new teachers who have developed a philosophy and understanding of what it means to be teachers for social justice enter their first classroom.

By signing this letter of permission, I am agreeing to the following:

☐ The Texas State University researcher to have permission to be on IDEA Academy premise.

☐ The Texas State University researcher to have unrestricted access to the data collected to perform the data analysis both for presentation to her Texas State University Dissertation Committee and for publication purposes.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_ *(Signature)*

\_\_\_\_\_ ***(Please Print Name)***

*Principal*

*School Address*

## **Informed Consent Form**

### **From Student to Professional: How New Teachers Negotiate Between What They Know and Believe and What They Practice as Social Justice Educators**

**Researcher:** Patti J. Baran, of Texas State University; (512) 635-3861, pb1012@txstate.edu

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. Read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information furnished on this consent form. You will receive a signed copy of the form.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research study is to deepen understandings of what happens when new classroom teachers who have decided to be teachers for social justice, experience their first year of teaching. You were chosen to be a participant in this study given your pre-service teaching experiences and desire to be active in teaching and addressing social justice issues in schools. Your reflective skills and willingness to continue to grow as a reflective teacher also identified you as a viable participant. Data collection for this study may last up to 10 months.

During this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher, observed during teaching, and will share written reflections with the researcher. All information gathered, such as transcripts, will be shared and approved by you, the participant. You will have the option to revise, delete or provide clarifying information upon review of the data. You may refuse to answer any question or complete any request at any time.

The research procedures described above may involve some risks and/or discomforts. Such risks may occur as you think about and discuss your beliefs and understandings about teaching, including concerns that arise within your classroom, school or community.

As a participant in this study you may receive and benefit from support and mentorship from the researcher. This may help you better understand and apply effective and appropriate strategies in my practice. You may also develop a sense of awareness of social justice issues in education that others in my profession do not see.

Information collected in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. No persons other than yourself, the researcher, and the researcher's advisor will have access to your name, the name of your school, or school district, and the name of your community. Any identifiable information will be kept for a period of three years from the completion of the study and then destroyed. During the study, transcripts, recordings, and other documents will be kept in secure settings including password protected hard drives and secure files.

Participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without prejudice or jeopardy. The researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

If I have any questions about this study, I may call the faculty supervisor of the project, Dr. Ann Brooks at (512) 245-1936. If I have questions about my rights as a participant, I may contact the Chair of the Texas State University IRB, Dr. Jon Lasser at (512) 245-3413 or [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu), or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512) 245-2102.

**I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL  
RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.**

---

*PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE*

*DATE*

---

*PRINTED PARTICIPANT'S NAME*

---

*Researcher's Signature*

*Date*



## LITERATURE CITED

- Adler, P.A. & Adler, P. (1987). *Membership roles in field research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Argarwal, M., Epstein, S., Oppenheim, R., Oyler, C., & Sonu, D.(2009). From idea to practice and back again: Beginning teachers teaching for social justice. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61, 237- 247. doi:10.1177/0022487109354521
- Ayers, W. (1998). Popular education—Teaching for social justice. In W. Ayers, J. Hunt, & T. Quinn (Eds.), *Teaching for social justice* (pp. xvii-xxv). New York, NY: Teachers College Press
- Ayers, W. (2001). *To teach: the journey of a teacher*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Ayers, W. (2004). Where we might begin with teaching. In *Rethinking Schools, The new teacher book: Finding purpose, balance, and hope during your first years in the classroom* (pp. 20 -25). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools Publications.
- Banks, J. & Banks, C. Eds. (2010). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.
- Banks, J., Cochran-Smith, M., Moll, L., Richert, A., Zeichner, K., LePage, P., ... McDonald, M. (2005). Teaching Diverse Learners. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World* (pp. 232-274). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Bigelow, B., Christensen, L., Karp, S., Miner, B., & Peterson, B. (1994). *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice*. Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, Ltd.

- Bloomberg, L. & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications
- Chapman, T. K. (2007). Interrogating classroom relationships and events: Using portraiture and critical race theory in education research. *Educational Researcher*, 36(3), 156-162
- Cherubini, L. (2009). Reconciling the tensions of new teachers' socialization into school culture: A review of the research. *Issues in Educational Research*, 19(2). 83-99.  
Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Chubbock, S.M. (2008). A novice teacher's beliefs about socially just teaching: Dialogue of many voices. *The New Educator*, 4 (p.309-329). Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Clandinin, D., Connelly, F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2008, March). Toward a theory of teacher education for social justice. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association, New York City, NY.
- Cole, A. L. & Knowles, J. G. (2000). *Researching teaching: Exploring teacher development through reflexive inquiry*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Los Angeles: Sage.

- Darling-Hammond, L. & Bransford, J. Eds. (2008). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley & Sons.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). From “Separate but equal” to “No child left behind”: The collision of new standards and old inequalities. In D. Meier and G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the no child left behind act is damaging our children and our schools* (pp.3-32). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L., French, J. & Garcia-Lopez, S. P. (2002) (Eds.). *Learning to teach for social justice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Flores, M.T. (2007). Navigating contradictory communities of practice in learning to teach for social justice. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 38(4), 380-404.  
doi:10.1525/aeq.2007.38.4.380
- Friere, P. (2005). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare to teach*. Cambridge, MA: Westview Press.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. & Howard, T. (2000). Multicultural teacher education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *The Teacher Educator*, 36 (1), 1-16. doi:10.1080/08878730009555246
- Goodall, H.L. (2008). *Writing qualitative inquiry: Self, stories, and academic life*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

- Gutkind, L. (1997). *The art of creative nonfiction: Writing and selling the literature of reality*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Haberman, M. (2005). *Star teachers: The ideology and best practice of effective teachers of diverse children and youth in poverty*. Houston, TX: Haberman Educational Foundation.
- Jacobs, D. (2008). *The authentic dissertation: Alternative ways of knowing, research, and representation*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnson, A. (2007). An ethics of access: Using life history to trace preservice teachers' initial viewpoints on teaching for equity. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58, 299-314. doi:10.1177/0022487107305604
- Johnson, E., Oppenheim, R. & Younjung, S. (2009). "Would that be social justice?": A conceptual constellation of social justice curriculum in action. *The New Educator*, 5, 293-310. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Kohl, H. (2004). Teaching for social justice. In Rethinking Schools, *The new teacher book: Finding purpose, balance, and hope during your first years in the classroom* (pp. 42 -55). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools Publications.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 7-24.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). "Yes, but how do we do it? Practicing culturally relevant pedagogy." In J. Landsman & C. W. Lewis (Eds.), *White teachers/diverse classrooms: A guide to building inclusive schools, promoting high expectations, and eliminating racism* (pp. 29-42). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Lichtman, M.(2006). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Linton, T.H., Eberhard, J., Reinhardt-Mundragon, P., & Stottlemeyer, B. (2000). *Strategies for new teacher retention: Creating a climate of authentic professional development for teachers with three or less years of experience*. Texas A & M University, TX: The South Texas Research and Development Center.
- Lynn, M., Smith-Maddox, R. (2007). Pre-service teacher inquiry: Creating a space to dialogue about becoming a social justice educator. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 94-105. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2006.04.004
- McDonald, M. A. (2005). The integration of social justice in teacher education: Dimensions of perspective teachers' opportunities to learn. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56, 418-435. doi:10.1177/0022487105279569
- Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass.
- Milner, H. R. (2008). Critical race theory and interest convergence as analytic tools in teacher education policies and practices. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59, 332–346.
- Milner, H.R. (2013). Analyzing, Poverty, Learning, and Teaching Through a Critical Race Theory Lens. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1) 1-53  
doi:10.3102/0091732X12459720

- Morales, (2005). *Changing students' ideas of social justice through narrative pedagogy*.  
(Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Information and Learning Company.  
(UMI DP 14633).
- Nieto, S. (2004). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*.  
New York, NY: Pearson.
- Nieto, S. (2006). Solidarity, courage and heart: What teacher educators can learn from a  
new generation of teachers. *Intercultural Education*, 17(5), 457-473.  
doi:10.1080/14675980601060443
- Parks, A.M. (2007). *Doing social justice: Narrative of struggle, transformation and belief*  
(Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest database. (UMI No. 3292976)
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London, Eng:  
Sage Publications.
- Poplin, M. & Rivera, J. (2005). Merging social justice and accountability: Educating  
highly qualified, responsible and effective teachers. *Theory into Practice*, 44(1), 27-37.  
doi:10.1207/s15430421tip4401\_5
- Riessman, C. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA:  
Sage Publications.
- Rodgers, C. R. (2002). Seeing student learning: Teacher change and the role of  
reflection. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(2), 230-253. Retrieved January 6, 2011,  
from Research Library. (Document ID: 137108571).
- Young, E. (2010). Challenges to conceptualizing and actualizing culturally relevant  
pedagogy: How viable is the theory in classroom practice? *Journal of Teacher  
Education*, 61(3), pp. 248-260. doi:10.1177/022487109359775

Young, I. M. (2000). Five Faces of Oppression. In M. Adams et al. (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism* (pp. 35 -49). New York, NY: Routledge.