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TALKING ABOUT TEXTS: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN A TEACHER PREPARATION CLASSROOM

VOLUME I

By

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Abstract

TALKING ABOUT TEXTS: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN A TEACHER PREPARATION CLASSROOM

By

Devon G. Brenner

Teachers' conceptions of knowing and learning affect how they teach by shaping their understanding of both their role as teachers and the nature of children as learners. Teachers who hold social constructivist theories of teaching and learning view children as active learners who construct knowledge of subject matter by using dialogue to build from their prior knowledge and experiences. Such teachers understand that the teacher's role is to create experiences with subject matter that provide opportunities for children to engage in, talk through, and reflect on their learning and to create learning communities where children are comfortable enough to share their emerging understandings.

Novice teachers generally do not understand either learning or the role of teacher in these ways, and changing preservice teachers' beliefs about the nature of learning and the role of teaching has typically been a challenging endeavor. As this dissertation will show, the reading and interpreting of children's literature in preservice teacher education hold promise as experiences which support teacher candidates' developing understanding of teaching and learning.

This dissertation examines the promise of children's literature as text

for teacher preparation by documenting the learning that was constructed in one teacher preparation course, and the role that the reading and interpreting of children's literature played in that overall learning. I will show that reading and talking about children's literature shaped and supported beginning teachers' beliefs about their future students, their roles as teachers, and the nature of learning and knowing.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is not so much a product of my intellect as it is a stopping point on my journey as mother, teacher, scholar, friend, and woman. To thank the people who have made the dissertation come to life is to thank the people who have helped me come to be who I am.

I begin with Ruby and Vaughan, my children, for the laughter, joy and poetry they bring into my life. I thank my mother, Gratia Karmes, for her insight, wisdom, patience, and friendship. I thank my other parents, Brian and Linda Worgess and Dick Koch, for their support and guidance. I thank Paula Martin and Suzy Stone, my wonderful child care provider. And I thank my women friends, Pat Norman, Kara Lycke, Mary McVee, and Brenda Neuman, who have helped me to grow in so many ways.

I wish also to recognize the contributions of my committee members. Cheryl Rosaen, chair and codirector, has guided me from the beginning, listening and supporting with rational care as I stood at the crossroads of countless decisions. Jenny Denyer, codirector, who with laughter and skill helped me to come to see so much of what is written in these pages. David Pearson, mentor and colleague, who in countless ways folded me into the community of educational researcher. And Laura Apol, whose passion for both children's literature and poetry has shaped the writer I have become. Finally, I must thank Sue Kennedy and the students in TE 301 for opening their classroom, their words, and their reading to me.

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Transcription Conventions

[ ] indicates text added to excerpts or text which inserts interpretations of typos in written texts and inaudible comments in spoken texts

[[ ]] indicates beginning and ending of overlapping speech

/ indicates one second of silence

Other Features of the Data

All excerpts of written work have been entered into the dissertation as they were originally written. All typos and other grammatical features have been carried over from the original.

In tables, the featured students are indicated in a **bold** font.

My ideas about teaching have changed since January. This course has shown me different things that I haven't thought about before. It challenged what I previously believed and forced me to think about issues in education in a different light. I may not have always agreed with everything but my eyes have been opened to new perspectives.

–Steve, Final Reflection

Chapter One: Introduction

The teacher education classroom is just one of the places where beginning teachers take part in experiences that can shape their emerging classroom practice. I say can because often teacher education makes little or no difference in teachers' understanding of, and therefore actions in, their classrooms. Teachers tend to reproduce the mechanized, irrelevant, stratifying schooling they have experienced, even when they've "learned" in their teacher preparation programs that there are other, better ways to teach (Lortie, 1975).

I know I did. When I entered the field of teaching, I was pretty sure all I

really needed was a commitment to my students and their futures. I was skeptical that teacher education had anything to offer me. I was pleasantly surprised to find that I was wrong in many ways. My undergraduate coursework helped me to situate classrooms in the larger social and political context. I learned about invigorating mathematics curriculum and theories of whole language. I learned I was supposed to distribute authority, to listen to children, and to be very prepared. But when I got my own classroom, when I really had to make sense of children and subject matter and squabbles and textbooks and materials and learning disabilities and the lives of children, I was overwhelmed. What did I fall back on? My own experiences as a student and the ways of making sense those experiences taught me.

Even though I had learned important theories and guidelines and philosophies and practices in my preservice teacher education, I ultimately had to base my day to day teaching decisions not on abstract knowledge but on my understandings about the students and their needs, and the curriculum which I was supposed to teach but about which I knew very little. I struggled to translate theory into practice, I yearned to be and act in the classroom like those teachers I had seen on videotapes when I was preparing to teach. But I did not have a discourse for that kind of teaching, I did not know how to see my students with social constructivist glasses, did not know how to interpret the stories of the classroom in the narrative frames that would allow me to act in the ways I desired. Although I learned a great deal in my teacher preparation program, I needed something else.

Teacher preparation is intended to help beginning teachers understand their students and subject matter in new, better ways. Patrick Shannon (1995) writes, "These undergraduates and teachers must construct themselves as teachers through their consideration of their histories, their literacies, and their experiences" and adds "I am not without influence, however. After all, I am a text they read during class; I dredge up their histories in new ways and I sponsor experiences in which they can engage" (2-3). To Shannon, teacher education is a process of working with teachers as they tell and re-tell their own stories around shared experiences and, in the telling and re-telling, learn new ways of making meaning of their own and their future students' experiences.

I believe that children's literature, as texts in the preparation of teachers, can serve as the basis for interactions that affect how beginning teachers understand and act in their classrooms. Children's literature holds potential as a pedagogical tool for helping preservice teachers grapple with issues such as children's lives and experiences, the role of the teacher, and the nature of knowing and learning. These issues are central to the education of teachers but are difficult to teach to novices. This dissertation examines the role and the promise of children's literature as texts for teacher preparation by documenting the learning that was constructed by six students in one of their introductory education courses, and the role that reading and interpreting children's literature played in that overall learning. I will show that reading and talking about children's literature shaped and supported these beginning

teachers' beliefs about their future students, their roles as teachers, and the nature of learning and knowing.

The Evolution Of The Research Question

As I embarked on this study, I began with a sense that children's literature, as a body of engaging and accessible stories about the lives of children, can teach us a great deal about our students, our teaching, and the nature of learning. I wondered whether or not beginning teachers might benefit from reading and then talking about selections of children's literature. In other words, I asked myself:

> What role, if any, can the reading of children's literature play in the preparation of beginning teachers?

When I learned that Sue Kennedy asked her students to read children's literature in a preservice education course called "EDU 200: Learning and Learners in Contexts," I asked to be allowed to document the role that the children's literature played in the teacher candidates' learning over the semester. During the course of collecting and analyzing the data, I gradually revised the dissertation question until it took on its final form:

> Based on evidence of appropriation and transformation of learning, what did six teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading and interpretation of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

Throughout the rest of this chapter and the next, I describe four revisions to the dissertation question. Many researchers do not write about the ways their research questions change over time. I have chosen to share the evolution of the research question to help my readers understand that while the final question is the one that "got answered," and is the neatest and most concise, that question did not emerge from thin air. A great deal of thought and deliberation went into each version of the question. As I worked to articulate my conceptual framework, as I responded to the specifics of the EDU 200 classroom, as Sue and my committee pushed me to think harder about my assumptions, biases, definitions, and methods, the question, and the work I was doing to collect and analyze data, changed.

I began the research with a vague commitment to explore the promise of children's literature as curriculum in teacher preparation. I ended the research with a question shaped by the setting, the participants, thorough reading of theory, and careful articulation and scrutiny of my own beliefs. For example, as I better understood and articulated the theories that undergirded both data collection and data analysis, the study became one about the interpretation in addition to the reading of the novel. As I came to understand Sue's particular purposes and goals as a teacher educator and for the students in her course, the study became one of the relationship between their interpretation of the novel and their learning about the role of the teacher and the child's experience.

Tracing the ways the dissertation question evolved serves several

purposes. First, it reveals the reflexive nature of this research. I worked hard to subject my thought processes, biases, and conceptual frameworks to the same careful scrutiny I brought to data analysis. As you will see in Chapter 2, the question evolved as I learned from the data. I had assumed that educative discourse about the novel and about teaching would appear a certain way, and planned to rely on discourse analysis as my primary methodology. The nature of the talk was not consistent with my expectations, and so I returned to theories and worked with colleagues to redefine assumptions about learning and dialogue, and, in turn reshaped the question to reflect ways I was conducting the data analysis.

Tracing the evolution of the research question also points out the ways that qualitative research is responsive to the particulars of the field setting. I began with general questions about the role and promise of children's literature in teacher preparation. The question became an "answerable" question when I had learned enough from my participation in the field to craft the question in ways that were consistent with the teaching and learning taking place in the EDU 200 classroom.

In addition to tracing changes in the dissertation question, I do two tings in chapter one: I situate this dissertation within a relatively new but growing body of work on the use of narrative, literature, and in particular, children's literature in teacher education, and I also discuss the reasons teacher educators are turning to narrative, in particular children's literature, to support the preparation of thoughtful and knowledgeable practitioners.

Framing The Question

As I said earlier, I began with a broad question:

What role, if any, can the reading of children's literature play in the preparation of beginning teachers?

The research itself was conducted in the context of one particular teacher education course, EDU 200: Learners and Learning in Context. As I discuss in greater detail in chapter 3, EDU 200 was a course about learning, a course meant to help 24 elementary and secondary teacher candidates come to see learning as an active, social process of construction. Sue worked to help the teacher candidates build that conception of learning by asking them to spend half of the class considering children, as individuals who make sense of experiences in classrooms in light of prior experiences in and out of classrooms and as members of learning communities. For the second half of the semester, Sue provided opportunities for the teacher candidates to learn about learning as they explored the role of the teacher by thinking about teachers as individuals who know and care deeply about subject matter and children; who have particular strategies for classroom management, planning, and reflection; and who find ways to make connections between children's prior knowledge and content.

Sue's goals for the course brought about the first revision to the dissertation question. The initial question asked generally about the role that children's literature might play in teacher preparation. In light of the content

of EDU 200, I broke the question into two parts. The first focused on the teacher candidates' learning in general, asking:

> What did teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher?

Part two of the overarching question retained the focus on the reading of children's literature and its role as curriculum in the preparation of teachers:

> What role, if any, did their reading of children's literature play in that learning?

The purposes of teacher preparation. By asking what role the reading of children's literature played in the teacher candidates' learning, my overall purpose for this dissertation is to learn about the promise and the limits of children's literature as curriculum in teacher education. Any consideration of the "promise" or the success of a curriculum must first begin with a careful consideration of the aims of teacher preparation. Teacher education is intended to support beginning teachers as they learn what they need to know in order to create successful classrooms. As a profession, we already know a great deal about the characteristics of successful, reform-oriented classrooms, and the teachers who teach in them. In the next section of this chapter I briefly describe the characteristics of "successful" classrooms and the knowledge bases needed to create them. As I do so, I briefly talk about the ways the knowledge bases were and were not part of the intended curriculum

for EDU 200.

Successful Classrooms And Teachers

The characteristics of successful classrooms and successful teachers have been well documented (e.g. Ayers, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Rose, 1995). Successful classrooms are those where students learn to think, to act on their own behalf and on behalf of their communities and the world. Students are helped to master the subject matter at hand in meaningful ways, and learn to make connections between what they are learning and their lives. As they learn, they become active and empowered citizens.

The researchers who study successful teaching and successful classrooms vary in their emphases or focus, and they inevitably find remarkable variability in teaching style, organization, and personality. Still, there are characteristics that cut across this variability. Mike Rose perhaps summarized the characteristics of successful classrooms best when he wrote:

> If we consider these rooms to be miniature public spheres or preparatory arenas for civic life, then it is essential to note how the formation of an intellectually safe and respectful space, the distribution of authority and responsibility, the maintenance of high expectations and the means to attain them–how all this is essential to the development of the intelligence of a people. (p. 417)

These four elements are the characteristics of strong classrooms. These characteristics focus on elements of the learning community–the ways

children are asked and allowed to interact with one another and with the teacher. In such classrooms children hold responsibility for their learning and for one another. The classroom is a safe and supportive environment, where learning and children are both valued and respected. Students are supported, emotionally and intellectually, by teachers who know children and the subject matter well enough to create links between the two.

In order to create such classrooms, the teachers in these studies shared several characteristics. They knew their subject matter, and they knew it well. They knew their students, their lives, communities, and histories. They possessed a knowledge of pedagogical craft that allowed them to make connections between students and the content being taught. They understood learners as active meaning makers and knowledge as a construction. They forged social networks that provided them with emotional, intellectual, and political support. They had an understanding of schools as institutions and of schooling's role in society. And above all, they held high expectations of their students' intellectual, civic, and democratic potential.

Knowing For Teaching

Knowing about the content. A teacher's success in the classroom is largely dependent upon his or her knowledge of the subject matter at hand. In light of this, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1989) calls for teachers who possess a "rich understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organized, linked to other disciplines and applied to real-world settings" (p. 3).

According to Grossman, Wilson, and Shulman (1989) teachers need to know the content of subject matter, including both the facts and the central concepts of any field or subject. Teachers also need to have substantive and syntactic knowledge of disciplines they teach. Substantive knowledge of a discipline includes understanding of "the explanatory framework or paradigms that are used both to guide inquiry in the field and to make sense of data" (Schwab, cited in Grossman, et. al. p. 28). In other words, substantive knowledge is the knowledge of the ways of seeing the world implied in a discipline. Syntactic knowledge, on the other hand, is knowledge of the ways new learning, new knowledge, is brought into the field. Syntactic knowledge includes understanding of the ways claims are made and supported, they way hypothesis are tested, the ways arguments are made.

In other words, teachers ought to have knowledge not only of the what they are teaching, but of the world view and ways of making sense implied in a field and of the ways those fields are organized, changed, and contested. Deep, flexible knowledge of subject matter allows teachers to help students become more active, engaged, and critical learners. While subject matter knowledge is essential, it has not typically been the domain of teacher education programs themselves, but rather the responsibility of the rest of their undergraduate coursework. In particular, knowledge of content was not a large component of the intended curriculum for EDU 200. Occasionally, the teacher candidates talked with Sue and with one another about the process of reading, and in that way explored their understanding of subject matter that

several of them would one day teach, and the teacher candidates' construction of knowledge about reading and the reading process is a small but significant component of the data analysis yet to come.

Pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Coupled with the **what** of teaching–the subject matter itself–is the **how** of teaching–knowledge of teaching in general and about the teaching of subject matter in particular. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards calls this "specialized knowledge of how to convey and reveal subject matter to students." General pedagogical knowledge is often the focus of teacher preparation programs (Shulman, 1986) including such things as lesson planning, classroom management, and assessment.

Knowledge of basic pedagogy is clearly important. It is becoming more and more understood that teachers also need what Grossman (1990) calls pedagogical content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge includes knowledge of the purposes for teaching a particular subject, the possible ways students might think about a subject, knowledge of the materials available for teaching a subject, understanding of connections between that subject in one grade and that subject in earlier and later grades, as well as connections between a particular subject and other disciplines, and knowledge of ways and strategies and representations of subject matter (p. 8-9). Shulman calls this kind of knowledge "the dimension of subject matter knowledge *for teaching*" (1989, p. 9) because it emphasizes not the content, but the ways of making that content accessible to, or learnable by, students.

Knowledge of pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge are both names for a teacher's knowledge of the experiences, materials, and processes that will support children's engagement with and mastery of subject matter. As the teacher candidates' explored the role of the teacher in EDU 200, they considered the importance of making connections between children's experiences and subject matter. However, these conversations were not typically grounded in particular content areas. The teacher candidates in EDU 200 were preparing to teach a wide variety of subjects and age levels, and their work in EDU 200 was meant to lay the foundation for the more pedagogical and subject matter oriented courses in the remainder of their teacher education programs.

Knowing about learners. In order to support students' learning, and to hold high expectations of students in the classroom, teachers need to know students--as individuals, as learners, and as members of cultures. To teach well, teachers need an understanding of their students as members of diverse cultures, and they should learn to see cultural differences not as weaknesses or obstacles, but as strengths (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Zeichner, 1993). Teachers need a vast repertoire of ways to learn about individual students, to interact with families and communities, and to listen to students in order to understand them (Cazden & Mehan, 1989). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1989) calls for teachers to understand and to adjust their practices for differences in culture, and also for differences in "interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, family circumstances, and peer

relationships" (p. 2).

Historically, helping beginning teachers learn about their students has not been easy. In a review of research on preparing teachers for cultural diversity, Kenneth Zeichner (1993) found that "the empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports a view of preservice teacher education as a weak intervention" (p. 4). Traditional teacher education experiences such as field experiences may even reify negative stereotypes preservice teachers bring with them, and lead preservice teachers to attribute "more negative values to school children, their families, and their neighborhoods" (Habermas, cited in Zeichner, p. 19-20). In the preparation of teachers, we must continue to seek out pedagogy and curricula that help novice teachers develop positive, rigorous, curious attitudes toward learners and a repertoire of skills for learning about students, both as individuals and as members of cultures and communities.

EDU 200 was certainly a course designed to help teacher candidates construct these curious, positive, and rigorous attitudes toward learners, and the particular skills of observation, community building, and reflection that allow teachers to know and learn about their students. The data analysis that follows documents the teacher candidates' construction of learning within this territory of knowing.

Knowledge of Learning. Teachers also need to understand their students as learners, because their epistemologies shape they ways they teach (Many, Howard & Stone, 1997). Successful teachers generally view knowledge

as a socio-cultural construction, and understand learners as active constructors of their own knowledge. They understand the role that dialogue can play in helping bridge new learning to existing knowledge. When knowledge is viewed this way, successful teachers tend to create particular learning communities, communities that are safe, respectful, and supportive. In such communities, children take risks, are intellectually challenged, and are given opportunities to use talk and writing to actively construct knowledge. Beginning teachers, however, generally hold a banking model, a model which sees teaching as telling and learning as receiving (McDiarmid, Ball & Anderson, 1989). Novice teachers tend to view learners as separate from the curriculum, believe that interest and "fun" are necessary and sufficient for learning, believe that learning is hierarchical, and think that the curriculum is fixed and organized (Prawat, 1992). Such teachers often tend to create teacher centered classrooms, delivering knowledge to children who passively receive it.

Changing preservice teachers' conceptions of learning and knowledge is a difficult task. Banking models of teaching and learning have long been the standard in K-12 education, and seem both reasonable and appropriate to the teachers who hold them. Changing those models requires novice teachers to rethink much of what they know about children, their own educations, and subject matter. As Prawat says, "Teachers are unlikely to complicate their lives in this way without undergoing a significant change in their thinking" (p. 357). Providing opportunities for novice teachers to make

epistemological changes of this sort, however, is essential if teacher education is to contribute to the formation of successful classrooms like those described above.

As I said earlier, EDU 200: Learners and Learning in Context was primarily a course about learning. This dissertation traces the ways the teacher candidates did, and did not, transform their conceptions of learning in light of their reading of the novel.

Knowing about the role of teaching. Buchmann (1993) describes a role as "those behaviors and dispositions that students and the public have a right to expect of teachers" (p. 147). She argues that while lore and tradition tend to allow teachers to justify their decisions based on personal and idiosyncratic preferences, conceiving of teaching as a role emphasizes teachers' obligations to those outside of themselves. Because they have chosen to be teachers, the individuals who head our classrooms are responsible to subject matter, that is, to the communities and bodies of knowledge that comprise what children are meant to know. Teachers are also responsible to children, not just to befriending and caring about children, but to teaching them, to helping them grow and learn. Finally, teachers are responsible to the communities in which their classrooms are located, both locally and further afield.

Buchmann argues that teacher educators should push beginning teachers to move beyond individualistic and personal orientations, and help beginning teachers to conceive of teaching as a role, with all its concomitant obligations. Buchmann claims, " . . . teacher educators often focus on the

personal concerns of novices and experienced teachers." However, "Role orientation as a disposition can steady teachers in their separate classrooms, helping them call to mind what their work is about and who is to benefit from it" (p. 154). Helping beginning teachers move beyond themselves as teachers is important. Beginning teachers tend to see themselves as the keepers of knowledge they will deliver to students (Prawat, 1992), or to think of their role as one of merely creating friendly interpersonal relationships with children (Weinstein, 1998), both of which are inwardly directed visions of teaching. All of the qualities of good teaching described above, the formation of learning communities, the holding of high expectations, the creation of opportunities for children to engage with subject matter in powerful ways, these and other aspects of teaching come about when teachers move beyond a self-oriented conception of teaching and understand their role as balancing their obligations to children, to learning, to subject matter, and to society.

Conceiving of teaching as an outwardly oriented role is not unproblematic. Purposes for schooling have long been both complicated and contested (Cuban, 1990), and because of this, there are many competing conceptions of the role of teacher, from task-master to coach, from gatekeeper to friend. Many of those roles, and many of society's expectations of schooling, serve to reify the inequitable distribution of power and wealth historically perpetuated by the institution of schooling. Greene (1989) argues that teachers, including beginning teachers, need not only to sense their

outward obligation to children, learning, subject matter and community, but they also need to be able to evaluate and critique the expectations which these external communities put upon them. In other words, teachers need to know about the historical, social, and political contexts of schooling in order to balance their obligations they assume when they take on the role of teacher.

In EDU 200, the teacher candidates talked about the teachers' role as one of balancing the needs and desires of the teacher, the content and organization of subject matter, and the interests, knowledge, and desires of the students. Not all aspects of the teachers' role were components of EDU 200, for example, they did not work to situate schooling and teaching in larger societal contexts (an issue explored in other teacher education courses at this institution). The teacher candidates' construction of knowledge about the role of the teacher has been an important component of this dissertation.

Conclusion. Each of the five knowledge bases described above, knowledge of content, of pedagogy, of learners, of learning, and of the role of teacher, is essential in the education of preservice teachers. While the term knowledge base implies a store of facts, information, and strategies, it has not been my intent to outline a set of binding categories. Instead, I see these "knowledge bases" as a complicated and interconnected web of concepts, dispositions, and territories of knowing that are important to teachers' work in the classroom, and which generally comprise the content of teacher education programs. Because the knowledge bases intertwine and connect, and because each of these bases is a summary of a large and complex body of

knowledge, we could not and would not expect one introductory education course to support teacher candidates' learning within all five territories of knowing or of "all" of one.

Of these five knowledge bases, three were particularly important for considering the knowledge the teacher candidates constructed in EDU 200: knowing about learners, knowing about learning, and knowing about the role of the teacher. The knowledge they constructed within these bases connected to developing understandings of subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge.

Why Children's Literature?

In spite of our understanding of the knowledge bases that support successful teaching, teacher educators have generally been unsuccessful in bringing about change in the practice of education (Britzman, 1991; Sykes, 1984). In part this is because beginning teachers' beliefs and epistemologies are notoriously difficult to change (Prawat, 1992; Weinstein, 1989), perhaps because beginning teachers often find the curriculum of teacher preparation to be useless and irrelevant (Lortie, 1975), or, as Lanier and Little (1986) describe it, " . . . largely arbitrary, technical, fragmented, and without depth" (p. 554). .

There are many who hypothesize that beginning teachers might learn the content and theories of education best when narratives become central components of the teacher preparation program (e.g. McEwan & Egan, 1995; Mcvee, in process; Preskill, 1998; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Narratives,

including those told and those written down, can make teacher education seem both relevant and connected to teachers' concerns. Teacher educators who bring narratives into the teacher education classroom hold assumptions about the narrative nature of knowing, and so believe that narrative frames the ways in which teachers make sense of their worlds and, in turn, their classrooms.

Jerome Bruner (1993) defines narrative as holding several properties. Narrative is sequential, and events are related to one another according to a time line, though that time line may be manipulated. Narrative has a dramatic quality, in other words, events described are related for a purpose or effect, and that effect is revealed or indicated by the very construction of the narrative itself. Narrative blurs the (artificial) distinction between "real" and subjective, and in so doing, ascribes qualities and intentions to the events being related. Perhaps most importantly, narrative serves as metaphor for experiences. Narrative, by representing and explaining both what is normal and what is unusual, allows us to ascribe significance and meaning to experience. Narrative discourse allows us to hold the world and our experiences still, to interpret the unusual apart from the usual, and to understand one another.

As we come together in an event, it is the narratives of the event that give it meaning. That meaning is particular, it organizes and represents the particular moment, person, and theme of the story. And that meaning is general. Narratives we take part in–that we hear, read, construct for

ourselves–shape and define the ways we make sense of future events and the ways we revise our understanding of past events. Or, as Diane Brunner (1994) writes,

> . . . the potential of narrative lies in its ability to particularize experience and to enlarge as well as personalize issues. It is the generative nature of narrative that gives it potential to generate particular ways of thinking, knowing, even criticizing–to have a memory and to extend or formulate application of that memory to particular experiences. (p. 103)

Narratives, like other linguistic structures, construct reality by naming, ordering, codifying, and calling attention to the specifics and the generalities of our experiences. To narrative theorists and researchers like Brunner and Bruner above, and also many others (e.g. McEwan & Egan, 1995; Mcvee, in process; Preskill, 1998; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), narratives are powerful tools for making sense of experience, and so in turn are an important means for both teaching and for learning about teaching.

Narratives can take many forms. Beginning teachers are sometimes asked to remember and tell their own stories or to write their own narratives of schooling and learning. They are sometimes presented with case studies of teachers or learners. Other times, beginning teachers are invited to read autobiographies or other stories as part of their learning as teachers. And with increasing frequency, beginning teachers are asked to read children's literature in courses where children's literature might not be expected to

appear.

At Michigan State University, for example, a third of preservice teachers are asked to read novels such as *A Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1886) in their foundational coursework (Norman, 1998). At the University of Cincinnati many students are asked to read Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and other novels in their educational psychology courses (Mitchell, Milgram, O'Reilly & Collins, 1997). In Minnesota, teacher candidates are asked to read picture books and novels as they consider issues of multiculturalism and bilingual education (Quintero, 1997). At these and other institutions of teacher preparation, children's literature is presumed to help beginning teachers learn about teaching, learning, children, and schooling (cf: Adler, 1991; Brunner, 1994).

There are many reasons that teacher educators turn to children's literature as texts in the preparation of teachers. Perhaps the most important is that as stories, children's books are consistent with the narrative ways that beginning teachers make sense of their worlds, and, in turn, their classrooms. When we take narrative as an organizing principle of meaning-making, then it is logical to assume that stories should play a large role in the preparation of teachers. Though not speaking specifically about teacher education, Lee Galda (1998) describes children's literature as potentially transformative because it can serve as both a window onto other lives and a mirror onto our own. Galda says: "It is just this potential for transformation, the power that experiences with stories have to change our lives, to make us see, feel, and

live a little differently, that makes literature so wonderful and so dangerous" (p. 4). This belief in the power of children's literature to help readers see their lives and others in new ways that leads some teacher educators to ask beginning teachers to think about students, schooling, and teaching in light of narratives that portray those topics in powerful ways.

Even though children's books are presumably written for children, there are many ways the content of children's literature is particularly suited to preservice teacher education, in particular in a course such as Sue's, which focuses on both the experience of the student and the role of the teacher. Children's literature is generally about children, and often portrays children's lives in ways which can help beginning teachers to understand their future students in ways they need to–as individuals, as learners, as members of cultures. In most children's literature, the characters grow and change. They learn. As they learn, they face issues that real-life learners face–emotions, families, friends, cultures. These are issues perhaps most difficult to address in teacher education (Hargreaves, 1995).

A substantial subset of children's books are set in and around school. As the characters in children's books interact with teachers, as they learn in and out of school, beginning teachers can find opportunities to reflect on the role of the teacher (Brenner, 1997). The particular content of children's books, in their portrayals of learning and schooling, can provide a powerful set of narratives for beginning teachers to consider. As Maxine Greene has said, "It is difficult for me to teach educational history or philosophy to teachers-to-be

without engaging them in the domain of imagination and metaphor. How else are they to make meaning out of the discrepant things they learn?" (cited in Rummel & Quintero, 1997).

Another reason that teacher educators often turn to children's literature is that beginning teachers are likely to find children's literature engaging. These books are often well written, and because they are written with children in mind, they contain straightforward, easy to read prose. Preservice teachers often complain that theoretical writing is too difficult or inaccessible. Children's literature, however, can form bridges between novice teachers and the theories they are asked to explore. Diane Brunner, for example, (1994) paired particular pieces of theory about the role and purpose of schooling with adult novels, films, and children's books that depicted the theories being considered. She found that the literary texts allowed her students to better engage with and understand the theories, and that the theory pieces in turn supported students' critical readings of the literary texts.

Narratives in Educational Research

Professors and instructors who incorporate children's literature into their teacher education classrooms reason that these novels and picture books are effective texts for helping students learn about students and schooling. However, little is known about just what and how students learn about teaching and learning when they read these texts in their education coursework because, to date, little research has been done that carefully examines how preservice teachers make sense of the children's novels they

read, and most of the writing that emerges from these courses has been anecdotal. Brunner's work, described briefly above and in more detail below, is an exception. Brunner is one of the many who write about narrative in education, and one of the very few who have carefully researched the role of children's literature in teacher preparation.

Many educators and teacher educators have written theoretically about the role that narrative can play in education. (See, for example, Coles, 1989; Conle, 1996; Greene, 1991; Jackson, 1991). There are some who understand teachers as narrative beings, and conduct research which tells, in narrative form, the stories of teachers' personal and professional lives. These include Carter (1992), Connelly and Clandinin (1994; 1990), Elbaz, (1990) and Schubert (1991). Others researchers recommend and study the role of case studies of teachers including Bird, 1991; Bird, Anderson, Sullivan & Swidler, 1992, Preskill, 1998; Kleinfeld, 1992; Shulman, 1992; Sykes & Bird, 1992. Finally, there are several who have studied the potential of both reading and writing autobiographies, of teachers and others, for teacher education. These include Florio-Ruane, Raphael, Glazier, McVee & Wallace (1997); Glazier (1998), Mcvee (In process), Florio-Ruane (1995) Preskill (1998), Gomez (1991), and Soliday (1994).

In spite of the growing of body narrative work in education, very few teacher educators and researchers have written about the role that children's literature can and has played in teacher preparation, in part because the practice of teacher education itself is a relatively unstudied phenomenon

(Sarason, 1986/1962), and in part because texts written for children have typically been the domain of children's literature, literacy, and library science courses, rather than the curriculum of more general or foundational teacher preparation.

A very few teacher educators who ask their students to read children's literature have shared anecdotes from their classrooms. Quintero (1997), for example, wrote briefly about her use of multicultural children's literature in a diversity course she regularly teaches in a larger volume focusing on the narratives of teachers' lives. Arlene Harris Mitchell, Joel Milgram, Patricia O'Reilly, and Roger L. Collins (1997) told stories about their uses of children's literature in educational psychology courses at a recent meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Two teacher educators, Diane Brunner and Susan Adler, present theories and cases that justify and encourage the folding of children's literature into the curriculum of teacher education. The bulk of Brunner's work, *Inquiry and Reflection: Framing Narrative Practice in Education* is theoretical. Brunner defines learning in social constructivist terms and describes the critical pedagogy she hopes to achieve in teacher preparation. She outlines in great detail the theories that underlie her use of several narratives of schooling, including young adult novels, to encourage her students to rethink their assumptions of schooling. She also summarizes the plots of several of these narratives of schooling.

After laying the groundwork for understanding the potential of

narratives and theory to inform one another, Brunner shares several excerpts of discourse that arose during conversations about the novels, movies, and theoretical pieces. These teacher candidates' stories are presented without Brunner's analysis so that readers can interpret the cases independently. As Brunner says in her book, "It has been my desire to allow students' stories to stand on their own" (p. 191). In Brunner's work, the teacher candidates' discourse, the stories they told during conversations in class, are not meant to serve as data to prove a point about narrative or to support a research claim. Instead, they are meant to:

> . . . illustrate through story vignette the particular struggles prospective English teachers who participated in responding to the materials in this text shared as they remembered schooling experiences and attempted to construct new images of teaching.

These vignettes help the reader to see that when narrative texts are explicitly paired with theoretical pieces on the role and purposes of schooling, teacher candidates are able to work intertextually. In this case, the literature gave her students access to the theoretical pieces she asked them to read, and the ideas in the theoretical pieces helped her students bring a critical spirit to their exploration of the characters and themes portrayed in the literature, and, in turn, in their own individual stories of schooling.

Adler's work, "Framing a critical pedagogy in the social studies methods class: The use of imaginative literature," a chapter in an edited volume on inquiry-oriented teacher education (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1991),

has a structure similar to Brunner's. In the first part of her chapter, Adler justifies the use of what she calls "imaginative literature," which includes children's novels, in the social studies classroom. Adler argues that imaginative texts can enable preservice teachers to reexamine their assumptions both about social studies content and about the nature of knowledge. Adler describes the plots of two narratives she asks her social studies methods students to read, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1959), and Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* (Miller, 1952). Adler then provides what she calls "A case example" (p. 85), describing and quoting her students' responses to reading Achebe. This brief case of teacher candidate learning is meant to illustrate the potential of imaginative literature for enabling beginning social studies teachers to take a critical stance.

There are many differences between these authors' work and this dissertation, some minor, some major. Brunner and Adler hoped literature would enable their own preservice teachers to take a critical stance toward content and toward schooling. In contrast, Sue Kennedy did not aim to foster a critical stance as much as she hoped to challenge the teacher candidates' assumptions about learning, children, and the role of the teacher. Brunner and Adler taught subject matter specific courses. Sue's course was more general, as a foundational course that served as prerequisite to subject matter specific courses. Brunner and Adler both taught teacher candidates preparing to teach high school, while Sue's students were both future elementary and high school teachers. Brunner asked her students to read children's and adult

novels, as well as view movies that portrayed experiences in school. Adler asked her students to read a novel and a play, neither specifically written for children but often read by adolescents. Sue Kennedy, on the other hand, asked her teacher candidates to read *Bridge to Terabithia*, a novel written for an audience of children, and frequently read in schools by children as young as fourth grade.

Methodologically, there are larger differences between their works and the mine. Adler summarized her students' experiences into a brief case. Brunner presented her students' narratives as they were, but did little or no analysis. Both hoped their examples would provoke thought and invite discussion about the use of narratives in teacher preparation, and perhaps serve as inspirational models. Neither worked to systematically understand the role the stories played in the teacher candidates' learning or to document and describe the learning that the teacher candidates constructed.

I aim to do something quite different in this dissertation. In the following chapters, you will see that I carefully define learning as a social construction, and then systematically examine the teacher candidates' writing and talk in order to make claims about the role that the reading of a novel played in that learning by presenting six case studies. Brunner and Adler, by their use of theory and example, make a convincing argument for the potential of literature in teacher education. This dissertation aims to explore that potential in a systematic and methodological way.

Chapter Two: Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the methodology I used to collect and analyze data, as well as the conceptual framework which underlies this study. In part one of this chapter, I describe the data sources and the methods employed to manage that data. In the second part of this chapter, I describe several sets of theories that served as the foundation for analysis of the data. These include social constructivist theories of learning, transactional theories of reading, and activity framework theory. As I mentioned earlier, the research question changed during the course of research. One change came about in response to the particulars of the course itself, as I described in chapter 1. Other changes to the research question came about as I thought hard about both the theoretical stances and the methodology that shaped this research. I will continue to outline the ways in which the dissertation question itself evolved throughout chapter 2.

The course and its students. In chapter 1, I briefly described the content of the course in which this study is situated. The most complete description of the course, its participants and instructor, can be found in chapter 3. Here, I relate some key facts about the course in order to frame the methodology that follows. EDU 200: Learning and Learners in Contexts is the third in a series of nine teacher education courses which culminate in a year long internship experience in a single classroom. University wide, EDU 200 is a course meant to challenge beginning teachers' notions of knowledge as fixed and of

learning as receiving, and to help them come to an understanding of learning as a socio-cultural construction.

Sue worked to meet this aim by asking her students to consider both the experience of the student and the role of the teacher. The teacher candidates in the course took part in many of the experiences that are common in teacher preparation work, including reading and discussing pieces of theory, taking part in a field experience in a local classroom, conducting a child study, writing reflections both in and out of class, and teaching a brief lesson to their peers.

At the center of the course, in between the component dedicated to considering the experience of the child and the component which focused on teachers and their various roles, Sue asked the teacher candidates to read a children's novel and then to engage in a variety of experiences to further interpret that novel. The teacher candidates read Katherine Paterson's Newberry Award winning novel *Bridge to Terabithia*. (A summary of *Bridge to Terabithia* can be found in Appendix A.) After reading the novel, the teacher candidates worked with the book in three ways: (1) they took part in an instructor-led discussion about themes, characters, and events in the novel, (2) they worked in groups of 12 to create a large mural of their illustration or interpretation of the novel, and (3) they gave individual presentations to represent their interaction with or connection to the book. At the end of the course, each teacher candidate wrote a graded reflection summarizing their overall learning in the course.

Sue read a couple of picture books aloud to introduce some themes she discussed in class, but *Bridge to Terabithia* was the only book the teacher candidates worked with extensively. The teacher candidates read the novel independently at home, and then spent two full class periods talking, painting, and presenting about their readings of the novel. In addition, the novel was meant to be a bridge between the two major components in the course, the focus on understanding the experience of the child and the explorations of the role of the teacher. After learning about the major themes and content of the course, the dissertation question shifted, so that in its second iteration, the question that guided my work was:

> What did teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading of children's literature play in that learning?

The question asked generally about the reading of children's literature. *Bridge to* Terabithia played a prominent role in the course, as the experience connecting the two components of the course, as the piece of literature the teacher candidates talked most about. As I came to understand the role that the novel played in the teaching and activities of the course, I became curious about the role that particular novel played in the teacher candidates' learning. Because of this, the question changed again, in a small but important way, to read:

What did teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading of **Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*** play in that learning?

In the next sections I outline the data sources, methodology, and theories underlying my efforts to answer this question.

Data Sources And Methodology

The work of this dissertation has been done in the tradition of interpretive, participant observational fieldwork, which, according to Frederick Erickson (1986), involves,

> (a) intensive, long-term participation in a field setting; (b) careful recording of what happens in the setting by writing field notes and collecting other documentary evidence (e.g. memos, records, examples of student work, audio tapes, videotapes); and (c) subsequent analytic reflection on the documentary record obtained in the field, and reporting by means of detailed description, using narrative vignettes and direct quotes from interviews, as well as by more general description in the form of analytic charts, summary tables, and descriptive statistics. (p. 121).

In this conception of qualitative research, the researcher enters the field; observes, documenting as carefully as possible the events and

phenomena that transpire; participates in the field enough to interpret the meanings and significance of the phenomena she has observed; and then analyzes, describes, and reports on her findings. In the next sections, I describe more thoroughly the methods of participant observation, data collection, analysis and reporting that I have employed.

Participation And Documentation

Erickson's description of interpretive or qualitative research begins with participation in the field and collection of evidence of "what happens." For this dissertation, the data collected include observations and field notes from nearly 2/3 of the class sessions (12 out of 19 class sessions), as well as transcripts of audio and video tapes of 10 of the class sessions, artifacts that came from the class, interviews and conversations with the course instructor, and interviews with several students. Table 1 summarizes the data collected for the study, briefly describing the kind and quantity of each sort of data. Each of these types of data is more thoroughly described in the following sections.

Table 1: Data Sources

Class Sessions	Artifacts	Instructor Interviews	Teacher Candidate Interviews
• 12 class sessions: beginning, end, *Bridge* Sequence and surrounding courses. • field notes of all 12 class sessions • 6 sessions audio and 4 sessions both audio and video taped	• in class artifacts including posters, handouts, readings, artwork, all student work	• two formal interviews about the course • informal conversations • preparation for conference presentation	• interviews at middle and end of course with 5 teacher candidates

Class sessions. During spring semester, I attended and collected data from 2/3 of the course sessions. I collected field notes of my observations from all 12class sessions I attended. I also collected audio tapes of 10 of those twelve classes, and video tapes of 4 classes. The first two days of class were not recorded because the teacher candidates had not yet been told the details of the research project nor had they granted permission for data collection. Those initial classes served also as an opportunity for the teacher candidates to get to know me, as a member of the community of the class and as a researcher. Video footage was collected during the two class sessions that made up the *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence–the day the novel was painted and discussed and the day of the *Bridge* Presentations. In addition, I collected

video footage of the class period before the *Bridge* Sequence in order to help students become familiar with the video cameras, and video footage was collected on the day the students taught brief lessons to each other.

Audio tapes were collected on the days I video taped class sessions and on 6 other class periods before and after the *Bridge* Sequence. Audio taped days included tapes of whole class conversations as well as of small group conversations. I cataloged those tapes, making time-coded summaries of the conversations and contents of each tape. Selected sections and entire tapes were chosen for detailed transcription when the contents of those passages seemed pertinent to data analysis.

I have described the methodology as one of participant observation fieldwork. My participation in the course, including participation in large and small group discussion, activities, and informal conversations with the students, was an on-going negotiation. My role in the course changed frequently in response to my own emerging clarity of purpose, the participants' comfort level, and the changing format and content of each session of the course. For example, on the first days of class I participated in the getting-to-know-you activities as if I were one of the students. These included name learning games and presentation of personal "profiles." Sue and I reasoned that my active participation in the class would help to me to become a comfortable and unobtrusive member of the learning community. During the mural painting activity, however, I sat on the sidelines and took notes. The withdrawn observer role seemed more appropriate on this day

because other times Sue had taught this same course, the mural painting activity was an independent activity.

Artifacts. I collected artifacts that related to the teaching, learning and experiences of the course over the entire semester. These included formal course documents, such as the syllabus and handouts explaining Sue's assignments. I collected, copied, and returned all course assignments, including the three graded written assignments–the Child Study Paper, the Peer Teaching Reflection, and the Final Reflection–and all informal in-class writing that Sue collected, such as end of class quick-writes or reflections, and ungraded papers written in reaction to specific readings. I also collected all of the group artifacts created in class, including the murals that were created during the *Bridge* Sequence and posters that small groups created in the middle and on the last day of class. In addition, I collected all of the course readings, including the coursepack, required books (Dewey, 1902/1990; Weinstein 1990, Weinstein and Mignano,1991), and all readings handed out in class.

Instructor interviews. I held two formal interviews with the course instructor, one before class began and one at the end of the course. These interviews focused on understanding Sue's goals for the class, her rationale for the readings and assignments in the class, and her sense of the students' learning and the course overall. Sue and I also talked frequently about the course, including both informal conversations and e-mail. These conversations became part of my fieldnotes. Sue and I also worked together

on a conference presentation about one of the class sessions. This collaboration shaped my interpretation of the data.

Teacher candidate interviews. Five teacher candidates volunteered to participate in interviews focusing on their participation and learning in the course. All five of the students interviewed were preparing to teach elementary school. Gina and Kelly were child development majors planning to teach the younger grades, and Steve, Bill, and James were elementary education majors, planning to teach middle grades.

When I asked for teacher candidates to volunteer to be interviewed, I recruited only those teacher candidates preparing to teach elementary school. This happened both because I think of myself as an elementary teacher educator, and because only one secondary education major student volunteered to participate in the interviews, and this volunteer had not been present during either of the two classes of the *Bridge* Sequence.

In chapters 4 and 5, I present the cases of six featured teacher candidates, Only three of those were teacher candidates who participated in interviews. As I selected the teacher candidates who are featured more prominently in chapters 3, 4, and 5, I realized I needed to include secondary education majors because they played an important role in shaping the discourse and experiences of the rest of the class. Finally, because 18 out of the 24 students were women, it made sense to me to select 4 women and 2 men for featured students. The featured students included Steve, Gina, and Kelly, who participated in interviews, Renee, another child development major, and

Aaron and Elise, both preparing to teach high school. These six featured students are introduced more thoroughly in chapter 3.

Subsequent Analytic Reflection And Reporting

Data, once collected, is worth very little until the researcher learns from it, and shares that learning with the larger community. Part (c) of Erickson's description of qualitative work (mentioned on page 33 of this chapter) refers to, as he puts it, "subsequent analytic reflection on the documentary record obtained in the field, and reporting by means of detailed description, using narrative vignettes and direct quotes from interviews, as well as by more general description in the form of analytic charts, summary tables, and descriptive statistics." Chapters 4 and 5 comprise the work I have done to "report" my findings, and these chapters take on many of the forms that Erickson has described here. Tables, charts, vignettes, descriptions, and quotes are all featured prominently. But what of the work that went into creating those tables and descriptions and choosing those quotes? These, and the claims they are meant to support, arose out of the "subsequent analytic reflection" done in the name of learning from my data. Analytic reflection has to do with the ways in which the researcher goes about deciding which pieces of the data help to answer her questions, which to attend to and which to ignore, and how to make sense of the ways the data do (or do not) help to understand the phenomena being studied in light of the research questions the researcher is exploring.

Erickson describes the process of moving from a large corpus of data to assertions and claims as one of "inductive analysis." In this kind of analysis, the data is examined for patterns, which lead to assertions about the nature of the phenomenon being studied. The assertions come from the data, as the researcher seeks to understand and describe the field, and stronger assertions arise both when there are multiple instances of a pattern and when there are multiple sources that reveal the pattern, such as interviews, observations, and written work.

This process of "inductive analysis" was done mainly by cutting apart, organizing, and reorganizing pieces of data. The data were all various genres of texts, including catalogs and transcripts of video and audio tapes of class sessions; catalogs and transcripts of interviews; and copies of students' written work. As I sought to answer the key questions–what did they learn, how did they learn it, what role did the reading of the novel play in that learning?–I worked to organize pieces of these texts. I began with a chronological organization, putting interviews and transcripts and coursework into a timeline. I then searched for themes, including learning themes, common ways of talking about the novel, common ways of describing the course experiences. When several teacher candidates seemed to write or speak in similar ways, these themes emerged into categories I used to organize small pieces of the data taped onto note cards, such as excerpts from transcripts or paragraphs from their written work.

Analyzing the data in this way was useful for thinking about overall learning constructed by the class, and for documenting the teacher candidates' transactions with the novel. In chapter 3, for example, I summarize eight learning themes to summarize the teacher candidates' construction of knowledge about the experience of the child, the role of the teacher, and learning. In that chapter, whenever a theme appeared in the work of at least one fourth of the students (six out of 24) I called that theme a part of their "general" learning. I used a similar pattern to document the teacher candidates' interpretations of the novel, first summarizing the content of their conversations about the novel, then grouping the teacher candidates' presentations about the novel into categories based on both theme and form.

However, when I began to try to understand the particular role that the class' transactions with the novel played in their overall learning, I realized that the role was unique for each individual, and that the only way to document that role would be to present individual cases. At that point, I reorganized the data one more time, into sets of cases, that allowed me to search for repetition and transformation of themes that emerged for each featured student.

During research, assertions are carefully scrutinized and tested, as the researcher searches for discrepant cases which disconfirm the assertions she is making. Systematic data analysis of this sort prevents research from being merely "anecdotal." I worked hard, during the process of data analysis, to carefully scrutinize and test my assertions based on the evidence, and the

process of attending to both themes and individual cases made that process richer and more complex.

For example, in the initial stages of data analysis I was fairly certain that the mural painting activity did not provide the teacher candidates with an opportunity to talk interpretively about the novel, and that in turn the mural painting activity did not support the teacher candidates' construction of understandings of either the role of the teacher or the experience of the child. I based this initial assertion mainly on assumptions about the nature and role of talk in educative experiences that I brought to the research study. However, as I worked carefully to understand the ways the teacher candidates spoke with one another during the mural painting, and as I searched for connections between the painting and the rest of their learning in the course, I found evidence that challenged my initial assumptions. My understanding of the role of the mural painting became more complex, as I saw the ways that some teacher candidates, most notably Aaron and Kelly, used the mural painting activity to develop ideas and ways of interpreting the novel they had begun during their discussion of the novel, and then used those same ways of interpreting the novel as the foundations for their individual presentations. In turn, those same ways of interpreting the novel were echoed and elaborated upon in their statements about their learning in the course, the final reflections. As the data challenged my assumptions about the nature of discourse and learning, I went back to the theories that undergirded my research, learning from the data as well as from social constructivist theorists

in ways which shifted the dissertation question and strengthened data analysis. This process of rethinking assumptions and learning from the data is described in greater detail later in the chapter.

I have written of handling the data by searching for categories and themes which "emerged" as I organized and reorganized excerpts of the data. However, as Erickson points out, the data does not speak to the researcher, dictating the process of analysis. Assertions, claims, and even questions that guide research do not simply emerge from the field by themselves. Instead, the researcher pays attention to certain things, both during data collection and during data analysis. As Erickson says, "One can argue that there are no pure inductions. We always bring to the experience frames of interpretation, or schemata" (p. 140). In other words, our conceptual frameworks guide the analysis of the data.

Three sets of theories have shaped the data collection and data analysis of this dissertation, and so have served as the "frames of interpretation" that I brought to my research. Because this is a study of learning–both what the teacher candidates learned during the course and how that learning is connected to their reading of children's literature, the first set of theories related to the definition of learning I hold. Because I was interested in the relationship between the teacher candidates reading of the children's novel and their learning in the course, the second set of theories that underlie this research are those which describe reading and interpretation. Finally, I understand that the opportunities the teacher candidates had to discuss the

novel and to present their learning were shaped and constrained by the activities in which they participated and the context of the course overall, and so the third set of theories that underpin this work are theories about the structuring nature of activities, often called activity framework theory.

These three sets of theories–theories about learning, reading and interpretation, and activity framework theory–shaped the work I did to make sense of the data. In the remaining three sections of chapter 2 I outline my understandings of each of these sets of theories, and talk about the ways they shaped both the selection and analysis of data.

About Learning

The third iteration of the dissertation question was:

> What did teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

The first key phrase in this questions was "What did the teacher candidates learn?" To answer this question, I needed to think carefully about what learning looks like, where it might be found, and how it would be recognized. Social constructivist theories help to explain the ways in which I sought to recognize and document learning as I interpreted the transcripts, interviews, and written and other artifacts that I collected.

I began by turning to the work of John Dewey.[i] Dewey wrote about the learning of children in ways I extended to help me understand the learning of adults, particularly the young adults in EDU 200. In *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902/1990), Dewey proposed to reconcile two discrepant points of view. The first emphasizes the child as "the starting point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal." (p. 187). The second emphasizes the subject matter, which the adult world has organized, abstracted, and sorted into bits that the child is meant "to receive, to accept" (p. 186).

In reconciling these two points of view, Dewey claims that teaching is not a matter of simply allowing children to develop by accommodating their immediate interests, abilities, faculties. Dewey also claims that teaching is not simply a matter of bringing learners the already organized and abstracted "truth" of the adult world and getting that subject matter, somehow, into the students' heads. Teaching is, instead, a "continuous reconstruction, moving from the child's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies" (p. 189). What the child is capable of imagining and experiencing herself, on her own, does not push or change her thinking, and so does not help her to learn the subject matter at hand. However the subject matter, in its abstracted and organized form, is like a map, a representation of a real experience. It is not enough on its own. It is the teacher's role, then, to structure the child's environment, to provide experiences which are engaging and motivating, guiding students through

those experiences, and through making sense of those experiences, ever moving toward that subject matter the child is meant to learn.

This conception of teaching is coupled with a particular understanding of learning. Learning is neither "receiving knowledge" nor "developing naturally" but an active construction, whereby new experiences, including those provided by the teacher, are made sense of and built upon in terms of previous experience and knowledge as the learner strives to make sense of his world. Dewey situates this active meaning making in the social realm. The ways in which a child, or any learner, makes sense of any new or immediate experience is by making use of prior knowledge, experience, and ways of making meaning acquired in the social realm, in interactions with others. According to Dewey:

> Studies of childhood have made it equally apparent that this socially acquired inheritance operates in the individual only under present social stimuli. Nature must indeed furnish its physical stimuli of light, sound, heat, etc. but the significance attaching to these, the interpretation made of them, depends upon the ways in which the society in which the child lives acts and reacts in reference to them. The bare physical stimulus of light is not the entire reality; the interpretation given to it through social activities and thinking confers upon it its wealth of meaning. It is through imitation, suggestion, direct instruction, and even more indirect unconscious tuition, that

> the child learns to estimate and treat the bare physical stimuli. It is through the social agencies that he recapitulates in a few short years the progress which it has taken the race slow centuries to work out. (p. 99)

In other words, the meaning that an a child, and presumably any individual makes of any experience, even one as simple as reacting to light, that *meaning* has its origins not in genetics or biology so much as in society. The individual, in transactions with others, learns, through imitation or instruction or "tuition" what the light means.

And it is precisely this learning, this coming to ascribe meaning, that I as the researcher was interested in, in that I wanted to understand and to document the teacher candidates' learning in the course. In other words, I hoped to glimpse, even just partially, the kinds of meanings the teacher candidates came to attribute to both the experience of the child and the role of the teacher. I was curious about the role that reading of novel played as the teacher candidates came to those meanings. If meaning, if knowing and learning originate, as I understood from my reading of Dewey, in society, then it seemed as though I ought to look to the teacher candidates' transactions with one another in the course to make sense of their learning. As you will see, this was what I tried to do, turning first to the teacher candidates' discourse and then to their writing in order to learn about their learning.

In working to document the teacher candidates' learning, these words of Dewey's give me very little to go on. As I began, I was not sure just what to

look for in the data to recognize and document learning. In order to more completely develop my understanding of learning, I turned to social constructivist theorists, particularly Gavelek and Raphael, who, building from the work of Harré and Vygotsky, helped me to understand the idea that all learning, in fact all meaning, arise in society.

In understanding learning, social constructivist theories earn the adjective "social" on two levels. On the first level, these theories recognize the social origins of mind. On the second level, these theories emphasize the role that transactions among individuals, in dialogue, play in learning. Each of these levels will be discussed in the following two sections.

Social origins of mind. The process by which individuals make meaning, which Vygotsky calls higher mental functioning, arise in social transactions among individuals. According to Vygotsky:

> Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts and the development of volition . . . . [I]t goes without saying that internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions. Social relations or relations among

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people genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships (cited in Wetrsch, 1991, p. 26).

The ways we have of making meaning, of categorizing, recognizing, connecting, understanding, responding to, feeling and thinking about experiences, these originate for individuals in social interaction. Without others, there is no I. This is not to say that each individual is a duplicate of society or of another individual. Each individual engages in a unique set of transactions with others, in a particular set of social, historical, and cultural contexts.

Recognizing that learning and knowing are social in origin means that I recognize that the teacher candidates have constructed both shared and particular ways of making sense of and taking part in EDU 200. As speakers of English, as residents of America, as individuals who attended school, the students in EDU 200 shared semiotic systems which allowed them to communicate with one another and to make sense of the course in similar ways from the very beginning. At the same time, the teacher candidates, as members of particular cultures, communities, and families, brought those individual ways of making meaning, acquired in social transactions that arose before class even began, to the ways that they learned in the course. In this way, I came to understand that the course, and the learning constructed during the course, was nested in the larger cultural, societal, and historical contexts which comprised each students' life.

Social origins of learning. But the question still remained. How could I, as the researcher, document the teacher candidates' learning, as a group and as individuals, and how could I understand the role that the *Bridge* Sequence played in that learning? Social constructivist theorists conceive not only of the social origins of mind, but also of the social origins of learning, that is, they emphasize the role that transactions among individuals, in dialogue, play in the learning that is constructed in any experience.

One way to think of knowing is to think of it as inner thought or inner speech, as individual ways of making meaning (which, as has already been said, originated in social interactions). Learning, then, is any revision to these ways of making meaning, and the revisions themselves come about as individuals transact with one another.

Gavelek and Raphael (1996) and Brock and Gavelek (1998) build from the work of Vygotsky and Harré (Harré, 1984) to conceptualize the Vygotsky Space. The Vygotsky Space can be thought of as "rich heuristic for conceptualizing how individuals appropriate and transform that which they experience in the public/social realm" (Brock and Gavelek, p. 83). This model highlights two sets of dimensions–the public/private dimension and the social/individual dimension–and four process of learning–appropriation, transformation, publication and conventionalization.

The Vygotsky Space first sets up the two pairs of dimensions, social–individual and public–private. The public–private dimension refers to the ways that what's known is displayed or made observable in varying degrees.

What is known can be made public as it is shared with the community, or it can remain private, within the individual mind of the knower. The social–individual dimensions refers to the location of knowledge. Knowledge can be social, in that all the members of a community may share a way of thinking, or knowers can bring to communities their own individual ways of thinking. The intersection of these two dimensions, the social–individual and the public–private, sets up four quadrants, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Learning can be thought of as a recurring cycle of four process that take place within these dimensions: appropriation, transformation, publication and conventionalization. When they learn, (1) Individuals *appropriate* ways of thinking as they take part in public, social transactions with others; (2) learners *transform* those ways of thinking by privately connecting them with prior knowledge, which changes both individual's knowledge and the ideas and concepts originally appropriated; (3) learners make this individualized, transformed knowledge *public* again by sharing it with others; and (4) learners *conventionalize* new knowledge when transformed ways of thinking that were made public by individuals are taken up by the community.

Of the four processes, publication and conventionalization are the processes by which knowledge is shared with members of a community. Both the ending and the starting points, these two processes refer to the ways in which ways of thinking, learned and changed by individuals, are returned to

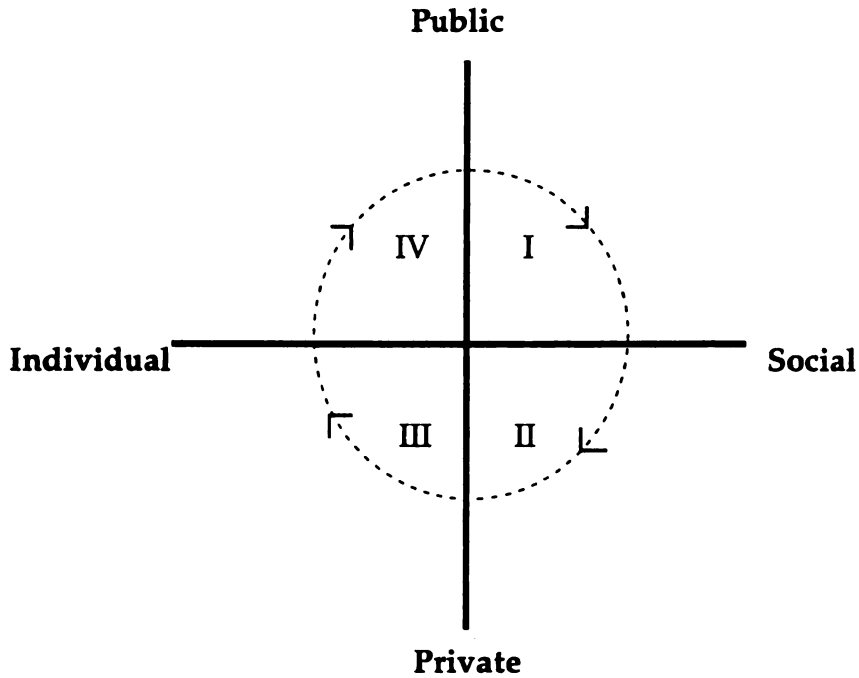

Figure 1: The Dimensions Of The Vygotsky Space
(adapted from Gavelek and Raphael, 1996, and Harré, 1984)

Conventionalization refers to the way that learning, once appropriated and transformed and made public, becomes part of the domain of the community as they become shared ways of making meaning.

Transformation and appropriation, on the other hand, are the processes by which individuals learn in the context of their interactions with others. For this, I was especially interested in how and what the teacher candidates learned as individuals, that is, in whether and how they appropriated and transformed knowledge as they read the novel. Because these are the two key process I used to document learning, I examine them more thoroughly here.

Brock and Gavelek say that appropriation is "the movement of thinking from the public to the private domain." Transformation, on the other hand, is "the process by which individuals personalize and make these earlier social ways of thinking and feeling their own" (p. 81). In appropriation, the learner takes up a way of thinking from the social environment. The way of thinking, the understanding, remains largely the same as when it first appeared. Gavelek and Raphael describe an example of students using journal entry formats for responding to books that their teacher has introduced. The children used the formats in ways that were nearly identical to the ways the teacher had described them, and the children created very similar pieces of writing based their appropriated knowledge. Appropriation, then, has taken place when learners take up and begin using language or skills or ways of making meaning in ways that are similar to their first appearance on the social plane and use them to describe and respond to experiences they have in class and in the field. Evidence of appropriation might include repetition of ideas and phrases in their speech and writing, the appropriate use of terms and phrases in the teacher candidates' writing, different groups creating visual images that are very similar, and applications of ideas raised in class in contexts very similar to those discussed in the class.

Transformation arises when a learner connects a way of thinking or speaking or believing he has appropriated to prior experiences and to existing knowledge, and changes that way of thinking. Transformation of knowledge implies some change has occurred. To continue with the journal entry

example, Gavelek and Raphael describe an example of transformation that occurred when one child created a new kind of journal entry. He took the appropriated idea of varying kinds of journal entries as ways of responding to literature, and transformed it by connecting it to his own knowledge about ways authors do or do not title their chapters, and created a new kind of journal entry focusing on considering the role that chapter titles can play in books.

If appropriation is marked by repetition and appropriate use of ideas, transformation is marked by connection and change. In transformation, learners link new experiences and new knowledge to prior experience and knowledge as they make learning "their own." Both existing ways of learning and the appropriated concepts themselves are changed. In transformation, knowing becomes deep, as learners can see connections between what on the surface seem to be discrete bits of knowledge or separate notions. Knowledge becomes a complex web of connections and interconnections. Evidence of transformation might include explicit connections between varying ways of understanding, or individual elaborations on ideas first raised in a community setting. Complexity and connections allow knowledge to be not only deep, but flexible. That is, knowledge moves beyond the immediate context. Transformation has taken place when a learner applies a way of making meaning to a new situation or is able to think about teaching or children in ways which are novel. In these new and extended ways of thinking, echoes of the socially shared and originally appropriated concept

remain, but the learner shares a way of connecting or working with that idea that is new to the community.

As I analyzed the data, I searched for evidence of those things that seem markers of appropriation, including repetition and application of ideas, and for markers of transformation, including complexity, elaboration, connection, extension beyond the immediate context, and echoes of ideas in novel formats and situations. As you will see in chapters 4 and 5, these kinds of evidence supported my claims that the teacher candidates learned a great deal about the role of the teacher and the child's experience, and about learning in general, and that the novel played an important role in shaping and supporting that learning. For example, Elise appropriated ideas about Terabithia (the imaginary land in the novel) when she heard her classmates talk about Terabithia's important features such as safety and imagination and ownership, and she transformed that knowledge by connecting those features, the plot of the novel, and her understanding of classrooms and the role of the teacher to create the metaphor "Terabithia as the classroom."

The third iteration of the dissertation question was:

> What did the teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, about understanding the child's experience and about the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

As I worked to articulate theories about the phenomenon that I was

studying I added a phrase to the dissertation question to foreground the theories of learning I was relying on to analyze the data and make claims about learning. The fourth iteration of the dissertation question was:

> **Based on evidence of appropriation and transformation:**
> What did teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

Appropriation and transformation are two of the four processes of learning *in social situations.* The Vygotsky Space and social constructivist theories in general emphasize the social, transactive nature of learning. The Vygotsky Space places the origin of learning in Quadrant One, in the social and public realms. Based on my initial understanding of this model, I expected to find the best evidence of learning to be found in the teacher candidates' discourse, the most visible and available source of data for documenting the teacher candidates' transactions with one another.

Turning to the discourse for evidence of learning made sense and was not all wrong, but, as I will show, discourse could not and did not serve as the only (or even the primary) source of evidence for understanding the ways the teacher candidates appropriated and transformed their learning about the experience of the child and the role of the teacher.

Learning and discourse. Starting with the classroom dialogue made sense, based on my understanding of the Vygotsky Space as I began the research. In fact, Gavelek and Raphael place an emphasis on in-class discourse and its role in learning. For example, they write "With Harré's model, we can see that language doesn't simply reflect thought; language makes possible what individuals think. That is, through classroom discourse, students' knowledge is actually constructed" (p. 188).

I imagined that discourse would reveal evidence of learning in two ways. First, the talk would show the ways that learning was appropriated in the social/public realm, as ideas were put forth in the public space and then taken up by various individuals. Second, although transformation itself is an individual and private process of making connections between ideas and applying ideas beyond the immediate context, I imagined that those same transformed understandings would become visible and available in the public and social realm as learners talked to make their ideas public and worked to conventionalize these transformed understandings and to establish communal ways of thinking within the EDU 200 classroom. In other words, I imagined that the in-class discourse would be the best window onto the teacher candidates' learning.

Not only that, but as I began I imagined that I would be searching for particular *kinds* of talk as I searched for evidence of transformation and appropriation in the teacher candidates' discourse, or that the talk that arose when learning was being constructed would take a particular form.

Gavelek and Raphael argue that teachers should carefully establish particular kinds of discourse communities, because "language used within the public/social quadrant may be positive, but there are no guarantees that such an environment will naturally emerge" (1996 p. 189). If particular environments or kinds of language best support learning, then, I imagined, there would be particular features of the teacher candidates' talk that would help me to recognize when learning was being appropriated, and when transformed knowledge was being returned to the community. In other words, I imagined that there would be features of the discourse, perhaps repetition, or disagreement, or eye-contact and posture, that would help me to recognize when the processes of appropriation and publication of transformed learning were taking place. As you will see in the following sections, I eventually revised my initial supposition that these surface features of the talk would point me in the direction of the teacher candidates' learning, and came to have a much more complicated understanding of the relationships between learning and discourse.

Connections between learning and talk. There are many theorists and educators who emphasize the relationship between talk and learning. Bruffee (1984), for example, claims that:

> To learn is to work collaboratively to establish and maintain knowledge among a community of knowledgeable peers through the process that Richard Rorty calls "socially justifying belief." We socially justify belief when we explain to others why

> one way of understanding how the world hangs together seems to us preferable to other ways of understanding it. We establish knowledge or justify belief collaboratively by challenging each other's biases and presuppositions; by negotiating collectively toward new paradigms of perception, thought, feeling, and expression; and by joining larger, more experienced communities of knowledgeable peers through assenting to those communities' interests, values, language, and paradigms of perception and thought. (p. 646)

Much like Gavelek and his colleagues, Bruffee conceives of learning as a community effort. He talks of two processes: 1) joining communities by assenting to their interests, values, and language; and 2) establishing knowledge by negotiating with others and challenging one another to socially justify belief. The joining of communities with already established ways of talking, valuing, and perceiving seems akin to the process of appropriation in the Vygotsky Space. In this case, learners acquire the discourse of the communities to which they desire to belong by participating in conversations with established members of those communities, and by taking on and making use of the ways of talking and, in turn the ways of believing, of the established community. In this way, the ways of making meaning, which a group has already established are appropriated.

Bruffee also talks of establishing knowledge, as communities work together to alter their ways of talking about and understand the world. The

group learns when what Rorty (1979) calls "abnormal discourse" arises. When the experience or the knowledge of an individual in a community challenges standard knowledge, the difference is discussed and evaluated, and the groups' ways of understanding may be revised. Establishing knowledge of this sort seems akin to the process of conventionalization in the Vygotsky Space. Individuals, who have appropriated the community's ways of making sense, reconcile and connect those ways of thinking with individual, already established ways of thinking, and create personal webs of elaborate and interconnected knowing. As they return those transformed ways of knowing to the community, individuals can argue successfully that their ways of understanding, reacting, and thinking make more sense than the community's, and the group's understanding can change in light of the discourse of a convincing individual. Bruffee calls these processes assenting to and negotiating new beliefs. Gavelek and Raphael might call them appropriating and then making public and conventionalizing transformed knowledge. Both sets of processes take place in dialogue, that is they arise in talk that serves to "socially justify belief."

In dialogue, talk has the potential to serve to make conclusions, assumptions, descriptions and interpretations of the "world" public, and to allow individuals to compare their interpretations, to justify those interpretations, and to come to common understandings about the meanings of those interpretations. Bruffee uses words like justifying, challenging, and negotiating to describe dialogue. These words imply two things–one, that

work is being done to come to consensus, and two, that some ways of understanding or describing are being rejected in favor of others.

Burbules (1993) defines dialogue in similar terms. He describes dialogue in terms of "a spirit of discovery, so that the typical tone of dialogue is exploratory and interrogative" a process which, when seen through, leads to "meaningful understandings or agreements among its participants" (p. 8).

James Britton (1969) describes what he calls expressive speech–another name for one kind of discourse which leads to learning, and which shares the characteristics of dialogue as described by Burbules and Bruffee. Expressive speech is characterized by talk with a spiral nature, where topics are abandoned and reclaimed; talk where topics are explored and tested and which leads to generalizations that are supported with specific details; and ultimately, a "group effort at understanding" (p. 98) which results in or leads to a changed understanding on the part of some or all of the participants. Britton, Burbules, and Bruffee all write about educative discoruse by emphasizing two aspects: the discourse works to build consensus or a shared understanding and the discourse is used to test and accept or reject ideas.

As I collected data and then looked to the transcripts in order to make claims about the teacher candidates' learning, this was the kind of talk I expected to use as my primary source of data. I assumed that I would rely on talk in which the participants engaged with one another to share explore ideas, in which claims were justified and rejected or accepted, and in which meaning–and knowledge–were negotiated. As I began, I had in mind a vague

notion of what the talk might look like. I remembered reading Nancie Atwell's (1987) description of talk about literature around her dining room table. Atwell said, "our talk isn't sterile or grudging or perfunctory. It's filled with jokes, arguments, exchanges of bits of information, descriptions of what we loved and hated and why" (p. 19). I remembered the kinds of discussions in which I felt I had learned the most, the electric talk of graduate seminars and afternoons with my friends teasing out the finer points of difficult pieces of theory. Based on these memories, I imagined that the talk where the teacher candidates' learning would be most "visible" would be talk between the students where Sue faded to the background as her students worked together to share and justify their beliefs. I imagined interruptions, starts and restarts, overlap, hesitation and tentativeness. I imagined students getting carried away with the ideas and the conversation. I imagined that dialogue, and in turn learning, would be easy to recognize. As it turned out, many factors, including Sue's supportive criticism of my entering assumptions, more thorough understanding of learning theory and dialogue, and the nature of the talk that was constructed during the course, challenged my assumptions about the discourse, and, in turn, strengthened my analysis of the data.

Rethinking My Assumptions

The relationship between talk and learning is not nearly as clear cut as I had imagined it. I was repeatedly challenged to examine my own incoming assumptions about discourse and learning when the talk during EDU 200 did

not sound like the talk that I expected. Quite often the talk during class was filled with long, pauses, and Sue sometimes said she felt like she was "pulling teeth." Yet each time I worked with the data, I had the sense that important learning was being constructed and that the teacher candidates were learning to think about teaching and children in deeper, more flexible, more powerful ways. As a result, my conceptions of the Vygostky space, of dialogue, and of discourse as the primary source of data for the dissertation, all changed.

The nature of the discourse. Some of the educational researchers I relied on for models as I began the research also documented learning and dialogue in terms of features of the talk such as overlap, hesitation, interruption, and even gentle argumentation. As I have said, these were the features of the talk that I had expected to help lead me to evidence of learning. As I formed and articulated my initial expectations, I was guided by the work of Douglas Barnes and Frankie Todd (Barnes, 1993; Barnes & Todd, 1977; Barnes & Todd, 1995) who studied and described talk that they determined was as "educative." They call this kind of talk "exploratory," to set it apart from more "final draft" talk. Final draft talk is relatively formal, and arises when speakers present more complete, pre-rehearsed ideas. Exploratory talk, on the other hand, is like thinking out loud. Barnes and Todd found that when groups of children engaged in exploratory talk, their talk often included "hesitations and changes of direction; tentativeness; assertions and questions in a hypothetical modality that invites modification and surmise; self monitoring and reflexivity."

Karen Gallas (1995) worked with young children to create Science Talks, spaces where children could work together to explore questions and to construct theories about how the world works. Gallas found these talks were characterized by messiness, repetition and overlap. She found that often, just as her students "clicked" to came to consensus on a theory or idea there was a "cacophony of voices" as the children took over the conversation.

When I listened to and transcribed the discourse constructed during EDU 200, I never did find a "cacophony of voices," and no one really seemed to get "carried away" as Burbules suggests might happen in dialogue. Talk in EDU 200, especially talk about academic articles, was typically far from the animated, student owned, interruption filled talk that I had envisioned. There were frequent pauses between turns, and students generally spoke one at a time rather than overlapping or interrupting one another. The students often did not make eye contact with one another, and often waited in silence for Sue to supply a response or new question rather than responding directly to one another. One student, James, said, "The class never got fired up about anything." In addition, there was generally great disparity in the number of times different individuals spoke. Sue often took a very active role in discussions, eliciting comments from students, drawing connections between different students comments, rephrasing students talk into more sophisticated conceptions of teaching and children. A more thorough description and analysis of the discourse can be found in chapter 4.

The notions of Atwell's dining room table talk, or the messy cacophony of voices Gallas found, or the tentative, hesitating, flavor of talk that Barnes calls exploratory, do not serve to describe the kind of discourse that arose in this section of EDU 200. But careful analysis has shown me that this does not mean the talk was not educative or engaging. According to the teacher candidates themselves, the talk was valuable for their learning. Fifteen of the students wrote comments in their final reflections that indicated that they found class discussion to be a strong, and supportive, learning experiences. According to one student, Sheila, "If there was an issue or topic that I wasn't very clear on, we would talk about it in class, and I would walk away with a better understanding of it." And in her final reflection, Mandy noted, "The class discussions that we were involved in gave me a broader perspective on many things. I heard many different opinions and contrasting and similar ideas." Finally, Lisa reported "The unity in the class gave everyone a comfort zone by which they were able to express feelings, where in other classes it is difficult, even scary, to express an unpopular opinion."

Rethinking dialogue. The discourse in EDU 200, especially in large groups, was marked by a lack of eye contact, long silences, and single rather than overlapping utterances. This talk, with all of its (to me) unexpected features, supported the teacher candidates' learning to the extent that 63% of them described the value of talking in class in their final reflections. During data analysis this seemed to me to be a contradiction. If, as Barnes and Gallas and their colleagues claim, educative talk sounds like a cacophony of voices

or Sunday afternoons at a professor's dining room table, then how could this linear, silence filled talk also be "educative" to its participants? In order to answer this question, I was forced to more clearly articulate, and then to rethink, my suppositions about the features of educative talk. Gallas described first and second graders having messy, noisy, overlapping, free-flowing conversations that led to her students' development of theories about the nature of the world. But she also, when she paid close attention, found that sometimes her students' voices got lost and that for some of her students, Science Talks were marginalizing, rather than educative, conversations. When Gallas imposed structures that opened up the floor for more voices, such as requiring frequent talkers to talk only once every 10 minutes, she found that while long and sometimes uncomfortable silences arose, so did more learning. The features she had at first thought of as characteristic of powerful learning were not, in the end, the necessary ones, and what mattered most was the co-construction of learning.

Barnes and Todd found the same thing in their studies of talk among small groups of students. While they expected hesitations and self-monitoring and reflexivity and tentativeness to represent exploratory talk among the groups, in the end these features were not always present. Barnes and Todd concluded that as they studied the talk "it seemed less useful to count these than to trace the patterns by which a group reshaped the content of its modification." In other words, the surface features were less important

for substantiating claims about learning taking place than the work that the talk actually did.

James Dillon (1995), in his book *Using Discussion in Classrooms,* distinguishes discussion from other kinds of talk in much the way I have described dialogue, above. To Dillon, discussion takes place when people talk back and forth, when there is an issue in question, and when people examine proposals over the issue or question and work to together to form a "satisfying" answer or resolution. Dillon drew from the work of Paterson to describe the conditions being met during this kind of discussion:

1. Freedom of address. Every participant is conscious of a freedom to address anyone in the class on any occasion, and this freedom is recognized by all other participants. Discussion is an activity of mutual address in a class setting that invites completely free and open exchange.
2. Search for meaning. Participants are consciously intending a common search for meaning. To discuss something is to ask one another, 'What does it mean?' In their exchanges, participants bear witness to the meaning of the subject in their understanding and life, and they invite others to share this construal of experience; they listen and enter into the other's world as it is being articulated over the subject being discussed (p. 12).

And so I turned back to Bruffee's and Burbules' concepts of dialogue. What these have in common is not some countable surface feature, not a pattern of interruption or repetition or a physical marker like eye contact, (though these often arise), but an intent. The speakers, together, raise an issue, stay with that issue for a while, and work together to come to some sort of agreement about meaning. This quality is more ephemeral, having more to do with what the talk does than any surface feature of the talk.

One result of my evolving understanding of the nature of learning and of dialogue was that I moved from attending to what the talk looked and sounded like, to what the talk actually did. In chapter 4, you will see that the revisions in the way I understood educative talk and dialogue shaped my analysis of the discourse so that while I briefly discussed the teacher candidates' discourse during the *Bridge* Sequence in terms of both the linguistic and physical features such as length of turns and overlap and interruptions, the main emphasis of chapter 4 is an analysis of the ways the talk did and did not support the teacher candidates' accomplishment toward Sue's goals for the sequence.

When I made the original dissertation proposal, I imagined turning primarily to in-class conversations in order to understand and document the construction of learning. As I reflected on my assumptions about the discourse, I also returned to the Vygotsky Space, coming to understand the ways that the teacher candidates' written work and formal presentations

could be equally valuable sources of data for understanding the role of the novel in the teacher candidates' learning.

Rethinking the Vygotsky Space. According to the model, learners appropriate ways of thinking as they transact in the social realm. These new (to the individual) ways of thinking can be encountered in dialogue, but they do not have to be. Learners can appropriate ideas from other social transactions such as listening to lectures, hearing songs, watching television and reading books. In either case, appropriation of ways of thinking is a private process.

Transformation is the process by which learners "personalize and make earlier social ways of thinking and feeling their own" (Brock and Gavelek, 1998, p. 81). When learners transform knowledge, they connect appropriated ways of thinking to prior knowledge, constructing complex webs of knowledge and elaborating on concepts and ways of feeling in light of prior experience. This work of transforming new ideas in light of existing ways of thinking takes place in the private realm.

Appropriation and transformation are private processes of learning, and yet, these are precisely the processes I was most interested in. Understanding this helped me to see that I needed to turn to the publication of learning to search for evidence. The process of publication *can* take place in dialogue, when speakers share their understandings with one another in talk as part of a group understanding at consensus, but this is not the only means that individuals have of making their knowledge public. Publication can

arise in other formats as well. Written assignments are one way teachers ask students to make their learning public. Presentations are another.

Sue asked her students to write many times, in quick writes during class for which the teacher candidates described and reflected on their learning in class, and in formal papers where students summarized what they had learned during various course experiences. The teacher candidates also gave presentations, including short presentations summarizing small group work, and more formal presentations about their understanding of the novel *Bridge to Terabithia*. Briefly, I will talk next about both writing and presenting as genres for making knowledge public.

Writing, a way of constructing and presenting learning. In EDU 200, the teacher candidates frequently used writing assignments to present evidence of their learning. They could do this because writing is one way of giving others access to private ways of thinking.

Using the Vygostky model, we might conceive of a series of processes--the teacher candidates appropriate and transform knowledge, privately, and then use writing to convey that knowledge to others by making it public. Writing, however, is not that straightforward. Writing is as much a process of developing and forming ideas and making meaning from experience as it is a process of finding ways to convey ideas and make experiences visible (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1980; Wells, in press).

Like speaking, writing is a dialogic process. When they write, authors use socially learned tools, including language, genres, and concepts. Writers

represent their thinking using these socially acquired tools, but the tools also shape and constrain the representations that can be created. We tend to think of writing as an individual process, of authors sitting with paper and pencils and pouring out their ideas. But writing is a social process. As they write, authors engage in "internal conversations" by which they go about the dialogic process of learning described above. Bruffee (1996) summarizes Vygotsky, saying:

> His thesis is that we learn to use language instrumentally, "talking through" our tasks with another person and then internalizing that conversation as thought. In this way, writing re-externalizes the language of internalized conversation. (p. 785)

By re-externalizing thought, writing makes our knowing public to others, and it also makes knowing available to ourselves, and in this way, writing is much more than a re-presentation of knowledge. In the internalized conversation of writing we come to know, explicitly, what we know. In writing, as we work to solve problems of reconciling and presenting ideas, we learn. As Gordon Wells (in press), wrote "Thinking about how to present ideas leads to development of the ideas as well as of the tool for doing so" (p. 13).

Although I recognize that the writers both make and construct knowledge as they write, during data analysis I generally treated the teacher candidates' writing as a representation of their learning. While I understood that the writing of the final reflections was also a way of organizing concepts

learned in class, and of transforming appropriated knowledge by using writing as a means of forging connections and elaborating ideas, I could not, as a researcher, have direct access to the private act of writing-as-learning. I was left with using the writing as a representation of learning, inferring from the written work as much as I could about the learning that went into the construction of the text.

The presentations. Although they were spoken, rather than written, the presentations the teacher candidates gave during EDU 200 shared many of the features of writing because they were "drafted" before they were spoken.

The teacher candidates gave presentations to represent their work in small groups, and they gave presentations to represent their own individual connections to and understandings of the novel *Bridge to Terabithia*. Presentations can be considered a form of "final draft talk." Barnes (1995) distinguishes between exploratory and final draft talk. If exploratory talk is like an oral, community-built, rough draft, then final draft talk is an orderly and organized presentation of those ideas to the rest of the community. Final draft talk, the kind of talk the presentations engendered, represents a group or an individuals' understanding at a particular moment in time. As the temporary end-point of thought about a topic or an issue, final draft talk is like writing. The thought process, the internal thinking and learning and transformation of ideas that led up to a presentation were not visible, but the presentations themselves, as representations of knowledge, revealed a great deal about the teacher candidates' understanding of the content of the course.

Because data sources such as the written final reflections and the formal *Bridge* Presentations were the end point and public representations of the inherently private learning that went into their creation, the work of making claims about learning, in particular, about the role that reading and working with the novel played in the teacher candidates' overall learning in the course, is inherently inferential. One example of what I mean by this can be found in chapter 5. In that chapter, I claim that the presentations and the teacher candidates' writing (both activities assigned by Sue as forms of assessment in the class) are evidence that the teacher candidates made sense of both the experience of the child and the role of the teacher in light of their understanding of the novel. When I make these claims, I am essentially speaking about an invisible process. Because of repetitions of, connections to, and elaborations on ideas raised during the reading of the novel, I believe both the teacher candidates' presentations and final reflections are evidence of the important role the novel played in the teacher candidates' learning. The thought processes which went into drafting the writing and rehearsing the presentations were not visible to me. Only the final products were, and they served as representations of thoughts and learning I could only infer.

Other data sources. Discourse, writing, and presentations are the primary sources I used in chapters 4 and 5 to make claims about the teacher candidates' learning in the course. The teacher candidates also had two other opportunities to make their learning public. First, Sue occasionally asked the teacher candidates to create works of visual art. They painted murals during

the Sequence, and they created posters on the last day of class in preparation for writing their final reflections. The teacher candidates talked as they created these artifacts, and they formally explained to the class as a whole the meanings behind the symbols and images they created. These visual images, and the talk that accompanied them, were opportunities the teacher candidates had to make their learning public.

The teacher candidates also engaged in publication of their learning when they took part in interviews. I asked five of the teacher candidates to reflect on their developing understanding of the novel, the course, and of children as learners and the role of the teacher. The interviews allowed for an insider's perspective because the teacher candidates, presumably, could speak with authority about their own learning and their understanding of the course and its content.

Taken together, analysis of these five sets of data–in-class discourse, written work, presentations, visual art, and interviews–provided a corpus of data that have allowed me to search for patterns and make interpretations, triangulate claims by searching for evidence from a variety of sources of data, and to challenge and critique developing claims based on through negative case anlysis (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992).

One example of the importance of multiple sources of data can be found in chapter 3. In that chapter, I make claims about the teacher candidates' overall learning in the course. The seven learning themes I describe in that chapter were themes which emerged from four of the five

data sources: the visual images of their end-of-class posters, the discourse spoken in explanation of the posters, the teacher candidates' written assertions about their learning in the course, and interviews. Because the teacher candidates spoke, wrote, and drew repeatedly about the same themes, I am much more confident that the themes I describe comprise the content of their learning in EDU 200 than I would be if I were using just one data source.

Another example of the way I used multiple data sources can be found in chapter 4. In that chapter, I note that during the discussion of the novel *Bridge to Terabithia*, some students, particularly shy students, did not speak frequently, and their involvement in and reaction to the discussion was difficult to gauge based only on the transcript. Interviews with one of these students, Steve, has allowed me to make limited claims about the role the *Bridge* Discussion played for quiet students.

In the sections above, I have shown that as my understanding of learning, in particular social constructivist theories of learning, deepened, I responded by revising both the sources of data I attended to and the process of analysis. As I began the work, I imagined learning took place primarily in a particular kind of dialogue, marked by negotiation and the verbal struggle for consensus. I have come to define learning as a process of appropriating ways of making meaning from a variety of public transactions, and then transforming those ways of thinking by connecting them to one another and to preexisting ways of making meaning. This has shaped my analysis, as I searched not for negotiation-like discourse, but for evidence of uptake and

repetition of ideas (appropriation) and complex and interconnected webs of understanding, extensions beyond the immediate situation that contain echoes of appropriated ideas, and elaborations based on personal experience (transformation). Understanding that transformation and appropriation are primarily private process, I turned to multiple sources by which the teacher candidates made their learning public, including writing, presentations, and visual images, as well as the discourse, to make claims about both the content and the novel-related processes of the teacher candidates' learning.

It may seem as though I have gone to great lengths only to end up at a point where any good qualitative research should begin, using multiple sources of data to document evidence of the phenomenon which I am studying. This list of data sources represents the (to me) difficult cognitive, theoretical work I went through as I worked to analyze the data in light of both my beliefs about learning and theories about learning, and the work I did to subject my own assumptions, biases, and frameworks to the same scrutiny I brought to data analysis. I have spent the last several pages writing about learning theories and their implications for this research. Learning is one important concept in the dissertation question. The second important concept is reading, the subject of the next several pages.

About Reading and Interpretation

Like defining learning, defining reading is neither simple nor straightforward. I use the work of Louise Rosenblatt to help me explain what I mean by the term "reading." In *The Reader, the Text, and the Poem,*

Rosenblatt (1978/1994) describes reading as a transaction between the text and the reader:

> The transactional phrasing of the reading process underlines the essential importance of both elements, reader and text, in any reading event. A person becomes a reader by virtue of his activity in relationship to a text, which he organizes as a set of verbal symbols. A physical text, a set of marks on a page, becomes the text of a poem or of a scientific formula by virtue of its relationship with a reader who can thus interpret it and reach through it to the world of the work. (p. 18-19)

In other words, reading is a process during which the reader actively works to evoke a coherent, unified synthesis based upon elements of past experience that the text brings to attention within the reader. The poem, the event of reading, is evoked as the text calls to the reader's mind elements of experience, of past and present readings and vocabulary and knowledge and life. The meaning of the text lies neither in the printed page nor in the mind of the reader, but in the transaction between the two. The poem, Rosenblatt's name for the coherent synthesis of meaning evoked by the text, is grounded in the written symbols contained with in the text itself and at the same time cannot be separated from the images and experiences the reader brings to the reading of the text.

An implication of thinking of reading as a transactional process is the recognition that the texts, including children's novels, do not somehow

magically get inside readers' heads in tact. A text does not "contain" ideas or knowledge or even stories that readers put into their heads as they read. Readers work to make active sense of texts, and as they read, the ideas they are presented with, in texts, are transformed, much like learning is transformed, as readers connect ideas on the printed page with prior knowledge, experience, and ways of making meaning that they bring to the reading experience. In this way, any reading of a text is necessarily an interpretation.

Generally, the meaning of a written work moves beyond the moments of readers and pages transacting. Kevin Dupré (1997) studied teachers and other adults as they read pieces of literature, asking them to both think aloud as they read and talk with him about their reading processes. Dupré found that the meaning of any particular text was first evoked during the reading, but the text's full meaning for each reader came about only as she talked with family, friends, and colleagues about her reading of the text. The power of the text for helping these women think about their lives came as much from the stories themselves as it did from the ways they talked with others to interpret the meaning of the novels.

Dupré's work is an example of Rosenblatt's theories of interpretation. Interpretation is one of those words that represents a fluid phenomenon, so that while the lived-through experience of the text is an interpretation of that text, interpretation continues and changes, as the reader works to articulate that lived through experience to others, and changes even more as the reader engages in dialogue with others.

Interpretation of a text arises whenever a reader tries to name or describe her reading by reflecting upon it. According to Rosenblatt, "Reflection on the literary experience becomes a reexperiencing, a reenacting, of the work-as-evoked, and an ordering and elaborating of our responses to it" (p. 134). The reader can never share her entire lived through experience with the text, but, in telling or writing about her reading, she can interpret her experience, sharing aspects of her meaning-making and her response to the text. In interpretation, the reader may consider and share the elements of the text which evoked her particular understanding and she may consider and discuss elements of herself which affected her reading of the text. Private thinking, talking to others, and writing are all ways individuals can continue to interpret texts after their initial transaction with the page.

As Dupré found, and as Rosenblatt describes, interpretation of the sort that reorders experiences and helps readers to learn from the texts they read often arises as individuals come together, in classrooms and informal settings, to talk about the texts they read. The sharing of experiences of readings can support and change readers' interpretations of their own readings in powerful ways. As Rosenblatt writes,

> As we exchange experiences, we point to those elements of the text that best illustrate or support our interpretations. We may help one another to attend to words, phrases, images, scenes that we have overlooked or slighted. We may be led to reread the text and revise our own interpretation. Sometimes we may be

> strengthened in our own sense of having "done justice to" the text, without denying its potentialities for other interpretations. Sometimes, the give-and-take may lead to a general increase in insight and even to a consensus. Sometimes, of course, interchange reveals that we belong to different subcultures, whether social or literary. (pp. 146-147).

In many ways, Rosenblatt's description of interpretation-through-talk harkens back to the ideas I discussed earlier about learning and dialogue. Groups of people talk together, working to figure out "what does this text mean, to me, to us as a group?" They talk about their own transactions with the text. They may justify or elaborate on those readings by sharing information about their own knowledge or experience that were evoked by the text, or they may point to elements of the text that evoked their own particular reading. As readers talk with one another about texts this way, their understanding, both individually and as a group, can change. One reader points to a particular passage or turn of phrase as important to interpreting the whole text; others, who dismissed that passage on first reading, reconsider their understanding. Another reader connects the text at hand to one the group read some time ago, and the groups' understandings of both texts is changed.

We can think of learning from and with texts in terms of the Vygotsky Space. The ideas, stories, details, themes, and events in texts are public and social in that they are written down on the page. Readers appropriate the

ideas written on the page and transform them as they evoked and are connected to the readers' prior knowledge and experience. The reader's appropriated and transformed understanding of the text is made public when he writes or talks about it, and in sharing his understanding of the text, a reader's interpretations can become conventionalized, can become part of the ways the group understands the text. The cycle recurs as readers' talk about texts is appropriated, and transformed again, as understanding of what is read changes.

Rosenblatt's transactional theories of reading outline the ways in which readers construct meaning by interpreting texts they read. In this dissertation, I am interested in the sense the teacher candidates made of the novel as they interpreted *Bridge to Terabithia*. After their initial, private reading of the novel, the teacher candidates had three formal, structured, in-class opportunities to further interpret the novel. They engaged in a discussion about the novel, they worked together to paint a mural of their understanding, as a group, of the novel, and they gave formal presentations of their connection to or understanding of the book.

As I researcher, I did not have access to the teacher candidates' first and most immediate lived-through experience with the novel. They took *Bridge to Terabithia* home with them, and read it privately. However, this has only somewhat limited the data analysis and my ability to make claims about the teacher candidates' learning in the course in light of their reading of the novel. The immediate act of reading the novel was unavailable to me, but

the teacher candidates' further interpretations of the novel were not. As they engaged in the *Bridge* Discussion, the teacher candidates both shared their understanding of the novel and worked together to construct joint interpretations in light of the rest of the course. They discussed different aspects of the book that they had attended to, and closely examined the characters in response to Sue's questions. As they created a mural to represent the novel, the teacher candidates worked as a group, this time to create representations of their visual images and of important aspects of the plot of the novel. Finally, the teacher candidates gave presentations which named, described, and justified their own individual interpretations of the novel at the end of the *Bridge* Sequence.

If reading is both a transaction and an interpretive event, that is, if the meaning of a novel lies not in the page, but in the transaction between reader and text, and if meaning evolves as readers talk with one another about text and make their understandings public, then it does not matter that I do not have access to that initial poem. The meaning of the book lies in the ways the teacher candidates interpreted the novel, and I have multiple sources for understanding those interpretations–including visual images, discourse, and presentations.

My recognition that reading is not simply a matter of decoding words on a page, but an act of interpreting, alone and with peers, the meaning of a text, led to a slight but important change in the overall dissertation question, so that the fifth and final version of the question read:

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Based on evidence of appropriation and transformation of learning, what did six teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading **and interpretation** of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

By adding the word interpretation to the dissertation question, I foregrounded my interest in the meaning the novel came to have for these teacher candidates in this course. As they reflected on the novel, as they talked with one another in groups, as they painted and presented, and as they worked in writing and talk to forge connections between the novel and other experiences in the course, the teacher candidates interpreted the novel, and its meaning, and its role in the course, changed.

Moving from interpretations to learning. In the beginning I set out to study children's literature in teacher education because it was my belief that stories written for children could support beginning teachers' learning. In other words, I began with an interest in how the teacher candidates both interpreted the meaning of the novel, and whether or not that interpretation connected to or supported their overall learning in the course. Teacher educators who ask their students to read and talk about children's literature assume that readers of children's literature can move from making meaning from texts, that is, interpreting texts, to making meaning with texts. In chapter 1 (page 23) I quoted Diane Brunner who talks about the power of

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literature to "particularize experience and to enlarge as well as personalize issues." She suggests that texts, particularly narrative texts, have a power of their own, to make issues and theories and lives real by making them both personal and particular. A narrative, as an example or contextually situated event, can extend beyond a reading and interpretation to help readers make sense of content in a course. Conversely, the particulars and specifics of a narrative also make narratives generalizable. In other words, an individual's interpretation of a narrative can extend beyond the immediate setting, to help readers make sense of their experiences in a course, or to provide them with examples from which they themselves can generate theories they use to make sense of their experiences.

Let me expand on both of these ways of learning from and with narratives by using the terminology of the Vygotsky space. Readers appropriate and transform knowledge as they interpret texts. Because narratives are told for a purpose, they ascribe qualities and intentions to the sequence of events giving those events meaning. This happens when readers work to comprehend and summarize a text. The plot and characters matter within the context of the story.

Readers can also transform the meanings signified in narratives' details and sequences. They do this in two ways. First, readers can interpret texts as concrete examples that bring life to abstract theories (moving from theory or experience to texts). Readers who struggled to understand a theory in the abstract can make connections to the theory as it is enacted in the form

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of a narrative example. Story and theory become intertextually connected. As readers read the narrative, or talk about it with their peers, their knowledge of a theory is transformed by using the theory to understand an event (the story) outside of the situation in which the theory was appropriated. The reader's knowledge of the narrative is transformed as it is seen as an exemplar of a particular theory.

Second, readers can build from the events that take place in narratives to develop their own theories about how the world works (moving from text to theory or to experience). Narratives can provide contexts from which readers generate their own theories and understandings. The conventions of narratives (e.g. tension, plot, theme, character development, the coda) serve to point out the meaning of the events in the story, and readers can move from the particulars of the story to use the same meanings to understand similar events in their own lives. In this way, readers' understandings of both texts and events are transformed as interpret the significance of the text in ways which help them to understand their own experiences.

In chapter 5 I will show that both ways of learning from and with narratives took place as readers made connections between *Bridge to Terabithia* and their developing understanding of teaching, learning and children. Some found that *Bridge to Terabithia* helped them to understand theories they read in other components of the course, because they interpreted the novel in light of those theories. The books brought the theories to light. Others reading the novel found that the events in the book,

and the meanings they as readers ascribed to those events as they interpreted the novel, helped them to generate theories they in turn used to think about teaching and learning. This can be seen in the ways the teacher candidates wrote and spoke about the novel and the course, the ways they elaborated on ideas (sometimes elaborating on theories in light of the reading of the novel, sometimes elaborating on their understanding of the novel to explain how it had changed their thinking about children or classrooms), in drawings they did which made use of images from the novel (such as a bridge) to explain their understanding of the teachers' role, and in several other ways. The web of interconnected ideas about teaching, learning and children that the teacher candidates constructed throughout the course rested heavily on their interpretation of the novel.

In working from the set of data (the transcripts and video tapes, the artwork and the collected pieces of writing), using the conceptual frameworks of the Vygotsky Space and the transactional, interpretive nature reading to make inferences about the role the novel played in teacher candidates' learning in this course, one thing I have tried to do is be cognizant that the artifacts themselves are products of particular activities, and that these activities are shaped by the context in which they occur. In other words, the teacher candidates' writing and talk were shaped by several constraints, including Sue's directions, the teacher candidates' understanding of their roles in the course and of undergraduate education in general, and their

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histories with one another. Recognizing these constraints is an implication of activity theory frameworks.

About Activity Theory

Smagorinsky and O'Donnell-Allen (1998) ground their research on the discourse that arises in high school classrooms in what they call cultural historical activity theory framework, which is based on the theories of social constructivists such as Wertsch (1991), Cole (1996), Vygotsky (1978). They recognize that the high school students they study bring with them particular histories and cultures. They have varying expectations and levels of expertise. They are asked to engage in particular tasks set before them by the teacher, and also arrive in the classroom with sets of agendas and tasks to accomplish (such as building or ending relationships, maintaining an image, etc.) and they come together, as a class, at a particular point in time and space in an institution known as high school. All of these constraints shape the transactions that can arise among the students as they work together to read Shakespeare, and in turn shape the learning the students can and do construct. Smagorinsky and O'Donnell-Allen write:

> Cultural-historical activity theory helps to account for human development through its emphasis on the dialectical process through which people create and develop settings which in turn provide the tools through which people internalize ways of thinking. (1998, p. 520)

In other words, learning is constructed in the social realm, as people transact with one another. At the same time, those social settings themselves are constructed by the individuals who inhabit them. Ways of talking are constructed and maintained by individuals in the group, even as they structure the learning, and the minds, of the individuals who are doing the talking within the group.

Cultural historical activity frameworks helped me to keep in mind that the constraints of the setting and the norms and conventions for speaking that arise within any setting shape the learning that is constructed among the individuals within that setting. In the words of Fine, as cited in Cole (1996) the members of a group construct an ideoculture as they negotiate:

> [the] system of knowledge, beliefs, behaviors and customs shared by members of an interacting group to which members can refer and that serve as the basis of further interaction. Members recognize that they share experiences, and these experiences can be referred to with the expectation they will be understood by other members, thus being used to construct a reality for the participants. (1996, p. 302)

Conceiving of learning and interpreting texts as an active construction emphasizes what the individual brings, his past experience, his repertoire for making meaning. Conceiving of learning as a social construction reminds us that learning arises and is appropriated in dialogue, in transactions among individuals. But those transactions are constrained. The shared experiences

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of groups shape the meanings that can arise between them, and in turn the thinking that can be constructed within individuals.

The settings in which discourse (and written and visual artifacts) arise have histories and cultures all their own. On a grand scale, discourse is situated within societies, which share ways of talking and of making meaning. The talk and the writing that arose in EDU 200 took place in United States, among a group of mainly white, mainly middle class and mainly young teacher candidates. Discourse is situated within institutions or particular settings. Because they talked and wrote within the context of a classroom within the walls of a College of Education, the teacher candidates in this section of EDU 200 brought certain expectations for the ways of communicating with one another. They expected to sit in a circle, to be asked to "reflect," to talk about schooling and children and teaching, to be asked to read articles and write about them. Discourse emerges among groups with particular shared histories, and those histories and shared pasts become an ideoculture, become shared ways of making meaning, and, in turn, of thinking. From the first day of class, the teacher candidates in EDU 200 developed ways of interacting with one another. Their on-going experiences, such as learning about one another by giving presentations and the practice of taking turns to talk rather than overlapping one another, shaped the discourse and the other artifacts I was able to collect from the field.

A fourth aspect that shapes the talk that emerges within groups is the particular tasks individuals engage in. While the tasks that groups engage in

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become the purpose and give rise to the need to communicate, especially in classrooms built around group work, projects, and whole class discussion, those same activities also limit the realm of talk that can arise. Each assignment in the classroom carried certain constraints and expectations, which shaped the talk that could emerge. The painting of the mural, for example, required students to negotiate with one another about color and placement. The work done to edit and revise the child study papers required the teacher candidates to talk about their focus children and to explain the descriptions they had written. This fourth aspect of an activity theory framework–the constraints of the particular tasks the teacher candidates were asked or chose to engage in–became an important element of data analysis.

For example, in chapter 4 I describe the teacher candidates' interpretations of the novel *Bridge to Terabithia,* based primarily on the teacher candidates' individual presentations about the novel. In that chapter, I acknowledge that the techer candidates' presentations were constrained by the context of the course and by the particular directions for the presentation assignment. The teacher candidates had presented once before in class, and so were familiar with this kind of assignment and the ways of talking and range of topics their peers might find acceptable. Sue's directions for the assignment were fairly open ended, she asked them to share their own understanding or interpretation of the book, but she did give one example, which became the most common presentation topic. Recognizing the constraining as well as

the enabling features of the activities which gave rise to the data I have collected has been an important aspect of data analysis.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described my methodology and analytical framework. Data analysis has been shaped by more careful understanding of the key concepts underlying this dissertation: reading, interpretation, learning, and dialogue. In light of the particular goals for Sue's section of EDU 200, and the implications of the conceptual framework, the final version of the dissertation is:

> Based on evidence of appropriation and transformation of learning, what did six teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading and interpretation of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

The experiences of six featured students have helped me to answer this question. The experiences of these featured students, and the three concepts I have defined in this chapter–learning, interpretation, and activity framework theory–have played different roles in each of the following three chapters. In Chapter 3, I describe the context of the course, and then go on to summarize eight learning themes generally constructed in the course. In that chapter, I have used the six featured students' spoken and written words to serve as examples, representing their peers' learning. In chapter 3, activity framework

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theory has been highlighted more than other aspects of the theoretical framework, as I make claims about overall learning, situating those claims in the constraints of the directions for the assignments (end-of class posters and written reflections) that served as data for making claims about learning.

In chapter 4, I analyze the *Bridge* Sequence, showing the ways that the teacher candidates talked about and interpreted the novel. Here, the featured students experiences are presented in context, as the six featured students spoke with six of their classmates during talk and mural painting about the novel. Their experiences also serve once again as representative examples of ways the teacher candidates interpreted the novel, as I describe and analyze the teacher candidates' individual presentations about the book. In chapter 4, my understanding of the transactive and interpretive nature of reading is highlighted, as I work to understand the meaning the teacher candidates made of and with the book, and the social, dialogic sources of that meaning.

In Chapter 5, the featured students' experiences become the central focus, as I present six case studies. The role that the novel played in supporting the teacher candidates' learning about child, teaching, and learning was highly individual, and so can only be represented on a case by case basis. Here, the socially constructed and transformational nature of learning becomes the theoretical underpinning of data analysis, as I work to show that the teacher candidates' interpretation of the novel served, in varyingly powerful ways, to support their learning in the course.

As a final caveat, it is important to note that his research has been located within one introductory teacher education course. The readings and assignments of EDU 200 were meant to serve as a foundation for further study of teaching in education courses, during the year-long internship, and on through the teacher candidates' first years as teachers. While it would be compelling to know about the ways that the teacher candidates learning in EDU 200 carried over to knowledge that guided and shaped their actual classroom practice, the data available–transcripts, interviews, students' written work–only allowed me to make claims about the appropriation and transformation of learning within this one course. I recognize this as a limitation of the study. There is a significant difference between knowing about learning, children, and the role of the children, and actually acting on that knowledge in a classroom setting. Nonetheless, I believe that the data analysis to follow is a powerful testimony to the power of children's literature in teacher preparation, when that literature is thoughtfully chosen, carefully woven into class experience, and when teacher candidates have ample opportunities to individually and socially interpret the texts that they read.

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[1] I begin with Dewey because his work, connected to social constructivist theories, frames the data analysis, but also because his ideas about learning as an active engaged construction serve as the content meant to be learned in the course and the foundation and justification for Sue's decisions about what and how to teach the course.

Chapter 3: The Course

In chapters 1 and two I gave a rationale for exploring the potential role of children's literature in teacher preparation, and explored the theoretical framework for data analysis. That analysis is presented in chapters 4 and 5. In chapter 4, I document the *Bridge* Sequence, analyzing and describing the talk that arose as the teacher candidates interpreted the novel in three in-class activities: painting, teacher-led discussion, and individual presentations. In chapter 5, I present six case studies, showing that the novel played a unique and varyingly powerful role in the learning constructed by the featured students. In this chapter, chapter 3, I present important contextual information about the course, its students, and their learning.

In the first section of this chapter, I describe EDU 200, the course, including summarizing its overall goals and learning activities and introducing its instructors and students. In the second section of this chapter, I introduce the six featured students, Aaron, Elise, Kelly, Renee and Steve, and discuss the ways I selected these six featured students to represent the demographics and the learning of the entire class.

The third and final section of this chapter presents a different sort of context. In this section I summarize eight concepts and stances that comprised the class' learning about learning, the role of the teacher, and the experience of the child. These learning themes are the result of careful analysis of the class' end-of-the-semester written and oral reflections. As a

description of learning generally constructed by all or most of the teacher candidates in EDU 200, these learning themes serve as a foundation for understanding the six individual cases presented in chapter 5 and the ways those cases do and do not reflect their classmates' experiences.

Overview of the Course

EDU 200 is a junior level teacher preparation course taught at a large, midwestern university, the third in a series of nine courses that lead students through their year long internships in public schools. Before taking EDU 200, preservice teachers at this institution take courses which ask them to think about themselves as learners and their experiences in schools, the role of school in society, and the needs and experiences of diverse learners. EDU 200: Learners and Learning in Context asks students to think about children and young adults as learners and about the nature of learning in general. After taking EDU 200, students go on to take two five- to six- credit courses focusing on preparing to teach subject matter. During their fifth year internship, teacher candidates take four more masters level courses, continuing to learn about pedagogy, subject matter, children, and their professional roles as teachers. EDU 200 is situated rather early the teacher candidates' educational program, coming third in a series of nine increasingly intensive courses. As such, EDU 200 is not meant to teach everything they need to know in order to teach well, but to lay a foundation for the teacher candidates' further work on pedagogy and in the content areas.

In the chapters to come, I will make claims about the teacher candidates' construction of, and in particular, their transformation of, knowledge about teaching, children, and learning. Because the dissertation has been situated in an introductory course, those claims are by nature limited. While the dissertation shows that the teacher candidates interpreted the novel in ways which supported their construction of complex, interconnected webs of knowledge, I have been unable to show that those webs of knowledge carried over into the teacher candidates' final two years of course work and on into their first years of teaching.

Data for this dissertation was collected from a section of EDU 200 conducted Spring Semester of 1998. The instructor for the course was Sue Kennedy (pseudonyms have been used for the names of the instructor and all participants in the study). Sue was an advanced teacher education doctoral candidate who had taught the course several times prior to the semester I studied.

There were 24 students (18 women, 6 men) in the course, preparing to teach a in wide variety of fields. Nine were child development majors, six studied elementary education, and the other nine were seeking secondary education certificates. Three of the secondary education majors were earning degrees in agriscience, three in English, and three in various branches of science. All of the students appeared to be white, and they came from a variety of locations in their state, including farms, rural areas, small towns, and suburbs of a major metropolitan area, though none reported coming

from large cities. Only two of the teacher candidates were married, and all but four of the students were 20 years old.

The Curriculum

Sue's section of EDU 200 met 19 times during Spring semester, 1999. Students alternated meeting at the university classroom with visits to public school classrooms. For most sessions, the teacher candidates read articles or chapters (and once, the novel) to explore each session's topic. Table 1 summarizes each weeks' topic and names the authors and articles or chapters read to accompany that theme.

According to the syllabus, the course had two main themes–understanding the experience of children and exploring the role of the teacher–along with a pair of smaller but equally important themes–making connections between language and learning and understanding the importance of reflection. The readings, along with the in-class experiences, field experience, and three major graded assignments, were meant to help the teacher candidates explore and construct knowledge about each of these themes. The *Bridge* Sequence, at the center of the course, connected the two main themes. Each of the themes, and the experiences and readings meant to support learning of each theme, are discussed in more detail in the section below, and described in Table 1.

Table 1: Course Readings and Topics

Class	Author	Title	Topic
2	Kathy Short (1991) Henry James (1899/1958)	"Creating A Community Of Learners" "On A Certain Blindness In Human Beings"	classroom community, understanding others
3	David Hawkins (1974)	"I, Thou, It"	connections among learners, teachers, and subject matter
4	No new readings		building classroom community
5	Susan Florio-Ruane (1990)	"Creating Your Own Case Studies"	learning about children
6	Vivian Paley (1986) Patricia Carini (1982; 1991)	"On Listening To What Children Say" selections from *The School Lives Of Seven Children* and *The Education Of Minerva*	learning about children
7	Kathy Bailey (1993) Mary Pipher (1994)	"Breaking New Ground: Becoming Sensitive To Gender" from *Reviving Ophelia*	gender
8	Katherine Paterson (1977)	*Bridge To Terabithia*	
9	Robert Fried (1995)	"Passionate Teaching" "The Context Of Passion"	caring about what and who you teach
10	Robert Fried (1995)	"Designing A Unit"	worthwhile experiences
11	No new reading		peer teaching
12	John Dewey (1902/1990)	*The Child And the Curriculum*	worthwhile experiences
13	Carol Weinstein (1998)	chapters from *Elementary* or *Secondary Classroom Management*	management
14	Management Part 2		management
	Alfie Kohn (1993)	"The Trouble With Carrots"	management
15	No reading due		revising child study drafts

Table 1 Cont.

Class	Author	Title	Topic
16	C. James (1974)	"Some Educational Needs Of Adolescents"	connections between teacher, subject matter, and student
17	Peter Elbow (1986)	"Embracing Contraries"	connections between teacher, student, and subject matter
18	No reading due		
19	Robert Fried (1995)	"Discovering A Stance"	sharing what we've learned

The Child's Experience: The Importance Of Learning About Students

Sue wrote in the course syllabus, *"We must study the learning process, we must be students of our students--we must let them teach us if we are to teach them well..."* (emphasis in original). The first component of the class centered around understanding the importance of and ways to learn about students as both individuals and learners. A part of learning to know students is establishing a classroom community, a space where students know each other well enough to share their lives and their thinking. During the first four classes, the students played getting-to-know you games and presented their own "Cultural Profiles" where they shared information about themselves, their lives and their backgrounds. Students also read articles about the importance of the classroom community. One such article, called "Creating a Community of Learners," (1991) written by Kathy Short, focused on theoretical reasons to and specific means by which teachers build a

community of learners in their classroom. Another, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," by Henry James (1899/1958), spoke about the need to understand others from their own point of view.

Throughout the course, the teacher candidates in EDU 200 visited field placements in public schools a dozen or so times over the semester. During their visits to the field the teacher candidates were asked to observe and learn about one child in particular, and then to create what was called a child study. The child study was one of the three main graded assignments in the course. During classes 5, 6, and 7, the teacher candidates read articles about learning about individual students (e.g. Florio-Ruane, "Creating your own case studies" 1990) and engaged in activities (such a viewing and discussing video tapes of children in classrooms) designed to help them observe children and reflect on those observations.

The *Bridge To Terabithia* Sequence

As I have said before, the teacher candidates read *Bridge to Terabithia,* and then discussed, painted murals, and gave presentations about their reading of the book. Each of those four activities is described here. (These activities, and Sue's rationale for explaining them, are described in much greater detail in Chapter 4.)

Reading the novel. On a Wednesday afternoon in February, Sue sent the teacher candidates home for the weekend, admonishing them to read all of *Bridge to Terabithia* and, while they read, to ask themselves, "as you are reading, does the book engage you?" On the first class after reading *Bridge,*

Table 2: Major Themes and Related Assignments and Experiences

Timing	Theme	Graded Assignments	Instructional Experiences	Related Readings
class sessions 1-7, 15, 16	understanding the child's experience	child study	getting-to-know-you games, videos, observation exercises, share and discuss drafts of paper, field experience	Short, James, Florio-Ruane, Paley, Bailey, Carini, Pipher,
class sessions 8 & 9	*Bridge To Terabithia* Sequence		paint, discuss, and present about book	Paterson, Fried
class sessions 9-14, 17-18	the role of the teacher	peer teaching reflection	plan and teach short lessons to peers, debate about rewards, view and discuss videos, field experience	Hawkins, Fried, Dewey, Weinstein, Kohn, James, Elbow
through-out course	language and learning		engaging in various genres of talk, e.g. [presentations], debates, small and large group conversations, considering text structures and reading strategies, considering careful use of language, i.e. metaphors	

Table 2 (cont.)

Timing	Theme	Graded Assignments	Instructional Experiences	Related Readings
through-out course	teaching, learning, and reflection	final reflection	writing brief reflections and self assessments in and out of class, talking in small groups and with whole class about assignments and activities, creating posters to summarize learning, Sue sharing behind-the-scenes of her teaching	Fried

Sue asked students to write a reaction to the book on one side of a note card, and a quote that captured their attention on the other side. Then Sue split the class into two groups, Group A and Group B. While half of teacher candidates talked about the book with Sue, the other half went to a different room to create a mural.

Activity One: Discussion: During this formal discussion of the novel, the twelve students (half the class) sat in a rectangle around a cluster of tables. The conversation was mostly teacher led. Sue brought a list of discussion questions that she asked the students to respond to. These

questions included "Which character struck you? Why?" and "Why Bridge? What's getting connected and what's the bridge?" During the discussion, students responded to these questions and occasionally raised topics of their own. The discussion lasted about 40 minutes.

Activity Two: Painting a Mural. While one half of the class participated in the discussion with Sue, the other half of the class painted a mural. Students were given several colors of tempera paints, brushes, and a large (20 feet by 4 feet) sheet of green paper. Sue instructed the class to use these to create either an illustration of the novel, which would be "directly tied to the text" or an interpretation, which would be "tied to images or things you associate with the book." Sue discussed techniques artists use to create effects, such as brush strokes, mixing color, and different kinds and shapes of lines. Each group painted for approximately 40 minutes.[i]

Activity Three: *Bridge* Presentations. At the end of the day spent discussing and painting about the novel, Sue introduced what she called the *Bridge* Presentation assignment. Based on their own individual reading of the novel and their interactions during class that day, the teacher candidates were to create a presentation to represent their current interpretation of, understanding of, or connection to the novel. As Sue told them, " . . . . you can use music, you can use art, you can use poetry, you can use dance, you can use writing, you can use what ever you need but sort of to come and share with us what is your take on this book." The presentations were formal, in that students spoke to one another without interrupting or talking with each

other. Several teacher candidates brought written essays to read aloud or spoke about and shared artifacts that represented their interpretation of the novel.

These three activities--painting, discussing, and presenting--made up the *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence. In chapter 5 I explore the connections between this sequence and overall learning in the course by presenting six case studies.

Teaching And The Role Of The Teacher

The last seven class sessions were generally focused on considering the role of the teacher. As Sue wrote in the syllabus, " . . . as we delve into the question of what is the child's experience, we must also ask ourselves what moves we can make as teacher to create learning opportunities . . . " To this end, the teacher candidates in the class worked in small groups to plan and teach a lesson to their classmates, and then wrote reflection papers. The peer teaching paper was the second of the teacher candidates' three graded assignments. During this portion of the class, the teacher candidates considered specific technical acts that teachers take in order to create learning opportunities. For example, for class sessions 13-16, they read chapters about classroom management (e.g. Weinstein (1997), *Elementary Classroom Management* or Weinstein & Mignano (1996)*Secondary Classroom Management*), held debates about the role of rewards, and discussed lesson planning techniques.

While much of the second half of the course was spent considering the teaching as a technical act, they also spent time considering the teachers' role more philosophically. As Sue wrote in the syllabus: "Like bridge builders, your task is to span the gap between your students and the content that you so earnestly want them to reach." To explore that idea, in an early class session, and in class sessions 9-12 and 16 and 17, the teacher candidates read and discussed articles that considered teaching as making connections between teacher, child, and subject matter. For example, they read John Dewey's, "Child and the Curriculum" (1902/1990), which argues that attention to both the needs of the child and the demands of subject matter are crucial in classrooms. They read David Hawkins', "I, Thou, It," (1974) which argues that loving students is not sufficient for teaching, that teachers must also engage students in curriculum, and that content is the link that can connect teachers with students. The teacher candidates also read and discussed chapters from Robert Fried's *The Passionate Teacher: A Practical Guide* (1995). In these chapters, Fried, in part, argues that teachers must care passionately about both students and subject matter in order to teach well.

The teacher candidates also considered the role of the teacher for two written assignments. For the first, they planned and taught a lesson to their peers, and then reflected on that teaching in written papers. The final graded assignment in the class, the final reflection paper, asked the teacher candidates to reflect on their understanding of the role of the teacher by

describing their emerging stance as a teacher and by listing two characteristics that good teachers posses.

Themes That Cut Across The Course

I have described the class as having two main components, however, connections between these two themes extended to both halves of the course. Issues of understanding children and their experiences as learners, and understanding teaching as making connections between teacher, student, and content spanned the entire semester. The child study, for example, was completed near the end of the class, and students spent time during the last weeks of class sharing, discussing, and revising their drafts of their child study. Hawkins' "I, Thou, It" article, all about teaching as making connections, was read during the second week of class.

In addition, two issues cut across the course as a whole. Sue wrote in the syllabus, "What role does language play in teaching and learning?" To investigate this issue, Sue asked students to consider language in several ways. She asked them to articulate strategies for reading different genres of texts and texts of varying difficulties. They engaged in activities that highlighted the importance of careful use of language such creating and considering metaphors for teaching and for thinking about children and revising drafts of graded assignments in class. The teacher candidates also engaged in and reflected on a variety of oral discourse genres, including presentations, formal and informal small and large group discussion,

lectures, and debates. Consideration of language and the role of language cut across all three components of the course.

Connected to the theme of understanding connections between language and learning, and in order to encourage the students to talk freely with one another, Sue also engaged the teacher candidates in a series of experiences she hoped would get them talking. For example, she staged mock debates twice during the course, explicitly describing the genre of debate as one in which claims are made, supported, and refuted. She also worked with the teacher candidates to draft the EDU 200 Bill of Rights, which stated explicitly the expectations and norms, including conversational expectations, for the class.

A second cross-course theme related to reflection and the role that reflection can play in both teaching and learning. As Sue wrote in the syllabus, "The other major assumption [of the course] is that *our own examined experience* is a vital resource for learning" (emphasis in the original). In keeping with the course's emphasis on reflection, the teacher candidates frequently wrote brief in-class reflections on their participation or learning. After almost every major assignment or in-class activity, the teacher candidates reflected on their participation and learning. Sometimes this happened in whole-class conversation, other times in small groups. The third graded assignment, the final reflection, asked students to look back at their learning in the course and to consider the elements of the course that had served as the most valuable learning resources over the semester.

Finally, Sue herself set a very reflective stance as she worked constantly to go "behind-the-scenes" of her own teaching and learning. She reflected on the impact of the decisions she made as teacher, and tried to make her thinking as visible as possible throughout the course.

The Featured Students

Selecting the featured students. Because the cases of the six featured students are meant to illustrate the range of roles that the novel played in shaping the teacher candidates' learning in the course, I decided to feature the experiences of both students who volunteered to participate in interviews, and those who did not. Only three of the five students who participated in interviews have been featured in the dissertation. I had two reasons for featuring students other than those who chose to participate in interviews. The first is that half of the students who participated in the interviews were male, while there were only six mail students in class. Featuring only the interview students would have over-represented the experiences men. Second, none of the interviewed students were secondary education majors. The secondary education students' journeys through the course turned out to be interesting, in part because *Bridge to Terabithia* is a novel written for 10-11 year-olds, and several of the secondary education students did not respond to the novel as enthusiastically as the elementary education students generally did. Even though I did not interview them, I decided to add two secondary education students to the list of featured students.

Table 3: Information About The Featured Students

Name	Age	Major	Minor	Intrview	Aimed To Teach	Other
Aaron	22	Secondary English	Spanish	No	HS	alternative, poetry/ journal writer
Elise	20	Secondary English	jrnalism	No	12th grade, Europe	activist
Gina	21	Child Dev.	English	Yes	K	writer, artist
Kelly		Child Developmnt	English	Yes	K or 1	friends, family, kids important
Renee	20	Child Dev.	Spanish	No	lower el.	Christian faith
Steve	20	Elem. Ed.	Earth Science, chem.	Yes	4th	shy, hockey fan, skeptical stance

What follows next is a brief description of each featured students' background, based on surveys Sue asked them to complete that asked about their backgrounds, their experiences with children, and their goals as teacher. Table 3 summarizes the characteristics and backgrounds of the six featured students.

Aaron. Aaron was a 22 year old male from a major suburb. He worked in a clothing store at the mall. He was earning a secondary English degree with a minor in Spanish. Aaron had had very few experiences with children and young adults. Aaron thought he wanted to teach high school or senior

English somewhere in Michigan, although he was unsure whether or not he wanted to teach high school at all. Aaron listened to alternative music, loved literature and poetry, kept a journal, and had read Walden. He said he loathed politics. Aaron wrote that he wanted to be a teacher "to help others appreciate what I do," that the best thing about being a teacher would be the "role as teacher/learner," and that he feared "freezing in front of class." Aaron did not participate in the interviews.

Elise. Elise was a 20 year old English major, earning a minor in journalism. She did not say where she was from. She hoped one day to teach 12th grade in Europe. She worked as a Resident Assistant in her dormitory. Elise described herself as an athlete and an activist concerned about women's issues, children's issues, and education, a liberal to moderate democrat and a loosely practicing Roman Catholic. Elise had had many experiences working with children, including child care and camp counseling. She imagined the best thing about teaching would be the students. Elise did not participate in interviews.

Gina[ii] Gina was a 21-year-old from a city on the edge of a large metropolitan area. Gina lived in a sorority on campus and worked at the mall in a high end clothing store chain. Gina was a child development major and hoped to teach kindergarten. She had had many experiences with children, including working as a nanny, volunteering at community centers and in schools, working at a day care, and as part of her child development course work. Gina had also had opportunities to teach writing in a 6th grade

classroom, and spent much of her free time writing. She saw herself as an artist, and brought her portfolio of pictures in to class one day. She hoped one day to write and illustrate a children's book. At the end of the course, Gina wrote that she wanted to be a teacher because "I have a passion for children and feel that this along w/ my interest in teaching will make me a successful teacher." She imagined the best thing about being a teacher would be "giving something to children they will take away and use forever." Gina participated in two interviews.

Kelly. Kelly was a 20-year-old from a suburban area. She was majoring in child development, and working on a minor in English. Kelly hoped to teach Kindergarten or first grade. During the course, she worked ten hours a week as a child care provider, and she had had several other experiences with children, including volunteering both at a local elementary school and the city-sponsored multicultural programs, as well as working with children at church and family gatherings. Kelly enjoyed spending time with her family and friends. Kelly's primary memories of school were positive, and those positive aspects centered around her memories of the relationships with her teachers. For example, Kelly described her kindergarten teacher as being important to her because she "remembered me all through elementary school and I would like to be like her." Kelly said she wanted to be a teacher because "I love children and to watch a child learn is what has allways made me happy." She imagined that the best thing about teaching would be that "students respect and learn to love you," and was

worried about "students not liking me." Kelly was participated in two interviews.

Renee. Renee was a 20-year-old from a medium sized city. She was majoring in child development and working on a Spanish minor. Renee hoped one day to teach lower elementary, but was not sure what grade or where she wanted to teach. Renee claimed that the biggest influence on her life had been her faith, and talked about her faith several times during class. She considered herself to be a strong Christian. She had had many experiences with young children, including at church in the nursery, baby-sitting, volunteering in classrooms and through her child development coursework. Renee wanted to be a teacher because "I want to invest in kids and leave a mark, and help equip them to learn, be confident, and succeed." She thought the best thing about being a teacher would be "the rewards--I love being w/ kids" and said her biggest fear was "It just seems so overwhelming to actually get there--I feel like there is so much to learn in 2 years."

Steve. Steve was a 20-year-old from a community on a lake. Steve was majoring in elementary education with minors in earth science and chemistry, and hoped one day to teach fourth grade in a small town. He loved hockey and talked about hockey in most of his assignments and many class conversations. In fact he said that his hobbies, interests and passions were, "Anything that has to do with hockey." Steve was fairly shy, and did

Table 4: Members of the Child Study Groups

Group Name	Bill's Group	Gina's Group	James' Group	Kelly's Group	Steve's Group	Amber's Group
Group Members	Bill Candace Mary Shelly	**Gina** **Aaron** Bonnie Sheila	James Keri Tracy Tamara	**Kelly** Janet Mandy Neil	**Steve** **Elise** **Renee** Lisa	Amber Geraldine Jackie Keith

Note: Featured students are listed in bold in this and all following tables.

not say much in large group conversations. He had had many experiences with young children including working as an assistant in a fourth grade classroom, and coaching little league. Steve wanted to be a teacher because "I like helping kids and seeing the looks on their faces when they finally understand something," but that he was worried about "not being able to keep the students' attention." Steve brought a skeptical stance to EDU 200. On his initial survey, when asked about classes that were not so good, he listed another education course, because, when he volunteered, he found that "A lot of things in [that course] didn't work when I tried them in the fourth grade classroom." He also spoke and wrote frequently of his mother, a fourth grade teacher, and the ways in which she saw the university at the "child centered" end of a pendulum that was likely to be swinging back toward "teacher centered" teaching at any time.

Learning Constructed in EDU 200

My conclusions about the teacher candidates' learning in EDU 200 have been drawn from analysis of two main sources of data: end of class posters created by small groups to summarize the course's main themes and topics, and papers written

the last week of class, called final reflections. For the final reflections, Sue asked the teacher candidates to read a chapter by Robert Fried called "Discovering a Stance," (1995), to look over a list of teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions that the class had brainstormed their first day together (see Appendix B) and then to write about 3 things:

1. to list and explain three resources that have shaped their learning,
2. to describe their emerging stance as a teacher and ways they will develop that stance, and
3. identify and explain one important knowledge, skill or disposition from the list, and add and explain a new quality to that list.

For the posters, Sue asked the students to gather into already established groups of 4, and to create a visual representation, using words and/or images, to depict their understanding of "what the course has been all about." Steve, Elise, and Renee were all in one group, Gina and Aaron were in the same group, and Kelly was in a third. The groups and their members are listed in Table 4.

In their final reflections, end-of-class posters, and interviews, the teacher candidates talked about teachers as bridge builders who connect or create a relationship between children and subject matter, as well as between children and the teacher. They also wrote and spoke about teachers balancing their own needs, the needs of students, and the standards and organization of the subject matter. They generally understood that in order to create bridges

- Role of the Teacher
  - to build a bridge
  - teaching as a balancing act
  - to know subject matter
  - passion
  - to be a continual learner
- Understanding the Child's Experience
  - importance of knowing students well
  - importance of the learning community
- Learning
  - learning is active, builds from prior knowledge, and may be a social construction

Figure 1: Major Themes of the Teacher Candidates' Learning

or strike a balance, teachers needed to know their subject matter very well, and to feel passionate about the content they are teaching. The teacher candidates claimed that they realized that teachers needed to be continuous learners, working throughout their careers to learn about subject matter, to learn about children, and to learn about teaching. They also wrote and spoke about their relationships with and responsibilities toward children. They expressed a vehement desire to create a safe, respectful and accepting learning community where children would be willing to participate, share, and take risks, and they understood that their responsibilities as teachers lie in knowing their students very well, as both individuals and learners. Finally, they justified their positions on the role of the teacher and the importance of the learning community in light of their beliefs about learning. For the most part, the teacher candidates understood learning as an active construction,

wherein learners understand new concepts and new experiences in light of their prior understandings, and they understood the importance of talk and the EDU 200 classroom community for shaping their own learning as beginning teachers. Each of these eight learning themes, summarized in Figure 1, is summarized in the next several sections, using illustrative examples from both the posters and the final reflections written by the six featured students.

In keeping with the focus of the dissertation question, this summary of the teacher candidates' learning in EDU 200 focuses on the learning constructed about the experience of the child, the role of the teacher, and the teacher candidates' conceptions of learning. A few points need to be made about the eight learning themes summarized below. First, this list does not capture all of the learning that was constructed in EDU 200. These eight themes do not represent concepts that only a few teacher candidates wrote about, nor do they represent understandings that were shared by several students but that were not consistent with the focus of the dissertation question.

Themes Relating To The Role Of The Teacher

Role of the teacher theme one: The teacher as a bridge. One common metaphor for teaching in both the final reflections and the end-of-class posters was teaching as a "bridge." The teacher candidates used the bridge metaphor to represent their understanding that teachers make connections between children, between themselves and children, and most commonly,

between children and subject matter. The metaphor of bridge or the concept of connection was present in four of the six end of class posters, and in 7 of the 23 final reflection papers.

Two of the groups, James' and Gina's, made the idea of teachers connecting subject matter and children the central image of their poster. James' and Gina's groups both drew teachers with widespread arms, who reached out on one side to images of subject matter (textbooks, beakers, computers) and on the other side to stick figures of children. When Gina explained her groups' mural to the class, she said, "we had the subject matter and the students and the teacher.

Kelly's group also used the metaphor of a bridge to partially represent their understanding of the course's content. At the bottom of this poster, Kelly's group drew a bridge, and their poster read "Bridge Gap Between Students and Content." As Kelly explained to the rest of the class " . . . and down here is a bridge, well, it's supposed to be a bridge and um, bridge to get between students and content." Although Kelly's group did not portray the teacher as the agent that makes this connection, they recognized that in teaching and learning, there is a gap to be spanned–the gap between students and contents.

The bridge metaphor or the concept of teaching being an act of creating connections was present in seven of the twenty-three, or nearly a third of the final reflections. Renee, who planned to teach early elementary and whose Christian faith was so important to her, used the bridge metaphor as the

central organizing concept of her final reflection, using both the word bridge and the idea of connection several times to fulfill the three tasks of the final reflection. Renee's comments serve as an example of ways the bridge metaphor appeared in the teacher candidates' final reflections. (Remember that in the final reflection the teacher candidates were supposed to list three valuable resources, describe their stance as teachers, as well as choose one from and add one to the list of knowledge, skills and dispositions good teachers should possess.) In the introduction to her paper, Renee wrote that the course had "an overarching theme." She explained:

> I saw how the different pieces fit together to form the picture of our goals. I was struck by the metaphor of teaching as bridge building, and the importance of knowing the terrain on both sides, the breadth of the gap to be spanned, as well as the methods and techniques of bridge-building. This really pulled it all together.

In the rest of her final reflection, Renee continued to flesh out the bridge metaphor and to explain what it meant to her. She wrote about the bridge as a connection between teacher and student, when she wrote "We also explored the importance of subject matter (something I had hitherto not fully grasped) and its powerful potential as the substance, or connecting force, between the teacher and student." Renee described subject matter as the substance of the relationship between child and teacher.

Table 5: Teaching As a Balancing Act: What Teachers Must Balance

Subject Matter Balance		Relationship with Student Balance	Did not specify
Child and Curriculum	Child, Curriculum, and Teacher		
Gina Steve James Jackie Mary Neil Sheila	**Steve** Bonnie	**Elise** **Renee** **Steve** Geraldine Tamara Tracy	Shelly
Total: 7	2	6	1

Role of the teacher theme 2: Teaching is a balancing act. The balance metaphor implies a pairing. The needs and demands of one thing, perhaps students, are being balanced with another, perhaps the teacher, perhaps the subject matter. Only one group actually put an image of a balance on their end-of-class poster. (However, another group used the idea of balance to explain their poster, as will be described later in this section.) One image on the poster created by Steve's group was a seesaw with three words stacked on either end. Elise described the image this way:

> . . . then we had the balance connecting each other which, I can read it, on one side there's the child vs. curriculum, ally vs. bouncer-gatekeeper, and then you have the teachers needs and student needs, which are in constant in a balancing act.

As Elise described it, this group recognized that teaching is a "balancing act," and that in the classroom three things are balanced: 1) the child is balanced with the curriculum, 2) the need to be a friend or ally to students is balanced with the need to uphold standards and high expectations, and 3) the teacher's own needs are balanced with the needs of her students. Fourteen of the teachers candidates , or 61% of them, (including five of the featured students) used the metaphor of balance in their final reflections to explain their stance or to talk about competing interests that teachers must reconcile. Ten wrote explicitly about balance, and four others wrote about dichotomies they planned to attend to in their classrooms. Although the balance metaphor was common in the final reflections, the teacher candidates who used this metaphor to explain their stance or to consider the knowledge, skills, and dispositions good teachers possess did not use the same pairings of items that need balance in the classroom. Table 5 shows the different dichotomies the teacher candidates imagined reconciling when they become teachers. There are two broad categories of pairings in the table. The "Subject Matter Balance" section of the table refers to the ways the teacher candidates wrote about teachers striking a balance between the curriculum and either children's needs (seven teacher candidates wrote about this) or balancing the needs of the curriculum, the child, and the teacher (two wrote about this.) The second grouping of pairings focus on the teacher's relationship with the child, and the need to balance strictness and high expectations with

understanding and support. One student wrote vaguely about teachers needing to balance, but did not specify what she meant.

Gina (who saw herself as an artist and writer and planned one day to teach kindergarten) perhaps best exemplifies the seven teacher candidates who wrote about balance in terms of subject matter. Gina wrote:

> As discussed previously in class and restated within the Fried article is the idea that there must be a balance between the child's needs and the need to present the subject matter. There are times when one takes precedence over the other however, I believe they are both necessary for a child's learning.

Another example comes from Steve, the hockey fan who started class a bit skeptical that he would learn things in education courses that would apply in a real classroom. Steve was surprised at how much he had learned in EDU 200, and the idea of balance, and the dichotomy of teacher/subject centered and child centered teaching, were themes he paid attention to during class and wrote about in his final reflection. For example, Steve wrote that in the field:

> I finally got to see all the concepts and ideas I've had to talk about for the last year and a half. For example, a week before we read Dewey my CT and I had a conversation about child vs. subject oriented classrooms. She told me that you have to have a balance between the two. Some classes might work better with a more/teacher/subject matter focus, and some might work better

> with a more child-centered focus. Each class has to be taken individually . . . . What she said made a lot of sense and it made Dewey a lot easier to understand. That conversation kept coming back to me as I read.

Steve also represents the subset of 7 students who wrote about ways they understood that teachers must strike a balance in the ways they interact with students. Steve understood that teachers must both challenge and support students, an idea he elaborated on has he talked about a "firm but fair" stance toward the classroom, comparing teachers to good coaches who:

> push their teams really hard and demand the most from everyone. At the same time they let their players know that they will fight for them and be there for them to help them succeed. A good coach cannot be a pushover, letting the players run every little part of the game plan. However, they also cannot be dictators who take control of everything.

Steve linked the coaching metaphor to his understanding of the Elbow article, which focused on the "balance between being the gatekeeper and the ally." and then continued to elaborate on his ideas, saying:

> This is the stance I would like to take into the classroom. I want to push my students as much as I can, but I want them to know I'm on their side also, and I will fight for them to help them succeed. I'll be firm in what I want them to learn but I'll be fair in helping them get there.

Role of the teacher theme 3: Know your subject matter. The teacher candidates not only came to think of the teachers' role as one of creating a relationship (a bridge or a balance) between students and subject matter, they also wrote and talked about ways that that relationship can only be forged if teachers know and care passionately about both their students and their subject matter. The subject matter side of this is addressed first.

Five of the end-of-the-class posters depicted subject matter as one of the themes of the class. For example, James' group drew a poster of a teacher with outstretched arms (a bridge) reaching both to students and to symbols of subject matter such as a beaker, a map, and a calculator. Gina's group drew a similar symbol and added the phrase "knowledge of subject matter."

The teacher candidates' final reflections revealed even more about their developing understanding of the importance of deep, flexible, and passionate knowledge of subject matter for successful teaching. Remember that the directions for the final reflections asked the teacher candidates to talk about valuable resources and experiences in the class, their developing stance as teachers and characteristics good teachers posses. While they were writing in ways to meet the requirements of these directions, in a class whose official title was "Learners and Learning in Context," many students chose to write about their understanding of the teachers' responsibility for knowing and caring about subject matter.

As you can see from Table 6, six teacher candidates wrote about their understanding that they need to know their subject matter well. Knowing

Table 6: Knowing Subject Matter/Being Passionate

	Theme Three: Know your Subject Matter	Theme Four: Passion	
Name	Know your subject well	Be passionate about your subject matter	Be passionate about subject matter and students
Aaron		X	
Elise		X	
Gina	X	X	
Renee	X	X	
Bill		X	
Geraldine	X	X	
James	X		
Janet		X	
Keri			X
Mary	X		
Neil	X		
Sheila			X
Tamara			X
Tracy			X
Total: 14	6	7	4

subject matter well is closely related to the fourth learning theme summarized here, that of caring passionately about the content that is taught. The teacher candidates who wrote about passion in terms of only subject matter or both subject matter and student are also listed on Table 6.

Renee, the child development major who cared about her Christian faith, wrote about ways that the course had changed her views of subject matter and subject matter knowledge, and so can serve as an example to represent those sixteacher candidates who reflected on their learning in this way. Renee wrote that during the course, "I began to realize that I had indeed been focusing on teaching as loving children, and given very little thought to what I would actually *teach* teacher candidates who reflected on their learning in this way. Renee wrote that during the course, "I began to realize that I had indeed been focusing on teaching as loving children, and given very little thought to what I would actually *teach* them." As she continued to flesh out this idea, Renee added, "I saw that to neglect subject matter was to deny children the skills and resources they need to survive in our society." Gina serves as another example of this new found commitment to learn about content. Gina wrote that as a result of this class she planned to "learn as much [much] about my subject matter as possible and understand how that developmentally relates to the students I will teach."

Role of the teacher theme 4: Passion. The commitment to learn more about subject matter found in six of the final reflections, and the reference to subject matter on so many of the posters, is linked to ideas about passionate

teaching developed during the course. Passion, for subject matter as well as children, was mentioned specifically on one of the posters, that created by James' group. Their teacher (reaching out to students and to subject matter) had hair made of wild, squiggly, bright colored lines. Some of those lines were literally the word passion, written in a loose, hard to read scrawl, over and over. Tamara said of this teacher: "It looks just like squiggly lines but it's supposed to be, like, passion, coming from her."

Being passionate, as the teacher candidates wrote in their final reflections, has to do with knowing about what you are teaching, caring about what you are teaching, and sharing some of yourself in the classroom with your students. Passion was an important idea for Elise, the secondary English major who earlier described her stance in the high school classroom as "tough but caring." Elise wrote:

> One of my own personal qualities that I cherish is how much passion I take into everything I do . . . It's rewarding to read articles that say how passionate people can make a difference in the classroom.

Elise listed some of the things she herself feels passionately about, including "literature written in the oral tradition, equal rights for women and other social issues," and then went on to explain that "because I have these interests, students will be exposed to a vast variety of experiences and I'll be better equipped to connect the outside world to what the students are learning."

Elise, like the five other teacher candidates (See Table 6) who wrote about being passionate about what they teach were considering specific ways teachers go about creating a relationship between children and the curriculum. Elise and her peers recognized that one of the ways teachers "connect" their students to the content they are meant to learn is by being excited about it. When teachers care about the ideas and the content they are teaching about, not only do they know it better, but they also make it more interesting. It becomes content that is important, not only to the teacher but to the students as well.

Four other teacher candidates made a subtle variation on the passion idea by writing about teaching as being passionate about both subject matter and students. Sheila, for example, wrote about passion in this way. Sheila was an elementary education major with minors in history and English. Sheila wrote about adding to the list of knowledge, skills, and dispositions good teachers posses:

> To be passionate, I need to relate the outside world, my experiences, and the student's experiences to every lesson that is taught. Passion is such an important quality in a teacher because a passionate teacher continually finds new and interesting ways to present material to the students to spark excitement. . . . Passion for teaching, for the subject matter, and for the students really grabs their attention and gets them interested and engaged in the learning process.

Altogether, eleven of the 23 teacher candidates wrote about passion in ways similar to Elise, and Sheila, in their final reflections. They took advantage of the open ended prompts that gave them opportunities to explain their understanding of passion and its relevance to teaching. As they did so, they continued to elaborate on their ideas about teachers as bridge builders and balance keepers. Caring about subject matter is one way teachers can go about the work of building bridges. Sheila, in this quote above, wrote about the need for teachers to be continually finding "new and interesting ways to present material." Teachers need to be continually learning about their profession. Sheila was only one of many students who wrote about continuous learning as an important aspect of the teachers' role.

Role of the teacher theme 5: Keep learning. The idea of continual learning surfaced on only one of the teacher candidates' end-of-class posters. Among Amber's groups many words under their title "DIVERSITY" they wrote "teacher as learner." The idea of teachers being lifelong learners was more common in the teacher candidates' writing, since it was included in 12 of the 23 final reflections (52% of the class), including two featured students.

For example, when Elise, the future English teacher who planned to be passionate by teaching about women's rights and literature in the oral tradition, was considering the lists of characteristics of good teachers, she elaborated on the continuous learner theme. Elise wrote, "Through out this course we have dealt with looking inside ourselves to empower our own success as a teacher. We have also discovered that we are and always will be

continual learners (from previous list)." Gina, the artist/writer child development major, wrote that she also saw herself as a continual learner, saying:

> There are always aspects of this stance that are going to need work and that will continue to develop and change throughout time. I am hoping that everyday will being [bring] new experience that will better help me develop the ideas I already possess and also help me to create new ideas and philosophies on how I will best teach my students.

I have listed continuous learning here as one of the themes of learning constructed during EDU 200 because it appeared so frequently in the final reflections. Activity theory framework (Cole, 1996) as discussed in chapter 2, reminds us to be cognizant of the implications of the task set before the students. This learning theme may have appeared so frequently not because it was a major component of the teacher candidates' learning, but at least in part because Sue specifically asked the teacher candidates to list at least one way they would continue to develop their teaching stance, which was a topic they were required to write about for the final reflection.

Themes Relating To Understanding The Child's Experience

Understanding the child's experience, theme 1: Know about students. The most frequent theme in the teacher candidates' reports of their learning was the importance of knowing, understanding, and learning about students.

A variation on this theme was evident on five of the six end of class posters, as well as 19 of the 23 final reflections.

For example, Kelly's group created a poster with a central image of a teacher and a student, with arrows pointing to each. Kelly said their image represented "a student learning from the teacher and the teacher learning from the students." Amber's group made "Diversity" the title of their poster, in part because for them the course was about "differences in between people in general . . . . " When Sue asked Amber's group what a teacher needs to do to address that diversity, part of Amber's answer was "figure out what will help her learn about each student individually."

Nineteen of the 23 teacher candidates, or 83% of them, wrote about this theme. There were three basic ways the teacher candidates wrote about knowing students, summarized in Table 7. Some teacher candidates said teachers should know their students to demonstrate that they care for their students and to build classroom community. Others said that knowing students allows teachers to better plan and make other teaching decisions. Two teacher candidates did not give reasons for learning about students. Instead, these two wrote about specific ways that teachers can go about understanding their students' experiences.

Eleven of the teacher candidates recognized that learning about students as individuals is a way to let them know you care about and respect them. They wrote about the importance of knowing students as people as away to connect with children in the classroom and to foster the learning

Table 7: Elaborations on Teachers Knowing Their Students

Name	Community/Care	Teaching Decisions	Ways to learn about students
Aaron	X		
Gina	X		
Kelly		X	
Steve		X	
Amber	X	X	
Bonnie	X	X	
Bill	X	X	
Candace			X
Janet		X	
Jackie		X	
Keri			X
Lisa	X	X	
Mary		X	
Mandy	X		
Neil	X		
Sheila	X	X	
Shelly	X	X	
Tamara		X	
Tracy	X	X	
Total: 19	11	13	2

community. Aaron was one of those teacher candidates. Aaron was a secondary English major who kept a journal and who liked to write poetry. Aaron wrote:

> My experience at Bradley Junior High reminded me just how much I like teenagers. Sitting in the back of the classroom, I really wanted to get to know the kids; what their interests were, their hopes, dreams, and fears. . . . I think above all, I want to learn how to make my students understand that I do care about them as human beings, not just as students or learners. Once I can gain such a stance, I think the students will respect my honesty, and want to help themselves and myself to learn as much as we can, together.

Aaron had a specific reason for wanting to know the teens in this English classroom: he wanted to show the students that he cares about them, not just as entities to give knowledge to, but as people. Aaron imagined that this stance of communicating respect to students by knowing them as individuals would help him create a classroom where teacher and students, together, genuinely learn.

Another reason to learn about students is to teach them well. Teachers who understand children as individuals can choose subject matter and structure lessons that will interest them and behave in ways that meet children's needs. Thirteen of the teacher candidates wrote about learning from and understanding students for these reasons.

One of the teacher candidates who wrote about knowing students this way was Steve, the skeptical hockey fan who used a coaching metaphor to describe his firm but fair stance. Steve concluded his final reflection by writing about the importance of teachers' working to understand students and their "problems."

> Students will not always tell you what is bothering them, and trying to figure it out can be stressful. A good teacher should be able to get some idea of what is causing a student's change in behavior by observing them.

Kelly, a child development major who had worked as a child care provider and who really "loved" kids, serves as another example of this. Kelly wrote, "I have learned over the semester it is necessary for teachers to know how to observe their students so they can reply about their learning process." In other words, teachers who know how to pay careful attention to children in the classroom, to understand what they are thinking and how they are thinking, can give students feedback and respond to them in ways that foster children's learning. Knowing students, to show respect or to make decisions or to communicate caring for students, is linked to a second main idea the teacher candidates constructed knowledge of during EDU 200, the importance of the learning community.

Understanding the child's experience, theme 2: The learning community. According to their end-of-class posters and final reflections, the

teacher candidates also developed understandings about the importance of the learning community as they took part in the experiences of EDU 200.

Steve's group titled their poster "Creating a Community of Learners," to symbolize the ways that this theme was central to their understanding of the content of the course. Aaron, a member of Gina's group, drew five figures on his corner of this group's poster, and explained it this way:

> Mine, in the lower corner there's a big person in the middle giving a presentation or a talk or something and saying like "me me me me me" which means he's talking about himself, him or herself, I should say, like with that first thing we did and all there are four people around that are smaller, I don't know why they are smaller, it's supposed to be perspective or something but I'm not an artist, and they are saying, they're saying stuff like "really," and "cool" and "why, and" stuff like that, so they are, maybe it's about the community aspect, "why do you think this," or "it's cool that you think that," or "I don't understand why you think that."

In addition to these two posters, nineteen of the teacher candidates (just under 83%) wrote about this theme in their final reflections. As you can see in Table 8, two of the students wrote very vaguely about this theme, as when Keri, a child development major, wrote that her stance was a stance of "awareness" which included "being aware of the climate of the classroom and our management of it."

Table 8: Elaborations On The Learning Community

Name	Vague Mention of Learning Community	Create Safety for Risk Taking	Importance of Respect and Teacher/Student Relationship	Also Included Specific Ways to Foster the learning Community
Aaron		X	X	X
Elise		X		X
Gina		X	X	X
Kelly			X	X
Steve		X		X
Amber			X	X
Bill		X		X
Bonnie			X	X
Candace			X	
James		X		X
Keri	X			
Lisa		X	X	X
Mandy		X		
Mary		X		X
Neil			X	X
Sheila	X			
Shelly		X		X
Tamara		X		X
Tracy		X		X
Total: 19	2	12	8	15

The other 17, however, elaborated on their ideas about the learning community in ways that showed they had done more than appropriate a buzz-word, but that they give a pedagogical justification for attending to the classroom learning community. Nine of the teacher candidates wrote about the importance of a classroom being a safe place, where students can take risks. Five of the teacher candidates wrote about the teacher-studentrelationship, which ought to be both caring and respectful. Three of the teacher candidates wrote about both of these ideas.

Gina wrote in ways that are exemplary of this first justification when she wrote about the importance of a safe, comfortable learning community. As she explained, "the teacher must create a learning environment that will benefit the student. The classroom must be safe and comfortable." Gina elaborated on this idea to explain how a teacher might go about building such a community, saying, "there must be avariety of learning materials and experiences each where the children become active learners and are free to provide their opinions. The teacher must be prepared to outline the expectations and rules set forth in the room and be aware if they benefit the children's needs and environment."

Another way that the teacher candidates elaborated on the learning community theme was in terms of the teacher-student relationship. Kelly, the day care worker and child development major, was one of the eight teacher candidates who wrote about the teacher-student relationship when she wrote, "I feel mutual respect between a teacher and his/her students is

very important. To show a classroom fill [filled] with 20 to 30 children that you are willing to listen and share your feelings is what children need."

Aaron was the secondary English journal keeper and poetry writer, who wrote about his desire to get to know his students so that he can show them he cares for them. Perhaps not surprisingly, Aaron wrote about the importance of the quality of the relationship between teachers and students when he said that "letting students know you care" would be his addition to the list of knowledge, skills, and dispositions good teachers should possess. Aaron used an example from his own life to explain the importance of this skill when he wrote:

> Perhaps I feel this way because I don't remember any of my teachers ever making me feel as though my thoughts, my actions, my life was important. How can teachers expect students to listen to what we tell them if we don't care about what they want to tell us?

Eighteen out of 19 times the teacher candidates wrote about the learning community or about relationships with students, they also wrote about specific things teachers can do to foster those relationships. These ways included incorporating the students' lives in the classroom, finding out their interests, showing them you care about their lives, sharing authority for making rules and decisions with students, having high expectations of students and believing in their abilities, letting students know you are human and have feelings, having clear expectations, and listening carefully

to children. A table of the strategies the teacher candidates named for fostering the learning community is listed in Table 9.

The fact that 18 of the teacher candidates chose to write about specific things teachers can do to foster the learning community is evidence of transformational learning, as I described it in chapter 2. These 18 teacher candidates all wrote about the same theme, but the each elaborated on it in very different ways. They connected the idea of learning community to other aspects of the course or their prior experience in classrooms and with children, and created unique strategies. It is important to remember that even though the teacher candidates who wrote about this theme (with one exception) listed actions teachers can take in classrooms in order to foster the learning community, we cannot be certain that they will actually DO these things in their own classroom. The teacher candidates transformed their understanding of the learning community theme by connecting it to ideas about their future classroom and particular strategies they may have been familiar with from experiences in schools, so that they can apply this knowledge to teaching, but we cannot know if they can and will use this knowledge in action.

The teacher canddiates wrote that teachers should create these kinds of safe, respectufl, caring learning environments because they are the best kinds of spaces for children to learn in. This kind of idea carries with it an underlying assumption about how children learn. In these passages and others, and in their posters, the teacher candidates wrote about their

Table 9: Strategies For Fostering The Learning Community

Name	Strategy, In The Teacher Candidates' Own Words:
Aaron	let my students know that I care about who they are and who they want to be
Elise	majority of the walls will be filled with students' work students creating their own coat of arms students and myself would be arranged in a circle I will take an active part in the student's life standing in the hallways and asking students about their week would be routine
Gina	outline the expectations and rule set forth in the room calling the students by their proper names treating them as individuals talking to them in a professional manner valuing the accomplishments they do believing that any child is capable of learning
Kelly	show . . . children that you are willing to listen and share your feelings
Steve	encourage students to make mistakes
Amber	getting to know each other exercises [were useful] I want students to know: they are respected and cared about individually every one has the potential to do great and wonderful things
Bill	giving students a chance to give their ideas and participate in the making of the rules and regulations giving them responsibilities such as designating someone to hand out paper when needed
Bonnie	I want them to know I am not just a teacher but a person that I respect them and their thoughts know each one as individuals they should have a say in how the classroom is run to[o] many teachers think of children as lacking knowledge, I think that they know more than many give them credit for
Candace	showing the humanity of the teacher my CT (in the field): stayed and ate lunch in his classroom would talk and joke with the students this time was reserved for the needs of the students rather than his own
James	"handle with care" attitude (which meant respect and treat gently students' ideas)
Lisa	without letting them know that their intelligence is assumed, they will not want to trust

Table 9 (cont.)

Mary	carefully explain the expectations I hold for conduct, participation, and understanding
Neil	treat students as individuals establish an individual relationship with each student
Shelly	children working together as a class instead of a teacher acting as dictator
Tamara	[it was good we in EDU 200 were able to] get to know one another throughout the semester show them [students] my vulnerabilities, as well as my strengths
Tracy	creating a list of rules with the class as a whole allowing the students to decorate the classroom themselves

understanding of how children learn. The teacher candidates' posters and their reflections reveal that as a class they did, indeed, learn a great deal about learning.

The Final Theme: Learning

In the next sections, I will discuss two things. First, the teacher candidates were explicit about their understanding of learning as an active construction in their final reflections. Second, though they were less explicit about learning as a social construction, their reflections on their own learning and emphasis on the learning community are evidence of a tacit understanding of learning as social.

Learning as an active construction. In the final reflections, 20 of the 23 teacher candidates wrote statements which reveal their understanding of learning as an active construction. Table 10 summarizes the three different ways the teacher candidates wrote about learning: eight wrote that they

wanted to teach in ways that were "engaging" or "fun" because that is how children learn best; twelve claimed that they wanted the lessons they planned to be "active" or "hands-on" (since children learn best that way) or described children as active learners; and eight said that they understood that learners "bring things" that teachers must build from or recognize as the basis of children's learning.

One of the ideas that beginning teachers often bring to teacher preparation is the idea that learning should be "fun." This idea becomes more complex when teachers begin to understand that learning, as an active construction, arises not when children are having fun, but when they are engaged, when they bring mental attention to their experiences and grapple with ideas, questions, problems, and one another.

Many of the teacher candidates in EDU 200 still believed that learning should be fun. For example, Renee wrote, "There will be a time to work and a time to play, but the time to work doesn't have to be dreaded. I will strive to make the work as enjoyable (though in different ways) as the play." Using those words alone–fun, interesting, engaging–to describe either learning or teaching, does not imply that the teacher candidates understand something complex about the process of learning. All but one of the teacher candidates who used words like fun and engaging, along with 14 more of their classmates, wrote about their understanding of learning in more complex or specific ways–they wrote about the importance of active learning, or talk in the classroom, or the ways children build from experience.

Table 10: Learning is an Active Construction

	Should be engaging and/or fun and/or interesting	Active and/ or hands on	Based on what learners bring/prior knowledge/past experience
Aaron		X	X
Elise		X	
Gina		X	X
Kelly			X
Renee	X		X
Steve		X	
Amber		X	
Bill	X	X	
Bonnie			X
Candace		X	
James		X	
Janet	X		X
Keri		X	X
Mandy			X
Mary	X	X	X
Neil			X
Sheila	X	X	
Shelly	X		
Tamara	X	X	X
Tracy	X		X
Total: 22	8	12	12

Learners are active. Steve was one of the twelve teacher canddiates who wrote about children as learners who actively construct knowledge for themselves. Steve had claimed he wanted to be "firm but fair," much as a coach would be, pushing students and supporting them at the same time. When he went on to explain why both firmness and fairness were important, he also wrote abut student learning:

> . . . the teacher cannot run everything because the students would feel no investment in the class and they would have little to no motivation. The students are the ones who need to learn the material. No matter how much you try to force students to learn you can never really make them. At the same time you have to push them to get the most out of them.

Steve understood that as a teacher, he should be nudging students along, he should be "pushing" them, but that, in the end, students are the ones who do the learning. Words like investment and motivation and an understanding that "you can never really make them" learn imply that Steve believed that learners must play some role in constructing their own knowledge.

Learners bring things. Another way the teacher candidates seemed to come to understand learning and children as learners was in their understanding of the role of children's prior knowledge and experiences. Twelve teacher candidates wrote about learners building from experiences or prior knowledge. For example, Aaron, the future high school English teacher

who planned to let students know he cared about them, said that he learned a great deal about students as learners during the course. Aaron claimed he had discovered a new-found appreciation for students' knowledge when he wrote:

> Through my studies in teaching and experiences with students, I now view students as extremely smart and experienced human beings. Though they may not have the educational background I do, we do share many experiences that are valuable to our learning. I want to find a way to make my students understand that we all have something valuable to share, and that they can help me just as much as I can help them.

This recognition that students are not blank slates, that teachers work to create experiences that allow students to build from what they already know and have done, was an important recognition. Eleven other students also wrote about this idea. For example, Gina (the artist/writer/child development major) explained teachers should get to know their students and build rapport with them in order to help them learn the subject matter:

> Another aspect of building this relationship relates to the material presented and the importance of using a child's prior knowledge to support your subject. Use what children know and understand to your advantage and this will not only increase their learning but create a positive relationship as well.

Like Aaron, Gina's understanding of knowing students and of students as learners are interconnected. Because children are not empty vessels, because they already know and can do a myriad of things, and because they inevitably make sense of their classroom experiences in light of prior knowledge, knowing students, as individuals as well as learners, is important. Gina, Aaron, and the other teacher candidates who wrote about the importance of what students bring to the classroom, were making complex and important connections between their understanding of the experience of the child and their understanding of the role of the teacher, and showed that their understanding of learning was complex and elaborate.

Learning is social. In chapter 1, I wrote about important bodies of knowledge for beginning teachers, and hypothesized that effective teachers need to know about learning as a sociocultural construction. The teacher candidates' explicit knowledge of learning as an active, individual construction shows they have moved closer to this kind of understanding of learning, but in general the teacher candidates did not write about learning or their future roles as teachers in ways that were consistent with social constructivist theories of learning.

Social constructivist theories, as described in chapter 2, suggest that learners appropriate ways of thinking as they interact with others in the social realm, and emphasize the role that dialogue, among other forms of social transactions, can play in supporting learning. Only three of the teacher candidates wrote about teaching or learning in ways consistent with social

constructivist theories (for example, when Amber wrote "Hands on learning allows you to work at your own pace. . . . children perform at a higher level when allowed to work with more knowledgeable peers and adults." Three is not a large enough corpus of data for me to claim that these theories were expressly part of the overall learning constructed in the course.

While most of the teacher candidates may not have developed an explicit understanding of learning as a social construction, they did have a tacit understanding of the role that dialogue and transactions with others can play in learning. This can be seen in both their emphasis on a particular kind of learning community, as described above, as well as in the frequency with which they cited the interactions in class as valuable to their own learning As I described earlier, many of the teacher candidates wrote, and/or presented posters about classrooms that are safe, where children feel free to take risks and the teacher candidates' emphasis on the safety and comfort of the learning community underscores the teacher candidates' understanding that the social environment shapes children's learning.Fifteen teacher candidates (65%) commented on the importance and benefits of classroom discourse in their final reflections. Table 11 summarizes the various ways that the teacher candidates expressed the value of the talk in EDU 200. The first column in the table refers to the ways the teacher candidates appreciated the comfort level provided by the learning community, because it allowed them to share their ideas more openly. Steve, of the firm but fair stance, for example, said,

Table 11: Benefits of Talk in the EDU 200 Classroom

	I appreciated the learning community for its comfort level	Talk with my peers brought out many ideas	Talk helped me to push my ideas or was a place to test ideas
Aaron	X		X
Gina		X	X
Kelly	X	X	
Renee	X	X	
Steve	X		
Amber		X	
Bonnie		X	
Candace	X		X
Jackie	X	X	
Lisa		X	X
Mandy	X	X	
Mary		X	X
Sheila	X	X	
Tamara	X	X	X
Tracy		X	X
Total: 15	9	12	7

From day one this class felt like it would be a special one. I haven't been in a classroom with such a strong learning community since elementary school. Students actually talked to each other outside of class, and actually seemed to show an interest in each other. This openness created a much more open dialog between people, and it let people share what they really felt about certain issues, including myself. I felt comfortable to say things in our class that I would not have felt comfortable saying in my other education classes.

Steve's excerpt is representative of many of the nine teacher candidates who claimed they valued the learning community in the classroom. Kelly also spoke about comfort in the classroom and how influential the learning community was to her own learning. As she did so, she also made connections to the next column on Table 11, the importance of talk for hearing a variety of viewpoints and ideas. Like many of her classmates, Kelly not only felt comfortable to talk herself, but she found that she learned a great deal from hearing what others had to say.

> I found my classmates to be the most influential portion of our working together in class. In small groups we were able to talk about the learning process we were going through and how it has influenced our future teaching skills. . . . I was so comfortable going to class every week, knowing my ideas were not going to be ignored because they might not be what everyone else was thinking. We were able to come together as colleges [colleagues] and introduce new knowledgeable ideas. This was so educational to me, it was more educational than any article or employee telling me what the field is like.

Valuing their own EDU 200 learning community for the comfort which allowed them to talk themselves is an echo of the learning-is-active idea described in the last section. Presumably, though these nine teacher candidates did not say so expressly, having opportunities to talk more helped

them to learn more, because talking is one way of actively constructing meaning for yourself.

Valuing the learning community because it brought multiple ideas and points of view to the table is a slightly different facet of learning. The importance of hearing others' ideas, as Kelly so succinctly described, harkens back to appropriation as the first process of learning in the Vygotsky Space, which emphasizes the social origins of learning as new ways of thinking first between individuals and then within individuals. By emphasizing the value they placed on hearing multiple points of view, Kelly and her peers revealed an important but tacit understanding of learning as not just an active construction, but as an active, social construction.

The final column on Table 11 lists the seven teacher candidates who took their understanding of learning as a social construction one step further, by recognizing talk as a place not only to hear and appropriate multiple ways of thinking, but as a site for testing and contesting ideas to work toward a "best" understanding. Social constructivist theorists (see chapter 2) describe learning as dialogic and theorize that perhaps the most educative talk is talk in which participants work to "socially justify belief." Seven of the teacher candidates found that the talk in EDU 200 was valuable because of the ways in which, in their opinion, the class was a forum for the testing, evaluating, and developing of ideas. One example of this is Aaron, the journal-keeping future English teacher who emphasized letting students know you care.

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Aaron wrote that the discourse in EDU 200 was valuable because the teacher candidates challenged each other and pushed each others' thinking.

> As we got to know each other more and more as colleagues rather than classmates, we began to feel comfortable talking about our own ideas about teaching. We looked to each other as resources, and asked each other practical questions about our own ideas on teaching. We weren't afraid to challenge accepted philosophies of teaching, or to challenge our own preconceived notions of what makes a good teacher.

Aaron realized that in EDU 200, comfort and safety were important, the sharing of ideas was important, but equally important was the challenging stance he and his classmates took–toward the subject matter being presented, toward the ideas students raised in class, and toward their own ideas about children, teaching, and learning. Gina also expressed this idea when she claimed, "My classmates made me stop and think about issues and see others' points of view. My stance as a teacher is shaped not only by my experience but by others' experiences and arguments."

The teacher candidates reflected on the role of talk in their own learning, but, with the exception of valuing a safe, comfortable, respectful learning community, they did not write or create posters that extended this understanding of learning as a social construction to their future students. It was as though the teacher candidates had an explicit understanding of

learning as an active construction, but a much more tacit understanding of learning as a social construction.

Learning vs. Reiterating

Many of the teacher candidates imagined that their future role would be to create a relationship, (to build and bridge or to strike a balance) between the subject matter and the needs of the child. To do so, they must know their subject matter well and feel passionate about what they teach. They understood the importance of a safe, supportive learning community and planned to know their students as individuals and learners both to create that community and in order to make teaching decisions that build from what students know, what they can do, what they care about. They saw themselves as lifelong learners, and they had emerging ideas about the nature of learning. The teacher candidates generally saw learning as an active and engaged construction and understood that children construct knowledge through experiences that build on their prior knowledge and experiences. They had a sense that the discourse in the EDU classroom was essential to their own learning, but they did not write about that discourse in ways which show they had connected that experience to their future roles as teachers or to their students' learning.

I have portrayed these eight themes as summaries of the content that the teacher candidates learned during EDU 200. One final piece of evidence lends credence to my claim that the teacher candidates not only wrote about, but understood, these concepts they included on their posters and in their

final reflections. This is a comparison between the directions that Sue wrote for the final reflection and the actual content of those papers. In the directions, Sue summarized the class and the important themes. As you read this summary, pay attention to similarities between Sue's summary and the 8 learning themes that emerged from my analysis of the teacher candidates' learning. Sue wrote:

> With the semester coming to a close, it's time to turn our attention to making sense of our learning experiences in the course. We have studied the connections between the teacher, student and subject matter. We looked carefully at who our students might be, drawing on our own experiences a well as literature to give us insights into the world of children. You have become students of one student, attempting to come to know this child by discovering his/her strengths and talents and ways of viewing the world. You have become teachers yourselves, facing the challenges of acting on your passions to create meaningful learning opportunities for your peers. In class, we have grappled with the role gender plays in our own and students' lives as well as what it means to build and maintain a learning community, always trying to get clearer on what it means for a teacher to teach and a student to learn.

The teacher candidates wrote (often with complex detail or personalized examples that extended the learning themes beyond situations

that arose in the classroom) about every item that Sue mentioned, except for one: gender. Activity frameworks theory (Cole, 1996) might suggest that the teacher candidates wrote the things they did because they were making an effort, on this graded assignment, to tell the teacher what she wanted to hear. The complete omission of references to gender issues is evidence that the teacher candidates used the final reflections and posters to summarize their understanding of the course and of teaching and learning. If they were simply working to reiterate to Sue the themes she had suggested, then at least one or two of them would have written about gender issues somewhere in their final reflections. The fact that they did not lends credence to my claim that the teacher candidates wrote sincerely about their own learning.

A final piece of evidence that the teacher candidates learned in EDU 200 is that they said so. Renee, for example, wrote, "I leave feeling I have gained experience and confidence; feeling 'one step closer.' Once-vague ideas had begun to take shape into clear opinions, and I how have an emerging stance with which to work." Steve wrote in the introduction of his reflection:

> My ideas about teaching have changed since January. This course has shown me different things that I haven't thought about before. It challenged what I previously believed and forced me to think about issues in education in a different light. I may not have always agreed with everything but my eyes have been opened to new perspectives.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shared contextual and background information, describing the course and its activities and readings, and introducing the six featured students. I have also described 8 learning themes, summarizing the ways the teacher candidates, including Aaron, Elise, Gina, Kelly, Renee, and Steve, spoke and wrote in ways that reflected their developing understanding of the experience of the child, the role of the teacher, and the process of learning. These summaries serve as important background information for situating the chapters to come. They serve as an initial answer to the first half of the disseratation question: Based on evidence of appropriation and transformatin of learning, what did the teacher candidates learn about learning, the role of the teacher, and the experience of the child?

The second half of the dissertation question asks: What role, if any, did the reading and interpretation of the novel play in that learning? In chapter 4, I begin to answer that question by analzying the three components of the *Bridge* Sequence, the discussion of the novel, the painting of the mural, and the individual *Bridge* Presentations. That analysis illustrates both the ways the teacher candidates talked about the novel, and their interpretation of the text. Building from that analysis in chpater 5, I present six cases. Taken together, these cases illustrate the range of roles that the novel played in the teacher candidates' learning in EDU 200.

[i] This was "unsupervised time" though I was there running the camera.

[ii] Gina was absent on the first day of class. Her biographical information was collected at our final interview, where I asked her to fill out the survey.

Chapter Four: The *Bridge* Sequence

This chapter is about the *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence. In the first part of this chapter, I share Sue's goals for the Sequence, discussing both the ways Sue talked about the role of the novel in the course, and describing how I interpreted those purposes in an effort to understand the teacher candidates' interpretation of the book and the role it played in their learning. In the second, third, and fourth sections of this chapter, I describe the sequence itself, analyzing both the form and the content of the discourse for what the reveal about the process of interpretation and the ways the teacher candidates made meaning from and with the novel.

Sue's Goals For The *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence

Sue had several very specific reasons for asking her students to read, talk, paint, and present about the novel, which she shared with me in interviews and informal conversations, and which she shared with her students as she explained and reflected on the sequence of activities. Sue's purposes were multiple, layered, and interconnected. The novel was meant to serve as a bridge between the two major themes of the course, and to help the teacher candidates think about students, teaching, and learning.

Bridge The Two Major Themes

The work with the novel came at the center of the course, connecting the two main components. The first half of the course focused on the experience of the child, and included activities such as building and

discussing the importance of the learning community and preparing for and conducting the child study assignment. The second half of the course centered on role of the teacher, and in this half the teacher candidates' planned and taught peer teaching lessons and examined the kinds of decisions teachers must make about organization, management, subject matter and teaching. The novel was meant to help the teacher candidates move from the first theme to the second, to see the continuity and connections between the two. As Sue said in an interview,

> It's a bridge that launches the next part of the course. It sort of wraps up in a way that initial launching of the child study and moves us into thinking about curriculum.

In order for the *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence to play this bridging role in the course, Sue developed and sought to accomplish three main educational goals: a) taking part in and reflecting on an engaging learning experience; b) using talk, painting, and presenting to take part in a "deep literary experience" and, c) reading and discussing the events portrayed in the novel in order to complicate the teacher candidates' notions of childhood.

In the segments below, I have tried to write about these goals in two ways. I have used excerpts from interviews and transcripts to illustrate the ways that Sue understood and explained these goals. As I analyzed the *Bridge* Sequence, I found that I could not describe and analyze the Sequence and the role it might play independent of my understanding of learning, literary experience, engagement, and the importance of understanding childhood in

complex ways. Because of this, the next segments not only present the ways that Sue talked about the Sequence, they also present my interpretations of those goals. I have brought in other voices, including Dewey and Rosenblatt, because those voices have helped me to think about engagement, literary experiences, and interpreting novels.

Engagement

Primarily, Sue wanted the teacher candidates to take part in an "engaging" learning experience, one that would allow the teacher candidates to reflect on the processes of both teaching and learning. Having been engaged, the teacher candidates would, presumably, be better able to think about the kinds of experiences children find engaging, the importance of engagement to students' learning, and the steps a teacher must take in order to plan for engaging learning experiences. She told the class, just after they had completed their presentations and as she was introducing the peer teaching assignment:

> I told you a couple of weeks ago I had some purposes for having you read, and I wasn't going to share them up front, and I'll share them now. One of my purposes is to have us experience ourselves on what it is like to feel engaged, what it's like to feel passionate, to feel curious, to feel like we are making meaningful connections, and then use that as a template, how are we going to pull this off with kids now, if this is sort of a vision that we are going for.

Sue believed that helping her students feel engaged and then to reflect on that feeling would help them to recognize engagement in their own students and to think about ways to create classrooms and learning experiences that children would find engaging. Before class began, I asked Sue why she chose to have her students read this novel in particular, and she answered:

> Before they read it I ask them to think about as they're reading, does the book engage you. So often they say "yes," which makes us, forces us to create a definition, what does it mean, to feel engaged. And then that's what we're shooting for, that kind of engagement when they teach.

Sue meant to provide the teacher candidates with opportunities to feel engaged both reading and interpreting the novel. Reflection on that feeling of engagement was meant to help the teacher candidates think about teaching and learning, and in turn, to think about both components of the course. By experiencing and defining the feeling of being engaged, the teacher candidates would be working to understand the experience of the child. That is, they would know the kinds of experiences they are aiming for as teachers. And then, by reflecting on the knowledge and planning that Sue went through to create the Sequence, the teacher candidates could think about the role of the teacher in creating engaged learning experiences. The next assignment in class was the peer teaching assignment, which would allow the teacher candidates to have a chance, as Sue said, ". . . to promote that feeling . . .

following through on that and saying, O.K., if that's what the feeling was, how do you reproduce it?"

When I talked with Sue about the course, she often referred to John Dewey. Sue valued Dewey's ideas, for example, she asked the teacher candidates to read *The Child and the Curriculum*, which I described in chapter 2. In that work, Dewey says that learning is more than just interest, that learning involves a mental attention, a willingness to make sense or to overcome an obstacle. Because I wanted to better understand this word, *engagement*, I turned to a work of Dewey's called "The relation of theory to practice in education" (1904/1964). In that article, Dewey described what he called "inner attention."

> As every teacher knows, children have an inner and an outer attention. The inner attention is the giving of the mind without reserve or qualification to the subject at hand. It is the first-hand and personal play of mental powers. As such, it is a fundamental condition of mental growth (p. 318).

Dewey theorized that inner attention was key to learning, was "a fundamental condition of mental growth." Learning, or as Dewey calls it, mental growth, is constructed when the learner is engaged with the experience, with the subject matter, that is, when the learner is attending to and fully taking part in the learning experience. Dewey distinguishes inner attention from outer attention, where outer attention is what teachers get when children's faces and bodies are composed in school-like ways, but their

minds are somewhere far more interesting and relevant. Inner attention, on the other hand, is present when students bring their minds to an experience.

This excerpt I have selected to think about the term engagement, or inner attention, began with the clause, "as every teacher knows." But it is not the case that teachers automatically know just what inner attention, or engagement, look like. Much of schooling is not engaging, and children and students (including perservice teachers) become adept at feigning engagement. Sue reasoned that if the teacher candidates found the *Bridge* Sequence engaging, they would have at least one experience to draw on as they thought about the role of the teacher and the experience of the child in the rest of the course.

The notion of inner attention is important, because it implies that the attention itself is private, invisible. Many an accomplished student knows how to feign attention by striking a pose while her mind wanders. By the same token, teacher candidates' words and bodies may belie the inner attention they are bringing to the issues at hand. Although we might expect passion and curious attention to look or sound a certain way, engagement is not a physical attribute of the talk like seconds of eye contact or number of utterances, but a private, mental phenomenon. One of the ways that the teacher candidates could make their engagement public was by talking. The content of each utterance, the focus of several utterances strung together, and the role that particular utterances played in the overall discussion, these have

been the windows I have had available onto the teacher candidates' engagement.

As I have analyzed the data, I have tried less to decide at any given moment, are they engaged or are they not, and more to determine, just what are they engaged with, and how can I tell? This is an important distinction. Any time the teachers spoke was a window onto the places they were bringing their inner attention. During the painting activity, that attention was brought to the task of creating the mural and getting paint on paper. During the formal discussion, it was brought to answering Sue's discussion questions and raising and answering questions of their own. During the Presentations, the teacher candidates were engaged in representing their understanding of the novel by sharing personal narratives that connected to the novel.

Deep Literary Experience

If Sue's only purpose was to create an engaging experience as a foundation for thinking about the nature of learning and the role of the teacher, she could have picked one of a huge variety of experiences for her students to participate in. Some hands-on science, a math exploration, an examination of a historical era; each of these could have served as engaging curriculum. She chose to have the teacher candidates read and work with *Bridge to Terabithia* quite deliberately, because of the content of the novel, as I will discuss shortly, and because of her hopes that the teacher candidates would have what she called a "deep literary experience."

As she talked with me about what she meant by a "deep literary experience," Sue seemed to have dual purposes. On the one hand, she wanted the teacher candidates to enjoy reading and interpreting the novel, that is, she wanted them to be engaged as they read and worked with the book. At the same time, she wanted the teacher candidates to stand back from their pleasure in the novel and to reflect on the process of reading. For me, thinking about deep literary experiences, as they relate to engagement and as they relate back to Rosenblatt and my definition of interpretation, has been important in understanding how I can go about naming and describing the teacher candidates' interpretations of *Bridge to Terabithia.*

The aesthetic stance: Reading as an instance of engagement. Sue hoped students would find that reading *Bridge to Terabithia*, and in turn reading in general, was a pleasurable experience. She believed that many students did not see themselves as "readers," particularly as readers of children's literature, and so she chose to have them read this novel. She said of her reason for choosing *Bridge to Terabithia*:

> Well, it's short. It's powerful. It's, I mean, an eleventh grade English teacher told me that it's one that she always uses for students who see themselves as non-readers and we certainly have many of them. So it sort of just, you know, it pulls you in and I think it's one that they're willing to take three hours to read and that it's satisfying to them.

Sue believed that few of her students would be regular readers, she theorized that many of them did not read for pleasure at all, let alone read children's literature, the kinds of books they might teach in the future, on a regular basis. She hoped that reading this novel would help them to remember or to discover the pleasures of reading and of children's literature.

Sue chose this particular book, a Newberry Award Winner, one of her favorite books, because she wanted her students to enjoy reading the novel, to feel curious or passionate or connected as they read. Louise Rosenblatt (1978) describes this kind of reading as "aesthetic." When a reader takes an aesthetic stance, his attention "is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (p. 25). An aesthetic reading is pleasurable, and it is engaged. The reader brings her inner attention to the text on the page, and pays attention to her response to the text. She notices the emotions and memories and images that the text has evoked.

The work the teacher candidates took part in after the reading of the novel, the Discussion, Painting, and Presentations, were meant to be equally engaging. As the talk helped the teacher candidates to reflect on and deepen their understanding of the novel Sue hoped that her teacher candidates would see that talk about a book can be as aesthetically engaging as reading it. This was the first kind of deep literary experience Sue hoped to foster.

Several times, Sue used the term "interpret" to talk about this kind of literary experience with the novel. For example, she told students the mural should represent the groups' "illustration or interpretation" of the novel, and

she asked the teacher candidates to reflect on the discussion and the painting activity to come up with their own "interpretations" they would share in their presentations.

Because interpretation (or deep literary experience) is both a word Sue used in connection with the Sequence and a word central to the dissertation question, I think it is worth considering again Rosenblatt's definition of interpretation, and considering how this concept has been brought to my analysis of the *Bridge* Sequence. In chapter 3, I referred to Rosenblatt's definition of interpretation. The reader interprets a text as she reads, through a transaction between the text itself and her prior experiences, knowledge, and expectations, creating a unique, synthesized whole known as the "poem." Further interpretation occurs when the reader names and shares her poem, as she describes to others and/or privately reflects on the elements of text and self that evoked her initial understanding. The reader also engages interpretation when she hears her peers discuss elements of the text that evoked their own individual poems. Interpretation deepens the reader's understanding of both text and self. Interpretation is a way of constructing, considering, reflecting on, and revising understandings of texts, and this is how I understood one aspect of Sue's goal of providing an opportunity for a "deep literary experience."

Cited in Smagorinsky and O'Donnel-Allen (1990), Willhelm describes interpretation, saying:

> The reader uses a variety of moves and strategies to enter and involve herself intensely in worlds of meaning. In these 'story worlds' the reader interprets characters, setting, events and thematic possibilities through her interaction with and movement through the characters' thoughts and actions in order to make better sense of their own experiences, a view of literary reading often attributed to Rosenblatt (1978). The process is at once both strategic and emotional, serving to take readers more deeply into the text and at the same time enabling readers to probe more deeply into themselves. (cited in Smagorinsky and O'Donnell-Allen, 1998, p. 516)

Willhelm calls reading both emotional and strategic. On an emotional level, readers bring their inner attention to the act of reading as they become involved in story worlds, as they think and talk about the text and their lives and come to greater understanding. On a strategic level, readers use what Willhelm calls "moves and strategies." Readers employ skills and knowledge of the reading process in order to make sense of and talk about texts.

Sue hoped her students would become involved in the *Bridge* Sequence on this emotional level, and bring their inner attention to the reading and interpretation of the book, thereby taking part in a "deep literary experience." Sue also had "deep literary experience" goals that focused on attention to the process of reading. It is this second set of deep literary experience goals that I consider next.

The efferent stance: Reflecting on the process of reading. As we talked about Sue's plans for her students' work with *Bridge to Terabithia*, Sue described her intentions this way:

> . . . but also, I guess, I mean in a way, it's also sort of textual analysis, too. It's trying to, but that's I think a theme through all of [the assignments], is trying to figure out how do you read. And how do you take from reading and how can you use what a student has read as a tool for their learning. (interview 1-13-98)

With this aspect of a deep literary experience, Sue indicated she was planning on asking the teacher candidates to step back from the lived-through aesthetic experience of the text and to reflect on the strategies and moves they used to make sense of the novel. The teacher candidates were meant to experience the novel as a literary work, but she also wanted them to move to thinking about reading as "a tool" for learning. In this regard, she expected the teacher candidates to take a more efferent stance toward the novel. When a reader takes an efferent stance, according to Rosenblatt, "his attention is directed outward, so to speak, toward concepts to be retained, ideas to be tested, actions to be performed after the reading."

What Sue sometimes called "textual analysis" was a theme of many of the course assignment, as she frequently asked the teacher candidates to pay attention to features of the text read and their own actions as readers. In the syllabus, one of the overarching questions that organized the course was "What role does language play in teaching and learning?" Sue asked the

teacher candidates to talk about their reading process several times before and after reading other pieces as well, so that they shared their strategies for trying to decipher Henry James and John Dewey, and compared their readings of different kinds of texts. The *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence was one among several opportunities to consider the reading process this way.

There were many learning goals for the Sequence. The teacher candidates were meant to learn about learning by taking part in an engaging learning experience. They were meant to learn about the novel by interpreting the novel through talk and art, and they were meant to have opportunities to learn about the processes of reading by considering the reading process.

These two faces of "deep literary experience," coming to deeper, more elaborate understanding of self or text through interpretation, and considering the process of reading and ways readers make sense, come into play in the analysis of the Sequence that follows. In that analysis, I document the ways that the teacher candidates interpreted the novel by naming, describing, and justifying their understanding of and reactions to the novel. I also document the times that the teacher candidates talked about the reading process, including reflecting on their own reading process and conjecturing about other kinds of readers, such as young children.

Complicate Childhood

Sue's third goal for the *Bridge* Sequence had to do with interpreting the novel in a particular way. Sue imagined that the content of the novel–the

portrayal of Jesse's life, in particular (see Appendix A for a summary of the novel)–would complicate the teacher candidates' understandings of childhood.

In the syllabus on the day that the reading of the novel was due, Sue listed the topic as "Reading the experiences of children." Sue hoped that the particular content of the novel would help the teacher candidates to think about the experience of the child, one of the two main themes in the course. The novel's portrayal of Jesse and Leslie's challenges and strengths, the times they spent at home, at school, and together, these were meant to help the teacher candidates think about the lives of the children they would one day teach.

Sue's past experiences with other EDU 200 students led her to believe they would take a rose-colored view toward childhood, including their own childhoods, that as a group they would remember warm families, leisurely summer days, sufficient resources, and fond memories. Sue hoped learning about Jesse's life and talking about the issues Jesse faces in the novel–death, fear, isolation, poverty, the importance of peers–would help the teacher candidates take a more complex look at their own childhoods and understand their students, including their child study focus students, in more complex ways. In our interview before class, Sue told me about an activity she usually asks teacher candidates to take part in, creating a "Map of Childhood," by brainstorming memories of childhood, and how that "Map" connects to the reading of the novel:

> We do a reflection on childhood the week before, and they often from their own recollections and really paint childhood in rosy terms. So the whole idea that childhood can be painful and that there can be loss and that there can be feelings of alienation and loneliness that don't seem to occur to them. After we sort of make this initial map of childhood, it's really nice to say, from Jesse's experience, "is there anything that we left out of our map?"

Reading and talking about the novel, Sue imagined, would challenge the teacher candidates' memories of childhoods. Teacher candidates often imagine that their students are like them, or that differences are really deficiencies (Gomez, 1991). Understanding Jesse, as a well rounded character who struggles with poverty sand who possesses skills and strengths that go unrecognized at school, was one way of reading the novel that could help the teacher candidates think about the experience of the child.

When they took part in the *Bridge* Sequence, the teacher candidates were also conducting observations and keeping notes for their child study project. As Sue told them in class, "Part of the reason for me asking you to read the book for today is to work on this issue of child study." During the *Bridge* Discussion, Sue planned to engage in a "short study" of Jesse, and to model the ways of describing and drawing conclusions she hoped they would incorporate into their child study papers. The child study assignment, and

the ways of learning about students and understanding them as individuals and as learners, is important. As Terry Dean writes,

> There simply is no training program for teachers and can be no definitive research study that will ever account for the realities our students bring with them. Change is constant. Each generation is different. Given the lack of homogeneity in our classes, given the incredible diversity of culture we are being exposed to, who better to learn from than our students? (cited in Gomez, 1991, p. 106)

Studying Jesse supported the work the teacher candidates were meant to do in the course over all, the work of moving beyond their own memories of childhood and, as Sue wrote in the syllabus, "looking at--'listening' to--our own and each other's experiences, noticing commonalties and differences, thinking about what the experiences *mean* . . . ."

Complicating an understanding of childhood based on reading and talking about *Bridge to Terabithia* can be seen as a EDU 200 specific interpretation of the novel. Part of what readers do when they interpret texts is talk with one another. Sometimes, when that happens, some readers point out aspects of texts that other readers may not have noticed, and suggest to readers that they think about those aspects of texts in particular ways. When Sue asked the teacher candidates to think about the portrayal of Jesse's life, and, in particular, to think about the issues in Jesse's life compared to their

own memories of childhood, she was asking them to interpret the novel in particular ways.

This was certainly not the only way teacher candidates interpreted the novel. The Discussion, Presentation, and Painting activities all made room for interpretations that centered on considering childhood and contrasting Jesse's childhood to their own, and they also provided opportunities for other kinds of interpretations.

In the next several sections, you will see that while I highlight instances when teacher candidates talked about ways they were re-thinking their assumptions about childhood, this was just one of several interpretations that the teacher candidates constructed. For example, some teacher candidates spoke more about the teachers in the novel than the children. Others used the novel to think about Terabithia and what took place there, and to develop definitions of learning based on the children's adventures under the trees.

Conclusion

Taken together, these three goals–engagement, deep literary experience, and complicating childhood–were important ways in which the *Bridge* Sequence served as a bridge between the two components of the course. Learning about childhood in light of Jesse and Leslie's experiences connected back to the first half of the course about the experience of the child. Considering the engaged nature of learning served as a foundation for thinking about the teacher's role in creating particular kinds of learning

experiences, discussed during the second half of the class. Taking part in a deep literary experience, that is, becoming engaged in interpreting the novel through talk, supported both of the other goals.

Introducing the Other Six Members of Group A

In chapter 3, you met the six featured students, who included:

Aaron: the secondary English major who kept a journal and read poetry

Elise: the secondary English major who saw herself as an activist

Gina: the artist/writer/child development major

Kelly: the child development major who worked as a day care provider

Renee: the child development major to whom faith was so important

Steve: the skeptical hockey fan who was majoring in elementary education

As they discussed the novel and worked to create a mural about the novel, these six featured students were members of a larger group of 12 students, which I am calling Group A. The other 6 students in their group were Candace, Keith, Lisa, Mandy, Neil, and Tracy. These brief introductions of the other six members of Group A are meant to provide context for understanding the transcripts and analysis of the painting and discussion.

- Candace was working on a major in chemistry and a minor in theater, and hoped to teach both subjects in a secondary school setting. Candace had worked as a child care counselor and camp counselor, as well as a secretary. She hoped one day to teach a

classroom where she would be "able to let students learn & show them that they can accomplish their goals with hard work."

- Keith was an agriscience major with a biology minor, and he was planning on teaching secondary level agriculture education and being the advisor of that school's Future Farmers of America (FFA) club. Keith had worked as a farm hand and an office assistant. He had been a member of his high school FFA and found that organization was a powerful influence in his life, and in college he worked with adolescents through his continued involvement with FFA. He hoped that one day his students would describe his classroom as "fun, interesting."
- Lisa was working toward certification in elementary education and minors in Spanish and environmental science. Lisa had worked both as a day care provider and a waitress, and had volunteered in classrooms, including her mother's classroom. She planned one day to teach middle school, possibly overseas, and wrote that she hoped that one day her future students would describe her classroom as "enthusiastic, nice, fun, control of classroom."
- Mandy was earning a major in child development with a minor in Spanish. During the course, she worked as a day care provider, a tutor, and a junior varsity volleyball and softball coach at her home town. Mandy loved volleyball. She planned to teach in the early

elementary, and imagined the best thing about being a teacher was "knowing you can change, help, comfort and impact a child's life."

- Neil was also an agriscience major with a biology minor, and he was also planning to teach agriculture education in a high school setting. Neil had worked at a cheese factory, on farms, and in a computer lab. He described himself as politically conservative. Like his peers, Neil hoped to create a classroom students would describe as "informative, comfortable, exciting, fun to learn."
- Tracy was majoring in elementary education, and working on a minor in English. Tracy worked at a child care center and as a soccer referee on campus. She had also been a swimming instructor and volunteer tutor. Tracy hoped one day to be a special education teacher, and hoped one day her students would describe her classroom as "Homey, energetic, a tank of information, lacking any pressure, comfortable."

(Descriptions of the other 6 students in group A, the featured students, can be found in chapter 3.)

For each section of analysis of the *Bridge* Sequence, I describe the form of the discourse (how did the talk sound and look?) and the content of the discourse (what did the teacher candidates talk about?). The concepts of engagement, deep literary experience and complicating childhood help me explore the nature of the learning being constructed during the Sequence.

Discussing The Novel

During the *Bridge* Discussion, the teacher candidates used talk to share their understanding of the novel, to respond to Sue's questions, to challenge one another to think more deeply and in different ways about the novel, and to construct interpretations of the text. The talk, together with the Mural Painting Activity, served as a foundation for the individual interpretations of the novel, the *Bridge* Presentations.

The Form Of The Talk During The *Bridge* Discussion

You will see that I have used longer sections of transcript to consider the form of the discourse during the *Bridge* Discussion in later sections of this chapter. Here, I briefly summarize a few key features of the talk. During the discussion, the teacher candidates generally spoke one at a time. Turns varied in length, from as long as 30 seconds or so to as brief as one or two words. Often there were distinct silences between turns of a second or more, with some silences lasting as many as nine seconds. There was very little of what Tannen (1989) calls backchanelling, those "uh-huh" and "yeah" comments that reveal that listeners are involved in the conversation. Some students were so quiet the microphone could not pick them up. Except for the speaker, the room itself was very quiet. At any given moment, a handful of students might be looking at the speaker, but many either leaned back in their chairs or leaned on the table, looking down.

One of my major points of interest during analysis of the *Bridge* Sequence, and the discussion in particular, was engagement. In particular, I

wondered, just what were the teacher candidates engaged in thinking, and therefor learning, about? During initial phases of data analysis, I imagined that certain features of the talk would help me to recognize those moments of engagement. I had assumed that something like eye contact or vehement gesturing or frequent back-channeling or overlapping speech would point me directly to engagement. As a researcher, I was quite puzzled by the talk that did arise. In fact, I frequently wrote that the discourse "lacked markers of engagement."

However, careful reading of theory and methodology, and much thought and talk with Sue about how to define engagement and therefore how to recognize engagement in the data, changed the way that I approached the talk. Rather than using assumptions about surface features of the discourse to come to the conclusion that some quality (engagement) was lacking, what I needed to do was to try and figure out what the talk did do. In particular, I paid attention to just how and when the talk hung together, what the teacher candidates were talking about, and how they used talk to reveal the places to which they brought their mental attention. In particular, I have found that the words themselves, and not the way they were delivered, served to mark the teacher candidates' engagement with the novel and with their personal, connected interpretations of the novel.

The Content of the Talk During the *Bridge* Discussion?

Sue prepared seven questions she hoped would foster engaged, interpretive discussion of the novel. Sue's seven questions were:

- So, what did you think?
- What character struck you?
- What are some issues in Jesse's life and how do those issues compare to the map of issues in childhood we created earlier in class?
- What are Jesse and Leslie doing in Terabithia, and why did Jesse keep Terabithia a secret?
- What is Terabithia a metaphor for?
- Why bridge? What's getting connected and who or what is the bridge?
- Why read this novel in a teacher education class?

During the *Bridge* Discussion, the teacher candidates frequently used their talk to construct answers to Sue's questions. The questions that Sue asked served as a skeleton for the conversation, and as their talk fleshed out that skeleton, sometimes veering from the question at hand but more generally sticking to the topic Sue had raised, the teacher candidates had chances to share their understanding of the novel and to deepen and revise their interpretations. Because the teacher candidates' talk was organized around these 7 questions, I have used them to organize this section.

Question One: What did you think? Question One invited the teacher candidates to share a bit about their initial readings of the novel. Their answers revealed that two of the teacher candidates had read the novel and formed some initial interpretations. Their comments also revealed that they had had emotional reactions to the novel. When Sue started the

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conversation with, "So, what'd you think?" Mandy, the child development major and volleyball coach, answered. She liked the book because she "really got into poor Jess." Mandy's engaged reading of the novel involved surprise at the ending of the book, at the death. She also predicted as she read, imagining an ending that would undo Leslie's death.

> And I was so sad. I was shocked. Like, I never would have expected that. And then when they thought it was a dream, or whatever, then I thought it was a dream, too. But then I thought, no, that would be too nice of an ending.

Tracy, who one day hoped to teach special education, also found the novel interesting. Tracy especially paid attention to the gender roles in the novel, and to the imaginary games that Leslie and Jesse played. Mandy followed Tracy's comments by raising some of the different issues that had intrigued her as she read the book. She wondered why Leslie called her parents by their first names, which Elise explained was because it was the 70's and it using their first names was "a way to knock down the authoritarian aspect of being a parent."

In the following excerpt, you can see the ways that Sue modeled what she called "textual analysis," by talking about features of the text that evoke particular reactions and describing her reading process. Here we also see one of the ways that Sue moved from one question to the next. She replied to one of the student's comments, and then ended her turn by posing a new question. (Sue also posed new questions after pauses of several seconds.)

Mandy: I also liked how she, or he really looked up to her [Leslie]. like when he went to Washington he was so looking forward to telling her about things that he did, and he had so many things to ask her about like "how was I supposed to act in this situation," he really looked to her for-

Sue: I think you are showing us one of the ways that she [the author] really sets us up for a surprise, because all of a sudden here are sort of things that he's willing to share with her and we're so excited he's gotten to that place then wham, I think there are things she does as the author that set us up for the fall, for the surprise at the end.

Mandy: Especially when he was talking to Maybelle, and she said the thing about "and what if you die" or whatever and then after she died, I'm like, why didn't I see that coming?

Sue: I think that's the subtlety of foreshadowing, you know, you can go back and figure it out later, but in the moment, you know, you don't see it. Um, who was the most interesting character for you? And why?

Question Two: Who was the most interesting character for you? Sue's second question, about characters that interested them, showed that other

students had read and connected to the novel. First, I will share a brief excerpt, one that illustrates the ways that the teacher candidates spoke in answers to Sue's questions. Then I will briefly summarize several of the other characters named in this section of the discussion.

Sue: Um, who was the most interesting character for you? And why?

Kelly: I'd say Leslie because some of the things she's talking about, gosh she's 10 years old and I don't even know that, and she's talking about characters and stories, and then her imagination, and her vocabulary, gosh, she's a great character.

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Sue: Candace, what about you?

Candace: I guess Maybelle strikes me most because she was just always such a tagalong, she wanted to be with, involved so much, they didn't really completely alienate her, they talked to her a little bit but, and then at the end you, Jess says, well, you can come too, and I want to tell Joyce Anne, but, Jesse is being so much like Leslie so that Maybelle is like him, so it's like a cycle.

Elise: I thought the father was was interesting, because he was very much an absent part of the novel, and then, all the

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After Kelly spoke, there was a brief pause, and Sue posed her question again, directing it toward Candace. Elise followed Candace, again responding to the question. As the conversation continued, Sue filled in a brief silence by naming her most interesting character, Monster Mouth Meyers, for the way she changes in the novel, and then they kept talking about this topic. Keith (who participated in FFA), when prompted by Sue, said he thought Janice Avery struck him because of "the fact that the big bully was a girl," and Lisa (who planned to teach overseas) thought Leslie was most interesting, because she was so smart. Each of these five easily picked a striking character. The teacher candidates' ability to name and justify a "most interesting" character is evidence that they had read and were at least partially engaged in the novel.

Some were surprised at the characters. Kelly, for example, was surprised at how much Leslie, a ten-year-old, knew. Keith was surprised when the bully was a girl. Elise found the father surprising because he was portrayed as absent and as a "strong male figure" in different parts of the text. It is my hunch that these surprises challenged some of the teacher candidates' assumptions about childhood. That children know more than we think, that they can be different from our expectations, and that parents can be at once neglectful and quite caring, these surprises were not discussed extensively

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here, instead, they served as a foundation for discussions of childhood that came later and in the presentations.

In the middle of the conversation about interesting characters, Gina claimed she had not been struck by characters, but she did have a question about the book, and Sue and Elise (and one other student) responded to her.

Gina: [inaudible] characters about as much, I thought it was interesting that um, Leslie's parents moved to the country, gave up their life for her, I think that was like a theme, she seemed, you know, she saw it so different, and she was talking earlier in the book and she was just saying that they didn't consult her about it, about, and I thought that was kind of interesting.

Sue: And I don't ever know how to reconcile that, that piece, there's such different perspectives, and sort of who's right or who is acting for whom there?

Unknown: [Inaudible comment]

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Elise: I took it as even when they got to the ah, farm they were still very ah, oversaturated what they were doing, with their work, and she still felt second, I think that they had the illusion that if they moved away from the city that they would become more quote unquote family they thought, but then they realized, they kept doing the same work.

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Elise and Gina, as readers of the novel, had formed unfavorable opinions of Leslie's parents. Leslie's parents had left their academic jobs in Washington D.C. and taken her to the Maryland countryside, where Leslie did not fit in, where she was bullied and teased, while her parents, especially her mother, were busy working. Eventually, by herself, Leslie dies in a drowning accident. Elise and Gina, as engaged readers, questioned Leslie's parents' motives. Their negative opinion is evidence of their engagement as readers and their involvement with the novel. Elise and Gina were also considering issues of childhood. Both Leslie and Jesse experienced isolation in the novel, and parents whose actions can be seen as uncaring. These teacher candidates talked together and with Sue about differences between parents' perceptions of acting on behalf of children, and children's perceptions of parents who act to serve themselves. This conversation continued, with a couple of other teacher candidates naming the characters that they found

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striking, until Sue responded to another pause in the conversation by posing the next question.

Question 3: Issues in Jesse's life. Sue asked a volunteer to stand at the chalkboard, and then asked, "What are all the issues Jess faced as a child?" In a series of turns taken by a variety of individuals, Group A suggested several of the key issues in Jesse's life by naming the issue and describing enough of the story to contextualize the issue. The following segment of transcript is representative of the ways the teacher candidates brainstormed several issues:

Neil: Responsibility, he had to milk Bessie and (inaudible) it seems like he didn't get all the free time that he wanted to do the things that he wanted, he had to do something else (inaudible).

Steve: He had to hide a lot of things that he liked to do, like drawing, and ah, going with to Leslie to Terabithia and couldn't tell anybody, and, his littlest sister Maybelle, she found out, he made her promise that, that she'd never tell anyone.

Renee: Just the isolation, like before Leslie he was just, they spent so much time talking about, um, his family how you know his mother was always working and if she wasn't working she was tired, so they just watched TV, and his father was never there, and the girls always got to do what they wanted to do, and he was just always alone.

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> And like his, he really didn't have any having friends at school, just raced with the other kids so he could. And one of the passages that really stuck out to me was right at the beginning he was talking, he was running in the field you know and you're learning about him, how he wants to run, how he wants to beat the other kids, and then all of a sudden it comes out that, that wow, his dad would be really proud if he could beat the other kids, and then it's just like a desperate thing for him, somehow would fix that relationship and I just thought that that was really (inaudible word).

•In all, Laura, the teacher candidate who volunteered to write on the board, listed 9 issues in Jesse's life in response to her peers' comments: "avoid/face fears/emotions; only male; hid things he liked to do; isolation (getting dad's attention); money; fear of swimming/rain; worried about making dad happy; chores; acting grown up."

Listing of the issues in Jesse's life served as a foundation for Question Four, a question which asked them to compare Jesse's childhood to their own. This listing of several issues shows that the teacher candidates knew quite a bit about Jesse's life, that they had read and understood the novel. Whether or not their understanding of childhood was complicated is discussed in the next section.

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As they brainstormed the issues in Jesse's life, Group A also branched into two topics that did not specifically answer Sue's prompt, but which stemmed from their consideration of the issues in Jesse's life. In the first instance, Kelly wondered about the timing and logistics of milking a cow, and how, if he had all these chores to do, Jesse could spend so much time at the fort. Kelly was thinking hard, about the book, and about what Jesse's life might be like. She recognized a set of events she could not reconcile, and she was willing to raise a question in order to make sense of the text. Kelly was engaged in working to understand the novel. In answer to her question, the agriculture education students, Kevin and Neil, (on Sue's prompting) explained that cows are generally milked twice a day, in the early morning and then twelve hours later, so Jesse could go to the fort after school and still get home in time to milk the family's cow.

The second topic that the teacher candidates raised in the context of the discussion of the issues in Jesse's life gave several of the teacher candidates an opportunity to engage in deep literary analysis by thinking about their powerful reactions to the novel and thinking about differences between adults' and children's readings of the text. Seven of the women in Group A took part in a conversation about their powerful reactions to the book, and their worries that a book this strong and emotional might not be appropriate for children.

As Neil was talking about the ways that adults in the novel seem to ignore the children in the novel, Gina sat up as though she had something

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she wanted to say. When Sue called on her, Gina spoke about her memories of reading the novel for the first time:

> Oh, yeah, I thought it was interesting I read this book when I was in elementary school, and I finished reading it this time like, and like, it was so upsetting, and I was like gosh you know I don't remember, I remember it being really sad but I don't remember it being so upsetting. I was talking to my mom about it, you know, "I read this book, you know, blah blah blah" and she says "Gosh that is a serious topic, for like fourth or fifth grade," and it is but I don't remember it being as upsetting. That was interesting.

Gina's comment, that her reading of the novel as a fourth grader was very different than her reading of the novel as an adult, opened the door for several teacher candidates to think about the process of reading. The women who talked about this issue were engaging in a deep literary experience in two ways. The teacher candidates interpreted the novel as they remarked on their powerful, emotional reaction, and they supported those reactions by naming and describing their experiences with the book. The teacher candidates also considered the reading process as they considered differences between adults' and children's readings of sad novels. They were working to understand the process of reading in ways they had not already considered. Both of these were aspects of their deep literary experience with the novel.

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During the three-plus minutes this topic was discussed, Candace, Lisa, Renee, Kelly and Mandy all talked about their strong, emotional reactions to the novel. The following exchange is perhaps illustrative. In this excerpt, notice the ways that the talk about reacting to this novel moves to talk about reacting to other novels, and to coming up with an explanation for why books read as adults seem so much sadder than books read in childhood. Note also the feel of the discourse. In this excerpt, I found both interrupted, nearly overlapping talk and back-channeling, two phenomena rarely found in other sections of the discussion.

Gina: . . . . I don't remember it being as upsetting. That was interesting.

[Candace sits up, looks at Sue.]

Sue: Had you read it too Candace?

Candace: No, but after reading it I was talking to a friend, I said, and I just, cause I hadn't read it before and I think that really made a lot of my emotions go wacko, I was just like, I can't believe they would make little children read this, how are they supposed to get this, cause at that, at fifth grade, I would not have had a clue of what to deal with the ending, I would have been pretty stressed out.

Gina: Which is what I would have thought, when I was reading it, that's why, why I was so upset, and I was like, um sure, I was just like gosh, this is so serious, but for some reason

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Lisa: I felt that way with the Outsiders, we read that in sixth grade, and now when I read it just recently, and oh, it was really sad, but I didn't remember it being that sad.

Unknown: (quietly) that's interesting

Mandy: Don't you think you analyze things more, now though, and you think, like, I don't know, like, me after I read it I was like, God, that, life so short, you know like when I was fifth grade, I wouldn't have said, "Oh, live each day to the fullest," you know like I wouldn't you know, maybe take it as seriously.

Mandy's proposal that children understand texts differently, and that adults "analyze things more" was echoed by several of her classmates who expanded on this idea by explaining in various ways that children, who have had fewer experiences than adults, read texts less emotionally. Gina, for example, claimed that:

I think a lot of it is experience too, cause I know in fifth grade I hadn't lost anybody, you know what I mean, I hadn't felt death, so it was sad emotionally when she died but I had no personal experience to draw upon to really help me get emotional.

As the conversation continued, Renee echoed her surprise that kids might read anything as emotional as this novel, saying, "I thought that same thing,

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too, when I got done reading it I was like, man, I can't believe kids read this," Elise returned to the kids-as-less-experienced-readers idea that Gina had proposed. Elise explained,

> As you get older you experience, in childhood you don't experience any big loss or death and the fear of loss or death and that's why we take it. As you get older you get this fear of death this fear of loss and you don't experience that as much as a child.
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> . . .

As Elise continued talking, she used her childhood reading of the novel *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (Coerr, 1977) to explain her point. Sue followed Elise's explanation for differences between adults' and children's readings by asking whether or not the class felt it was "appropriate" for children to read novels like this one. In response to that question, Kelly returned to the kids-as-less-experienced-readers idea. Kelly said,

> I think too, that we're all taking it like Gina said personally, when probably a younger child would just be like oh this is a book, they wouldn't be like oh this could really happen, they could be like oh, this is just a book.

To this point in the conversation, the teacher candidates were thinking about the process of reading in interesting ways. Certainly, these several women had been engaged by their readings of the novel. They had cried, they had felt sorrow, and they had reacted strongly to the novel. The interruption and backchanneling, their sustained efforts to understand why their

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childhood readings may have differed so greatly, are evidence that they also were engaged in this section of the discussion. The teacher candidates were also thinking about the reading process. They were wondering just what it might be about readers, in particular young readers, that would lead to less emotional readings.

The teacher candidates were also supposed to be complicating their understandings of childhood, and thinking of kids as having experienced both joy and pain, among other things. This discussion of children as less experienced readers seemed to be reifying an understanding of children as innocent, naive, and inexperienced, so innocent, in fact, that they might miss the sadness in a novel like *Bridge to Terabithia*. It is interesting that the talk to this point could serve two purposes so clearly, but seem to travel in directions opposite the intent of Sue's third goal for the Sequence.

As the talk continued the women's understanding of children as less experienced became more complicated. Mandy and Elise, as they continued to explore this idea, talked in ways that more thoroughly developed their children-as-innocent-readers ideas they had already proposed:

> Mandy: And that was just the ending, I mean there's a lot more that a child could get out of this book, you know, like the gender, you know, different gender relationship, you know responsibility or whatever. There's more than just the death issue.

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Gina: I definitely think that the way I reacted, was a lot, like when I was little, you know, not that it is only a story, like I think kids have reactions to everything they read. But I think, I don't know, like if I was to read *Old Yeller* again, I think I cried when I was in sixth grade and I read the book, but I'd probably cry harder now, cry my heart out. Just cause you change, as you grow you put yourself more into books than you do when you are younger.

Elise: Now see, I feel like, I don't know if you talk about it in your English classes, [leans over, looks at Aaron, the other English major] but that--he's like, what are you talking about?--each time you read a book you get different things from it depending on what's going on in your life right then. So you know even right now you'll read this and get something out of it, but if you read it next year, and your life's different then you're going to get another thing out of it again.

Mandy as she talked, recognized that the novel was complex, and that death was one small theme in a book also about the nature of friendship and gender roles, and that children would read, understand, and respond to the whole novel, not just the last few chapters. Elise talked about ways every reading of a text, for every reader, is always different. The teacher candidates' ideas about texts and how texts come to have meanings are interesting. On

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the one hand, Gina still had not abandoned the notion that younger folks respond to texts in less sophisticated ways. On the other hand, Mandy and Elise seemed to be talking about the process of reading in more sophisticated ways. As I show later in the chapter, Gina used her presentation as a space to continue thinking about the ideas developed here, as she read an essay she had written about the differences between her adult and childhood readings of the novel.

During this final exchange, Sue noticed that Lisa was still standing at the chalkboard waiting to add to the list of issues in Jesse's life, although several minutes had passed as the conversation moved to this discussion of the reading process. Sue invited Lisa to sit down, passed out the "Initial Map of Childhood," a list of their memories of childhood, and began to raise the next question.

Question 4: Comparing Jesse's life to their own. In a previous class, Sue had asked the teacher candidates to think about their memories of childhood. As they had brainstormed, they listed memories of their own childhoods and some of children's strengths, joys, vulnerabilities and needs. Sue wrote down what the teacher candidates remembered about childhood, and compiled it onto one sheet, which she called their "Initial Map of Childhood" This "map" is included in Figure 1. Sue brought copies of this "map" to class with her the day the teacher candidates discussed the novel, handed it out, and then asked if there were things, in light of the novel, they might want to add to the Map.

Although her question asked the teacher candidates to move on to the fourth question, Neil responded by returned to the list of issues that was generated in response to Sue's third question saying, "I just thought of another one for the board." As you can see in the following exchange, Neil's suggestion of another item to add prompted some controversy.

Neil: I just thought of another one for the board. With Leslie's parents both being writers, it seemed she didn't have a lot of time to spend really with them, it didn't focus on so much like Jess, trying to get his father's attention, which it seemed like Leslie's found her consolation in books and it is interesting, she wasn't necessarily real close with her parents either.

Sue: Yeah, these are still adults that are sort of really not focusing on the kids.

Lisa: I thought they were

Sue: You thought they were?

Lisa: Yeah. [inaudible word] I mean Leslie's [parents] knew her better than my parents knew me [inaudible]

Gina: And there was a jealousy thing, too, I thought, you know when Leslie started spending time with her dad, and you know he [Jesse] didn't understand that cause you know he didn't have that, he not only couldn't relate to that cause his dad wasn't around, so I think they did spend times, at

An Initial Map of Childhood

Theme: The power of not forgetting . . . .
temper tantrums, the "agony of defeat," running away, the Ice Cream Truck, camping, hay rides, family pets, sandbox, bike rides, sports, family, vacations, Saturday morning cartoons, recess, Red Rover, car trips, buying candy at the corner store, being locked out of the house, pizza for breakfast, mean baby-sitters, New Kids on the Block, being called home for supper, swing sets, teachers, grandparents, dance class, summers at the pool, the crazy next-door neighbor, the park down the street, baseball, being escorted to school by an older boy, running through the sprinkler, flashlight tag, first home run, illness, tormenting sibling, being tormented, baking cookies, choking down Molasses cookies, sledding, banana seats, stomping through puddles. . .

Tensions
fun, carefree, no responsibilities/chores, fears, confusion
family as sources of love, attention/pain, anger
being too young/not old enough
laughing/crying
innocence/experience
school as place to grow/school as prison/school as unmemorable
wanting to be grown up/wanting to be self
health/illness
outside/inside
child as individual/child as member of a group (family, classroom, neighborhood, team, club)

Needs
friendship
play
freedom
guidance
fairness
attention
physical safety
place to call home
sense of belonging
reason (make up rules as you go along)
positive reinforcement
love/affection

Strengths
imagination/inventiveness
energy/physical activity
intensity of emotion (high highs and low lows)
passion/curiosity
compassion
risk taking

Vulnerabilities
impatience
envious
cruelty
territorial

Figure 1: An Initial Map of Childhood

certain point they did, cause her dad was gone for the summer, finishing that book.

When Neil returned to the third question, in spite of Sue's efforts to move on to question number four, Neil did two things that showed he was engaged in the overall conversation. He returned to the task of brainstorming issues in Jesse's life, rounding out the list that was already there. He also returned to an issue that his peers had earlier raised, that of wondering whether or not Leslie's parents were acting in ways that were good for their daughter. Remember that during the discussion of interesting characters Gina had first raised the topic of Leslie's parents and their decision to move to the country. During that segment of the conversation, Elise had quickly agreed, saying that Leslie's parents were "oversaturated" with their own lives. Even Sue agreed. Neil raised the issue again in response to the issues in Jesse's life prompt. He had heard his peers talk about this issue, and he wanted to be sure it was included on the list of issues.

Although Neil was raising an idea that had seemed to achieve a great deal of consensus earlier in the conversation, Lisa, who was an elementary education major who planned one day to teach overseas, disagreed with him, and Gina, who had criticized Leslie's parents in the first place, changed her position and defended them. Gina's talk about the text changed over the course of the conversation, as she referred to Leslie's parents in different ways. Her understanding of Leslie's family life was becoming more complicated, because she viewed Leslie's both as parents who were neglectful

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and self serving and as parents who spent important times with their daughter, times so bonding that Jesse, who did not have experiences with his father like Leslie did with hers, became jealous.

One of the features of exploratory talk (Barnes, 1993; Britton, 1969), a kind of engaged learning talk I described in chapter 3, is a spiral nature. In such talk, topics are abandoned and reclaimed as speakers build an understanding of concepts. This whole exchange is an example of a topic that was abandoned, reclaimed, and about which speakers seemed to be developing more complex understandings. The teacher candidates' decision to return to this topic even as Sue's question suggested that they move on shows that their inner attention was brought to the task of discussing and interpreting the novel. They cared enough about the topics Sue and other classmates were raising to return to them more than once.

In response to Gina's comment, Kelly shared the quote she had written on a pink note card at the beginning of the conversation. Kelly's quote referred to the same incident that Gina had referred to, the time that Jesse was jealous about the time Leslie spent with her father. However, rather than using that incident in the novel to think about the children's relationships with their parents, Kelly used it to think about the children's relationship with each other.

After Kelly got permission from Sue to share her quote (by asking, "are we going to share our quotes or?") Kelly said that she had written down the part of the novel where "it's like all the lights were coming back on after an

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electrical storm." Kelly explained that Paterson wrote this passage to explain how Jesse felt when he realized he did not have to sit by himself while Leslie and her father remodeled their living room. Kelly offered another interpretation of the "lights back on" metaphor, explaining that not only did Jesse realize he did not have to be jealous of Leslie's father, that Leslie turned lights on for Jesse in many ways.

> [Leslie said] "Well, why don't you just come over and help us," and it's like all the lights were coming back on after an electrical storm. I think not only did it apply to that but that is what Leslie did for Jess, she's turned on the lights when he was, he was not knowing what was going on in his world, he know of a place and a person where he could go to and be himself. We were talking about that situation in the book.

Kelly's consideration of the role that Leslie played in Jesse's life was a precursor to further considerations of the children's relationship later in the discussion. A few turns later, Kelly also tried to answer the question that Sue asked just before Neil and Gina and their classmates talked about the parent/child relationships in the novel-the question asking them to compare the Map of Childhood to the list of issues they had just generated. Kelly noticed a similarity between Jesse's life and their own Map of Childhood when she pointed out, "I think under strengths, there were a lot of things that I saw Jesse, that we did think, that were similar, just, like, imagination, obviously they had a huge imagination, energy, having activity," and went

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on to explain her observations with several examples such as getting up at 5:00 am every day and milking the family cow.

Aaron, the secondary journal keeper, on the other hand, saw differences, rather than similarities. He said,

> I think this was a one sided, maybe not one sided, but it's only one view of childhood coming from a particular upbringing and background. I mean we got a few different ones, but a lot of it was middle class values and backgrounds and stuff.

Aaron saw that Jesse's experiences were different from his own, and said so to the rest of the class. However, he did it in such a way as to obscure his point, because he preceded this important point with the claim that because he and Jesse had had such different experiences, he could not really understand the novel. Aaron explained that "I didn't identify with a lot of the stuff in this book because that's not, I was, I hadn't been through this stuff they did." Not only that, but Aaron wondered whether or not children would understand the book as well. He said

> And I think if you are teaching this to someone who hasn't grown up like that they are not going to get it, they're not going to under, I mean they might, if they're, I won't say they are not smart of enough, but there are some things they are not going to understand, I mean they might have different responsibilities, other than like not milking a cow, but a lot of it they're just not

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> going to get, like, they're just not going to get, like I didn't, I just couldn't identify with most of it.

Aaron's observations about the Map's one-sided-ness were framed by his declaration that he could not identify with the novel at all because his life was so different form Jesse's. Not only that, he doubted that children who had not experienced similar chores or childhoods would be able to "get" the novel. Now, Aaron was one of the two English majors in the class, he said he kept a journal, read frequently, and wrote his own poetry. It was very striking that Aaron would claim not to be able to identify with a novel because the characters are "different" from the reader. As I will show in the following paragraphs, Aaron's comments about not identifying with the novel sparked several minutes of conversation in which Aaron had multiple opportunities to interpret the novel and to justify his initial interpretation based on elements of the text. He and his peers also talked about their understanding of the reading process. In addition, Aaron kept talking aloud about issues of childhood, and how Jesse's experiences were so different from his.

After Aaron made this initial comment, Sue responded to Aaron by saying:

> Aaron, I'm just really struck, I want to come back just for a minute to this idea, because I think you raised a point about whether or not we can empathize with a character who is really different from our own experience.

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By asking this question, Sue diverted from the proposed topic of exploring and comparing versions of childhood, and suggested that the conversation turn instead to thinking about process of reading–one of her deep literary experience goals. Sue asked the other teacher candidates in the course to talk about whether or not they agreed with Aaron's claim that readers and characters must have something in common in order for the reader to "get" or identify with the text.

Again the talk was spiral in nature. Aaron proposed that readers, particularly young children who have not had experiences similar to the characters in novels, would not be able to "get" those novels. In this way, Aaron was returning to the topic talked about just seconds ago, that of differences in ways experienced and inexperienced readers will understand texts. The talk spirals back to the same theme in a different context, the context of comparing Jesse's life to their own memories of childhood.

In response to Aaron's claim, and to Sue's question as to whether or not readers need to have the same experiences as characters, Tracy and Elise both talked about universal themes and ways readers could, in fact, identify with the text. Tracy, the future special education teacher, had not spoken during the first conversation about young readers. Tracy challenged Aaron's claim that he and children of differing backgrounds could not identify with the text when she said,

> I think every child whether upper class, lower class, middle class have some parallel experiences, with playing on the playground,

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> having [inaudible] at school, interacting with children, I just think maybe not dealing with death, but I myself had a friend die, not my best friend when I was ten, but there is always some way to connect to someone else. And I think that plays into the story and I think every kid would probably be able to connect to either of the characters, regardless of their life.

Elise also challenged Aaron's claim that readers need to have similar experiences in order to identify with texts. Elise, who was the other secondary English major, had supported her peers' claims that young readers would not react as intensely because they "don't experience loss or death," and Elise had also already complicated that understanding by talking about the ways texts can mean different things each time readers read them "depending on what's going on in your life right then." This time, Elise took a slightly different stance, by talking about universal themes in the novel that anyone could relate to, even as she tried to create a common ground by explaining the ways Aaron's claims seem rational. Elise said:

> I could see how if you were reading this for example in an inner city you might, "whatever, you think these are problems give me a break." I mean that's true. But there's also the aspect of, that you can learn from the emotions that she feels, the idea of being teased is certainly something that happens across the, across the line, and the idea of losing someone is played across the line, the idea of wanting your parents to notice you is all

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over the place, there's always, there's always ideas, to get out of it, but I do see that on the surface that it could be blown off and the things could not be looked at.

Elise and Tracy gave Aaron a different way to think about the novel, and the talk continued to focus on the process of reading, and how readers make sense of texts. Talking about the process of reading in these ways opened up the door for Aaron to continue to interpret the novel by sharing and revising his understanding of the text as he considered the ways in which he went about the process of reading.

Aaron followed Elise and Tracy's comments with a very long turn, talking for just under two minutes in response to this challenge from his peers. Aaron had already heard how strongly his peers had reacted to the novel. Many of them could readily list characters that struck them. Many of the women had talked about how sad they had found the novel and how powerful their reading of it was. Aaron's interpretation of the novel was very different from his classmates'. Aaron engaged in interpreting the novel as he talked about his response to the book. Earlier I defined interpretation as the describing of a reading, and then the justification of that response, either by pointing to elements of the text or commenting on past experiences that were evoked by the text. As he first named his response (lack of identification) Aaron pointed to differences between his life and the characters. When that was refuted, Aaron kept talking. The entire transcript of Aaron's turn at this point can be found in Figure 2. I will refer to various lines in that figure as I

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discuss the ways Aaron's interpretation of the novel changed as he kept talking and responding to Sue and his peers.

When his peers challenged the claim that he could not identify with the novel because he had not had the same experiences Jesse had had, Aaron kept working to use elements of the text to justify his own understanding and reaction to the novel. His second justification had to do with the genre of the novel and its brevity. On lines 1-15 of Figure 2, Aaron claimed that the book's shortness made it unbelievable. As an adult, he knew that complicated issues like those in the book do not get wrapped up very neatly. As he said, "I'm going, that's ridiculous, that's not how things work out, for me. I mean, if you got teased, if you got teased, you, when I was a kid, you know, you got teased for months on end, it seemed like for an eternity, that would go on."

Next, Aaron tried out a third explanation for his initial interpretation of the book. This time, he referred to its "passé"-ness, by which I believe he meant the novel's predictability. On lines 17 and 18 Aaron said, "I just had a hard time reading it, cause, and a lot of this stuff seems so passé to me, like death, and stuff like that." Aaron went on to explain what he meant by passé-ness, referring to his familiarity with the "stages" of death on lines 23-26:

> . . . maybe if I had to deal with it then it would do something for me, it would touch me, I was like, maybe it would touch me, right now I just go oh, knew what's going to happen, now he'll get mad at his dead friend and now he's going to do this, I knew what was coming.

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1 Aaron: I think a lot of the issues are issues that I couldn't identify with,
2 because it's such a short novel, it's a child's novel, can I say that?
3 Sue: Yes
4 Aaron: That they have to resolve it in 10 pages, I mean he gets picked
5 on but two minutes later here come somebody else to take the
6 blame for him, or the big bully is a pain in the butt but all they
7 have to do is one little thing and all the sudden she's kind and
8 gentle like everyone else. I mean, Maybe a that will do
9 something for a kid, if while they are reading it, they're going
10 oh, wow things can work out, maybe you can look on a really
11 positive side, but, but as an adult I'm going, that's ridiculous,
12 that's now how things work out, for me, I mean, if you got
13 teased, if you got teased, you when I was a kid, you know, you
14 got teased for months on end, it seemed like for an eternity, that
15 would go on, and then, I don't know.
16 Sue: No, say,
17 Aaron: and I just had a hard time reading it, cause, and a lot of this
18 stuff seems so passé to me, like death, and stuff like that, cause
19 I've heard all the little things about the stages of dealing with
20 death, running away and accepting and it seems passé to me
21 because I've never dealt with it so it doesn't strike me, because

Figure 2: Aaron's Comments About Identifying With the Novel

22 I've heard so much, maybe if I had to deal with it then it would

23 do something for me, it would touch me I

24 was like, maybe it would touch me, right now I just go ho, knew

25 what's going to happen, now he'll get mad at his dead friend

26 and now he's going to do this, I knew what was coming.

Figure 2: Aaron's Comments About Identifying With the Novel

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Aaron's comments seemed contradictory. He had never experienced death, yet he found the novel passé. Generally, passé has to do with something that is overly familiar, that has become trite. As Aaron explained why he had found the novel to be "passé," he referred to his sense that the novel was very predictable, that "I knew what was coming."

Since he was an English major, it is perhaps not surprising that Aaron, who frequently read much more complicated texts, found *Bridge to Terabithia* to be both simplistic and predictable. In fact, Elise responded to Aaron's interpretation of the novel by naming their experiences as English majors. As she did so, she recast passé-ness in terms of foreshadowing. Elise said:

> I think part of that that comes from being an English major, we are reading so much, which I knew she was going to die, from the beginning, and I knew the foreshadowing, it was just very obvious, but I think that comes from the fact that we are constantly reading these, for English, novels or whatever, we know about foreshadowing. It is hard to go back.

Elise and Aaron's comments are especially interesting if we think back to Mandy's initial comments about the book in response to Sue's first question. Mandy, who was an elementary education major who was also a volleyball coach, had been stunned by the death. She said she had not seen it coming. And Sue had reinforced that reaction to the novel, saying that there were ways the author "sets us up for the fall, for the surprise at the end."

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Aaron and Elise had a very different take on the book. They recognized what Elise called foreshadowing–the (to them) obvious tricks of the author's craft that let them know to expect a death.

In this conversation, Aaron, in the context of talking to and being challenged by his colleagues, engaged in a deep literary experience by interpreting the novel. He first named his understanding of the novel as a text that he could not identify with. As he talked, he considered elements of the text that explained why–its shortness and its predictability. He also considered elements of his own experience that shaped his initial reaction–differences between his life and Jesse's. In these ways, he engaged in a deep literary experience. He and his peers also talked together about their understanding of the process of reading. As Aaron talked, he also continued to refine his understanding of childhood, because the book presented aspects of childhood he had not before considered.

After Elise spoke about foreshadowing, Sue responded to Elise, "You have clues, or categories, that others, particularly kids, are not going to pick up on those." And then she launched the next of her seven questions.

Question 5: What does Terabithia stand for? Sue next asked the teacher candidates to think about why Jesse was keeping Terabithia a secret. Tracy, Mandy, and Renee claimed that revealing their kingdom to their parents or Jesse's siblings could ruin it's specialness. As Tracy, who planned one day to teach special education and who had challenged Aaron's claims about not identifying with the novel, said,

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> Because it was theirs, it was theirs alone, if anyone knew it could take away, from the magic of it, their own imagination, if others came into it and the parents might not necessarily let them go over the creek, and it could make matters complicated for them to have a special place.

After Tracy spoke, Mandy, who had proposed that children understand novels like this one because they are less experienced, said:

> I don't think he wanted anyone to spoil this perfect, you know, little world he had, if his sisters found out, even anybody saying anything bad about it would just, he didn't want anything to spoil, that was, you know, something they had that was perfect.

Mandy and Tracy both understood that Terabithia must be secret because other's opinions of it could make Terabithia less special, less sacred. Privacy and secrecy were important for keeping Terabithia a safe place. Renee, the child development major to whom faith was so important, echoed these ideas:

> I think really, like, there just are some things that you just know that someone else will never feel the same way about it, and if you do, and even if you talk with them about it and try to make them understand they are never going to feel the same way that you do, and it's just gonna [inaudible–ruin it?] for you because they are not going to get it.

Each of these three teacher candidates said in different ways that they understood Jesse's need to have a space, like Terabithia, where you feel safe and secure, a place no one else can ruin. The repetition of ideas here is another bit of evidence that the teacher candidates were engaged with talking with one another about the answers to Sue's question. They were working together to describe the most important elements of Terabithia, to figure out a way to describe why Terabithia, as a place, had such a profound effect on both children. Some of those features included specialness and ownership.

Tracy called Terabithia their "special place" and Mandy called it a "perfect, you know, little world." Terabithia was set apart from the rest of the character's lives. Both Tracy and Renee referred to the importance of ownership, of having a place that belongs just to you, a place which feels safe, because only you know about it, because, as Tracy said, "It was theirs alone." By responding to Sue's question about the importance of keeping Terabithia secret, these teacher candidates began to name the features of Terabithia that made it such an important place. Ownership and specialness, these features of Terabithia became the same features that students referred to in their presentations, which I will show later in the transcript.

Sue had posed the Terabithia-as-a-secret question as a precursor to asking the teacher candidates to think about Terabithia as a metaphor and what Terabithia might stand for. Elise presupposed that question when she followed Renee's comment and declared that Terabithia "is" the child. Elise used the quote she had written on the pink note card at the start of class in

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order to support her claim that Terabithia is similar to childhood. Elise interpreted the salient features of Terabithia slightly differently than Tracy and Renee. According to the quote Elise shared and her discussion, it was safety more than specialness or ownership that defined Terabithia. Terabithia was powerful because it was an insulated place, behind walls, a place that prepared Jesse to move on to the outside world. Elise said:

> I think Terabithia is the child, it's where they learn and they find, like, OK, can I read a quote? "Now it occurred to him perhaps Terabithia was like a castle where you came to be knighted after you stayed for a while and grew strong you had to move on, for hadn't Leslie even in Terabithia tried to push back the walls of his mind and make him see beyond to the shining world, huge and terrible, beautiful and very fragile." And that's, that's what childhood is about, it's about learning, what is to come and what isn't, the future and learning that there is a world outside of the little walls that you have created which is what Terabithia is.

Elise believed that this quote represented the essence of childhood, that childhood is a safe place, surrounded by "little walls" of protection that children must break free from. When Elise likened childhood to Terabithia, and insisted they had the same qualities, she seemed to be reifying thoughts about childhood she had expressed earlier in the conversation. During the discussion justifying their assumption that children's reactions to the novel

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would be less emotional, Elise had been one of the women who claimed that children had experienced less and would not developed the fear of death and loss that adults have. By equating Terabithia with childhood, Elise continued to imagine that childhood is an innocent time, a time of protection that children break free from as they grow older.

After Elise's comment, Sue asked the teacher candidates to think about what else Terabithia could be a metaphor for. Neil, one of the agriculture education majors, Aaron, who had struggled to identify with the novel, and Elise, who must by now be quite a familiar teacher candidate, responded to Sue's question in the following exchange. Notice the ways that even as they use three different metaphors to describe Terabithia (their own world, adulthood, the classroom), the teacher candidates picked up on the same qualities of Terabithia (safety, freedom, ownership) to support their claims.

Neil: Creating their own world, their own perfect place where everything is just the they way that they always imagine, and he's brave and great and she's [inaudible] with the spirits of the forest or whatever, whatever, their imagination. It's a place that makes them feel safe and secure and still be what they really want to be or what they think they want to be.

Aaron: I agree with, it's like, it's more like adulthood. It's, they, they're in charge now, they don't have to answer to anybody, they are the king and queen, you know, they can

do whatever they want to, they don't have to answer to anybody, things like that, they don't have any responsibilities besides the ones they create for themselves. I think that's something they look forward to, in their real, in their actual lives, they just play it out somewhere else, there's no boundaries. Nowhere they can't go, when they go over that boundary, no one knows.

Elise: I also think that, that Terabithia is the metaphor for the classroom, it is the ideal classroom, it's the, that is where, it is in that quote, it is where he learned about art, literature, and all those places, that's what we strive to create, everything that you just, you just said, is what you want the classroom to be, so that you can learn from it.

Neil named explicitly the features of Terabithia that Elise had seemed to be referring to earlier, as a place that makes them feel "safe and secure." Neil also described Terabithia in terms of the imaginative play that took place there. The teacher candidates described Terabithia as a place where children could and did take risks and use their imaginations, and recognized the characters could do so because they feel felt safe there. These features of Terabithia–safety, imaginative play, and risk taking–became very important interpretations of the importance of Terabithia and recurred several times during the *Bridge* Presentations.

In this exchange, Aaron's statement was interesting. Aaron started out by saying, "I agree with," but did not say which of the two, Elise or Neil, he agreed with. Aaron went on to explain why Terabithia was like adulthood, not childhood. Presumably he was agreeing with Neil, who had described Terabithia as a "perfect place," because Aaron saw it as a place they look forward to, and where they can do whatever they want.

In contrast to Elise's conception of Terabithia as childhood, Aaron saw no boundaries in Terabithia, whereas Elise had defined Terabithia in terms of little walls. All three versions of Terabithia, however, shared several salient features. Aaron also used features such as ownership and separateness from everyday life, as a place that's their own world (Neil), where the children do not have to answer to others (Aaron) and a world of their own creation (Elise).

After Aaron redefined Terabithia in terms of adulthood, Elise (an engaged participant in the discussion) pointed back to the quote she had just read, the one about the castle walls being pushed back, and reminded her peers that Jesse had learned about art and literature in Terabithia. She referred to the features of Terabithia her peers had just described–freedom, safety, the lack of boundaries–as the features that let Jesse and Leslie learn while they were there. Elise then extended these ideas by concluding that those same features should be part of their future classrooms. She also laid a foundation for thinking that became important later in the class. Elise used the Terabithia-as-the-classroom metaphor, one she returned to in her

presentation and again, as I discussed in chapter 3, in her final reflection. The idea that a classroom should be like Terabithia, in terms of the features of Terabithia that she and her peers had just named such as safety, ownership, imaginative play, and privacy, became important ideas the entire class picked up on and referred to in their presentations and final reflections as well.

When Elise suggested childhood as the metaphorical equivalent of Terabithia, she seemed to be reifying the childhood-as-innocence idea, continuing to talk about ways childhood is a time of simpleness and safety set apart from the adult world. After hearing Neil and Aaron talk about ways that Terabithia was separate from the responsibilities and limits and lack of imagination in their real lives, Elise changed her Terabithia metaphor from childhood to classroom, and began to talk, and presumably think, about the ways that a safe, imaginative classrooms, where children feel ownership, is a place where children learn best. This is a subtle difference. Aaron and Neil had pointed out that Jesse and Leslie's childhoods were not at all like Terabithia, and Elise's conclusion was that teachers should then create places like Terabithia where children can learn in the ways Jesse and Leslie learned while they played in their magical kingdom.

The final metaphor for Terabithia was briefly nominated by Kelly, after Sue asked if there were any more thoughts on the subject of metaphor. Kelly suggested that Terabithia could be like a metaphor for "freedom," because it was there that the children had "the ability to do whatever you want, to get

away with everything." With this metaphor, Kelly returned to ideas her peers had raised, such as safety and ownership.

Throughout this exchange, as the teacher candidates responded to Sue's questions about secrecy and metaphors, their talk was engaged, that is, they worked with one another, repeating and returning to ideas, coming to consensus about a definition of the important features of Terabithia, disagreeing with one another in order to make their understanding more complex and more thorough. Elise was also considering issues of childhood, what childhood is or is not like, what it ought to be like, and where and when these safe, Terabithian spaces can and ought to arise for children. Throughout it all, these teacher candidates were using talk to have a deep literary experience, they were sharing their understanding of the novel, talking together to make that understanding more complete.

On paper, this is a very powerful exchange. It's important to point out that even in this exchange, many students still showed that external lack of affect I described earlier and in chapter 3. There were no instances of overlapping talk, no interruptions. In five minutes and 10 seconds of talk, there were 11 utterances, 3 of them by Sue. Several teacher candidates were slumped over in their chairs, and 5 teacher candidates did not talk at all. Still, I would describe this exchange as engaged, because it was what the talk did, more than what it felt or looked like, that revealed the teacher candidates' mental investment in this exchange, in the ways they repeated and developed ideas and addressed the topic in complex ways. The differences between

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surface features and deep features of engagement is made even more clear in the next section.

Question 6: What's getting connected? What's the bridge? After responding briefly to Kelly's freedom metaphor, Sue asked the teacher candidates to consider the term "bridge" by asking "who or what is the bridge, and what's getting connected?" The teacher candidates' responses to this question exemplify the ways in which the talk was complicated.

At the beginning of this chapter and in chapter 2, I talked about the ways that the discourse was complicated. The surface markers of engagement (e.g. eye contact, overlap, disagreement, interruptions) that I expected were not present. Sue and many of the teacher candidates also thought the conversation did not seem very engaging. After the class Sue reported that getting discussion going was difficult. Gina and Steve, in our interviews, agreed that the *Bridge* Discussion did not feel that engaging. Gina told me, "I remember feeling like she kind of had to pull teeth for it because no one really had much to say about it, like she would ask questions and everyone would kind of sit there, they wouldn't answer like direct questions." Steve told me, "I've never been one who likes to sit and discuss books I read, I find it takes the fun out of it. So I wasn't really into that part."

Yet the apparent lack of affect belied the ways in which the teacher candidates engaged with one another and with Sue's question as they constructed an understanding of the novel. This is evident in the ways the teacher candidates answered Sue's sixth question. A close analysis reveals

that the teacher candidates built from their knowledge of the novel and each other's comments to construct a complex understanding of the novel.

Figure 3 contains the excerpt during which the teacher candidates in Group A answered Sue's question about the bridge and what it stood for. This excerpt lasted for two minutes and 55 seconds. During this time, five teacher candidates spoke. Almost exclusively, the teacher candidates spoke one at a time, rather than overlapping one another. Gina did interrupt Sue at one point to begin answering her question. There were generally distinct pauses of one or two seconds between utterances. The turns were long, averaging 71 words. In the video taped footage of this section of the discussion, the teacher candidates either looked directly at the individual speaking or looked at the table.

But none of these things I have just counted are necessarily markers of engagement or the lack thereof. Within this excerpt, there are many features of the talk that indicate that the teacher candidates were, in spite of their appearance, engaged in listening to one another, considering each other's ideas, and making those ideas more complex. These features include repetition of words and phrases, connections between statements and ideas, and concepts which build one another and, in turn, become more complex. Next I will walk through each utterance in the transcript, pointing out the ideas, phrases, and words which either connect or are repeated, and which therefor show that the teacher candidates were, indeed, engaged in listening to and talking with one another.

1 Sue: Well, I guess my last big question is why bridge, I mean, bridge is
2 in the title, and it seems as though bridge is a metaphor for
3 something, what is getting connected, who or what is getting
4 connected, what's the bridge here, and what's getting
5 connected?
6 Elise: Connecting what happened prior to Leslie's death, what
7 happened in his real life, versus Terabithia , and then after
8 Leslie's death, the bridge is now, excuse me for making the
9 metaphor, is now connected in that now it is the one he's
10 carried on to the other. It's not, they're not two separate places
11 anymore.
12 //
13 Sue: So Leslie's death is the bridge between the person he was in
14 Terabithia and the person he was–
15 Gina: Terabithia is the one that saved him, it's like he was allowed to
16 do whatever he wanted and that's where he felt comfortable,
17 and after Leslie's death he realized he could do that. / / Maybe
18 like what you were saying, he realized that the person he was
19 there could be, he could be that person everywhere.
20 Neil: I was thinking bridge of who he was and who he wanted to be.

Figure 3: Transcirpt Of Talk About The Bridge

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Cause in the end he just got all his paints from, you know, hestarted painting. He didn't care any more what people thought, he just started doing what he wanted to. The bridge was who he was and who he wanted to be and just started to connect that.

Kelly: I thought it was like he always had in Terabithia where he like would hide his art and drawings, and there was a part of him that wanted to get away from the world of his, like, chores and everything, and Leslie was kind of like his bridge, she showed him how to get away from it all and how to be free with his art, and his ideas, so I thought of HER as his bridge to Terabithia.

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Tracy: And that's also going along with the metaphor about how when Leslie was alive they had the rope to get across the creek and then after she died then he built the bridge, and I think that's really symbolic of this, with the, as we're saying with her death, it allowed him to be, more where, he just, he wasn't scared anymore, of crossing the bridge, cause it was the bridge, it wasn't the rope that he was afraid he was gonna fall and not be able to swim, it was an actual safe way to go to that place.

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Figure 3: Transcirpt Of Talk About The Bridge

Sue posed the question, by saying "it seems as though bridge is a metaphor for something . . . . what's getting connected?" (lines 1-5). Elise answered that Jesse had two lives, a real life and a life in Terabithia, and after Leslie's death, these two lives were connected. As she talked, Elise said, "Excuse me for making the metaphor." By referring to the term metaphor, Elise both connected back to Sue's question, and to the last topic of conversation, when they had discussed what Terabithia itself was a metaphor for.

There was a pause, and as Sue began to fill that pause by rewording Elise's answer, Gina stepped in to repeat and reinforce Elise's notion of Jesse's two different lives. She did so first by bringing up some of the ideas from the last topic—freedom and safety–by saying that "he was allowed to do whatever he wanted and that's where he felt comfortable," and then she referred directly to Elise's comment when she said, "Maybe like what you were saying, he realized that the person he was there could be, you know, he could be that person everywhere." Elise had suggested that after Leslie's death Jesse connected his two lives. Gina provided an explanation for how that might have happened, by saying, "he realized he could do that. . . . .he could be that person everywhere."

After another brief silence, Neil, one of the agriculture education students, who, in answer to Sue's fifth question had described Terabithia as "their own world," came in with an answer to this question as well (line 20). Neil began his turn with a comment that seemed to refer all the way back to

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Sue's question (rather than to Gina or Elise's comments) when he said, "I was thinking of bridge . . . ." In the rest of his turn, however, Neil elaborated on this notion of the two different Jesse's, in and out of Terabithia. Neil's bridge was a bridge "of who he was and who he wanted to be." And like Gina, Neil explained a bit how this connecting of two Jesse's happened. Neil said, "he didn't care any more what people thought, he just started doing what he wanted to do."

Gina, Elise, and Neil all talked about the ways that Jesse connected his two selves after Leslie's death. Kelly built on this idea by suggesting a metaphor for bridge, an explanation of what the bridge itself was rather than what was getting connected. Kelly said, "Leslie was kind of like his bridge, she showed him how to get away from it all." In her turn, Kelly also returned to two ideas that had recently been discussed when she said, " . . . he like would hide his art and drawings," and that Leslie "showed him . . . .how to be free with his art and his ideas . . . ." Kelly also returned to the idea she had raised earlier. When Kelly talked about the lights-coming-back-on quote from the novel, she interpreted to explain the role that Leslie played in Jesse's life. As she thought about the bridge metaphor, she again referred to the role that Jesse played in Leslie's life.

Both Kelly and Neil referred to Jesse's passion for drawing and painting, and they both identified the change in Jesse in terms of overcoming fears–Kelly in terms of Jesse's willingness to "be free with is art," and Neil in terms of Jesse beginning to not care what other people think, as evidenced by

the fact that he was willing to go back to the river and retrieve the paints he'd thrown in the water, or, as Neil put it, "he just got all his paints from, you know, he started painting."

Tracy did not repeat the painting idea, but she did build on the aspect of their responses that had to do with overcoming fears. She did so in very literal terms. She referred to the actual wooden bridge that Jesse built over the stream after Leslie's death. The bridge was both " a safe way to go to that place," and "symbolic" of what her peers had been talking about, symbolic of the ways Jesse connected his two worlds. Tracy's comment directly tied to her peers, as when she said, "And that's also going along with the metaphor . . . ." and "as we're saying," referring to the work the group had been doing to answer Sue's question. Tracy's comment was followed by nine seconds of silence and the last of Sue's seven questions.

In spite of the long silences and apparent lack of affect, the teacher candidates did use talk to work together to construct a thoughtful and complicated answer to Sue's questions. They were engaged with one another as they talked, referring to each other's comments, repeating and elaborating ideas, using the talk to come to an understanding of Jesse and the bridge metaphors. I have tried to capture the repetition of words and phrases and the building of ideas in the previous paragraphs, because I believe that the times when the teacher candidates repeat, elaborate, and refer to each other's ideas are evidence that they are engaged in building together, with talk, an answer to the question on the table. The connections and repetitions of ideas

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are probably best seen, however, in Figure 4. In Figure 4, I have put circles around words that are repeated, and boxes around ideas that are similar but phrased with different words, and connected each of these with lines. Because of the large numbers of repetitions, it is almost impossible to read the text underneath my annotations. This figure visually represents the ways the teacher candidates did listen carefully to one another and draw on their knowledge of the novel and each others' responses to construct a complex and engaged discourse about the text. Not only was the talk in response to Sue's sixth question engaged, the teacher candidates were also taking part in a deep literary experience, in that they were considering their understanding of the novel, talking with one another about ways the author used metaphor and symbolism to create meaning, and deepening their understanding of the text.

Question 7: Why read this in EDU 200? Jokingly, Sue called her final question "the ultimate question." She asked the teacher candidates, "What does this do for you either in terms of being a teacher, in terms of learning about kids?" Kelly and Renee both read the novel for lessons about teaching, and found themselves paying close attention to the teachers in the novel, As Kelly said, "I know I paid attention a lot more to it, [the teachers] than if I was younger, I am sure, or if I wasn't in this major." Kelly was aware that her stance as a beginning teacher shaped the ways she paid attention to the novel,

Sue: Well, I guess my last big question is why bridge, I mean, bridge is in the title, and it seems as though bridge is a metaphor for something, what is getting connected, who or what is getting connected, what's the bridge here, and what's getting connected?

Elise: Connecting what happened prior to Leslie's death, what happened in his real life, versus Terabithia, and then after Leslie's death, the bridge is now, excuse me for making the metaphor, is now connected in that now it is the one he's carried on to the other. It's not, they're not two separate places anymore.

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Sue: So Leslie's death is the bridge between the person he was in Terabithia and the person he was.

Gina: Terabithia is the one that saved him, it's like he was allowed to do whatever he wanted and that's where he felt comfortable, and after Leslie's death he realized he could do that. / / Maybe like what you were saying, he realized that the person he was there could be, he could be that person everywhere.

Neil: I was thinking bridge of who he was and who he wanted to be. Cause in the end he just got all his paints from, you know, he started painting. He didn't care any more what people thought, he just started doing what he wanted to. The bridge was who he was and who he wanted to be and just started to connect that.

Kelly: I thought it was like he always had in Terabithia where he like would hide his art and drawings, and there was a part of him that wanted to get away from the world of his, like, chores and everything, and Leslie was kind of like his bridge, she showed him how to get away from it all and how to be free with his art, and his ideas, so I thought of HER as his bridge to Terabithia.

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Tracy: And that's also going along with the metaphor about how when Leslie was alive they had the rope to get across the creek and then after she died then he built the bridge and I think that's really symbolic of this, with the, as we're saying with her death it allowed him to be, more where, he just, he wasn't scared anymore, of crossing the bridge, cause it was the bridge, it wasn't the rope that he was afraid he was gonna fall and not be able to swim, it was an actual safe way to go to that place.

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Figure 4: Bridge Talk Excerpt Coded For Repetition And Engagement

an idea which echoed their earlier conversations about the reading process. Kelly and Renee were particularly struck by Ms. Edmunds, the liberal, guitar playing, jeans wearing, teacher who actually listened to students. Kelly said of Ms. Edmunds, "I was just interested in like, trying to find out how I can be that way, how kids can look forward to seeing me . . . ." Renee noticed that "for half an hour once a week that woman made such a difference in [Jesse's] life, and she, like, he, he wasn't afraid, he, she encouraged him in his drawing, and he showed her things he couldn't show anyone else . . . ." As you will see later, Renee and Kelly both returned to these ideas in their presentations.

When Sue assigned the reading of the novel, she merely asked them to pay attention to whether or not they were engaged. I have talked about engagement as inner attention, as opposed to the outer attention students often find it easy to fake. This distinction between inner and outer attention struck Gina, who noticed that even though Leslie was the teacher's favorite student and the teacher really thought that Leslie was paying attention, she often was not. Gina said,

> It was funny, because Jess said at one point, like if I didn't know her I would think she was completely paying attention but she never was, you know.

Gina applied her interest in this sequence of events to her understanding of schooling. Leslie was faking attention in school, and Gina

wondered in the long run what the consequences of that phony inner attention might be. Before they had even discussed engagement as a whole class, Gina had used that word and that idea to think about what teaching and learning ought to look like.

> It kinda goes to show that you can't really take kids at face value. Leslie was a really good student but she wasn't engaged, the teacher didn't engage her, and she happened to do well, but if she has teachers for the next 11 years like that?

Neil and Tracy both talked about ways that they had interpreted the novel in terms of thinking about learning. Neil understood that the novel was about the importance of letting kids do what they like, what they are good at. Neil said, "I think a message from book too, is to always encourage students to, to um, to do what they want to do." Neil based this conclusion on the portrayal of Jesse in the novel, and extended that to his understanding of both children and classrooms. And notice Neil's repetition of the fear idea, an idea he had suggested in answer to Sue's sixth question. Neil extended his understanding of Terabithia as a safe place where Jesse overcame his fears, as well as his understanding of classrooms, when he said:

> It seemed like Jess was always afraid of getting in trouble in school for drawing or whatever, even, kids don't always get a chance to do what they want to do, at school . . . . you should reinforce that, maybe not, you know, if you are in math class, let

him draw instead of doing math, but encourage them to develop what they really want, what they really enjoy.

Tracy, the future special education teacher, paid close attention to Terabithia as a learning environment, naming some of the features of Terabithia that had been mentioned earlier in the conversation, and laying the groundwork for her future presentation. Tracy noticed the ways the author portrayed Jesse learning so much more in Terabithia than he had learned at school. Tracy concluded that teachers should try to find or make special places, like Terabithia, in the classroom.

> . . . he learned so much in Terabithia about everything that Leslie talked about, and he was comfortable in that environment, and he was so happy in that environment, and the school environment it didn't really say how much he learned about through school, at all, I don't remember really anything, he learned more in Terabithia, I think that kind of is an angle that we as teachers, we should go, and finding a special place in a classroom so they are more comfortable with themselves.

In different ways, the five teachers who answered Sue's question about reading Terabithia in a teacher education classroom built on previous portions of the *Bridge* Discussion. They echoed ideas about reading theory that had been discussed, reiterated the features of Terabithia that made it a learning environment, and built from their understandings of the novel to

draw lessons about teaching and schooling and the kinds of experiences children should have in classrooms based on their developing understanding of childhood and of learning.

Bridge Discussion, Conclusion

Talking about *Bridge to Terabithia* was meant to be an engaging learning experience that supported the teacher candidates' interpretations of the novel and helped them to think about the nature of childhood. As I have shown, the discourse reveals that some of the teacher candidates did accomplish these things some of the time. For example, Gina and Elise and many of the women thought about the process of reading as they considered whether or not children should read a novel this sad. Aaron thought about childhood and interpreted the novel as he tried to explain his lack of identification. Elise, Gina, Tracy, Neil, and Kelly were engaged with the discussion as they tried to name the metaphorical bridge and what it was connecting. Before I move on to analysis of the conversation during the mural painting, I will first consider the learning of the three students who rarely participated in the *Bridge* Discussion.

Representing non talkers. I have shown that the teacher candidates who talked engaged in both the novel and the discussion, and that several spoke in ways that revealed their interpretations of the novel and their changing understanding of childhood during the *Bridge* Discussion. But not everyone talked with equal frequency or length. Table 1 shows the number of turns each member of Group A took during the discussion.

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Table 1: Number of Utterances During the *Bridge* Discussion

Student	Number of turns
Aaron	**4**
Elise	**14**
Gina	**9**
Kelly	**9**
Renee	**6**
Steve	**1**
Candace	2
Keith	2
Lisa	5
Mandy	12
Neil	9
Tracy	7

Elise and Mandy and other teacher candidates who spoke frequently took part in the discussion in ways that revealed their engagement, interpretation, and understanding of childhood. Aaron did not speak many times, but his turns were long and complex as he interpreted the novel and considered childhood. Steve and Candace and Keith, on the other hand, rarely spoke, and the turns they did take revealed little about their interpretation of the novel. However, I have another window onto the perspectives of these students who were infrequent participants during the *Bridge* Discussion. Steve participated in two interviews, and his comments about the *Bridge* Discussion may represent the stance of those three teacher candidates who did not say much that day in class.

Steve really liked the book and was engaged as he read it. He told me, "I thought it was a good book, it read quickly, when I was reading I didn't

know time was going by, so I liked that about it. I was interested." The novel was particularly engaging when compared to academic readings because "it was actually a story that was there, you could get to know the characters, know more what was going on."

In spite of Steve's pleasure in the novel, he did not take part in the *Bridge* Discussion. He said of his participation, "I've never been one who likes to sit and discuss books I read, I find it takes the fun out of it." Steve often did not participate in any large group discussion. Steve did not see himself as a talker. He was shy, and he told me he much preferred a lecture format to a discussion format. He said of discussions, "I just know personally I never participate."

Steve's take on his learning during the *Bridge* Discussion was fairly negative. He did not find the discussion to be very engaging and did not talk much, and in turn he could not talk very specifically about ways he interpreted the novel during the discussion. He told me that the conversation made him see the novel a little different, but when pressed he could not explain why. As he said, "There were a couple of times I thought 'Oh, yeah' but I don't know what they were." In our interviews, Steve did not talk about changes in his understanding of childhood as a result of the *Bridge* Discussion, in part because I never specifically asked him to.

The conversation, however, was one part of the *Bridge* Sequence, and the Sequence overall did support his accomplishment toward the three goals.

When reflecting on the entire Sequence, Steve told me one of the main ideas was:

> I guess, issues that children have to deal with that aren't necessarily academic, children do have lives outside of the classroom, things that happen outside the classroom can affect who they are in the classroom.

He also realized that working with the novel helped him to understand it better. He said of the Sequence, "If you just read it and put it aside, just go through the motions, you wouldn't get as much as if you personally connect with the story."

For Steve, it was not the talking alone that mattered, it was the Sequence as a whole. Interestingly enough, Steve's individual interpretation of the novel, his presentation, contains many echoes of ideas first raised during the discussion. Steve told a story about his own Terabithia, about events in his life that had the same features as Terabithia, including safety, imagination, and ownership. Steve used the presentation to create a personal example of ideas he had heard get developed during the discussion.

Checking on Steve's responses to the *Bridge* Discussion reminds us that the discussion was just one event in a sequence of three, and that no one activity in that Sequence was meant to accomplish all of Sue's goals by itself, nor should one activity in the Sequence serve as the only point of reference for the teacher candidates' interpretation of the novel. In the next section, I analyze the teacher candidates' participation in the Mural Painting Activity,

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again using the lenses of form and content of talk, along with the concepts of engagement, deep literary experience, and complication of childhood to explore the teacher candidates' discourse. In the final section of this chapter, I turn to the *Bridge* Presentations and show the ways the discussion and painting served as foundations for their interpretations, interpretation which played an important role in the teacher candidates' learning in the course.

Painting the Mural

Context

When Sue gave directions for the painting task, she drew a distinction between illustration, which is "directly tied to the text" and interpretation, which "is tied to images or things you associate with the book" and told the teacher candidates they could choose to do one or the other. Then she asked students to think about the mood of the book, and to suggest colors and other artistic techniques that might reflect that mood. She gave directions for mixing paint and described the materials they would have available–tempera paints, cups for mixing colors, several large brushes, and a 20 foot by 4 foot sheet of green butcher paper. Sue was adamant about only two things: everyone had to paint, and everyone had to help decide what to paint.

The Mural Painting activity lasted just over 37 minutes. The first few minutes were spent deciding what to paint, and the next 35 minutes or so were spent bringing that decision to life. As I show in the following section, the teacher candidates interpreted the novel as they decided on the design for their mural. Deciding on the design required the teacher candidates to share

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their understanding of the book in order to figure out a way to represent the major themes and important events of the novel. In this way, deciding what to paint led the teacher candidates to take part in a deep literary experience. After the decision had been made, the task of mural painting demanded the bulk of the teacher candidates' attention.

In the following sections, I describe the mural that Group A painted and the discussion that led to that particular design. I then analyze both the form and the content of the teacher candidates' talk during the mural painting, using the lenses of deep literary experience and complication of childhood to consider the teacher candidates' interpretations of the novel. Finally, I will use other data, including whole class conversations and interview excerpts, to talk about the ways the painting task supported the teacher candidates' interpretations of the novel in ways not immediately visible in the discourse.

Description of the Mural

The mural was meant to represent Jesse and Leslie's two lives, and the joining of those lives in Terabithia. In the center of Group A's mural were several tall, highly detailed trees surrounded by what the teacher candidates called a stream. The dog, Prince Terrien, sat underneath one of the trees, and a sun and several clouds were painted above the trees. On the left side of the trees were objects from Jesse's world–his house and pick-up truck, the barn and the cow he frequently milked, his art supplies. On the right side were objects from Leslie's world, her house, with one window looking on to a

golden room, her family's Italian sports car, and one of the many books she read and described to Jesse, *Moby Dick*. In the upper right hand corner the students drew a distinct border and added the Washington Monument. Gina explained the mural's motif to the rest of the class: "We kind of did it this way because we kind of put Terabithia in the middle and it's kind of like what brought them together from two lifestyles."

Making the Decision.

The two minutes it took Group A to decided on a theme and format for their murals sounded much like the "cacophony of voices" described in chapter 2. During this two minutes, 11 of the 12 teacher candidates spoke, often overlapping or interrupting one another. They talked almost simultaneously about whether or not to paint 12 small pictures or one over arching picture, about what to put on the mural, and a theme that would pull it all together. The first 30 seconds or so were literally untranscribable because of the overlapping nature of the discourse and the location of the recording equipment. (I had placed the microphones on the table that held the paper where the mural painting actually took place. The teacher candidates gathered around a side table where the paints and cups and water were being held, but where there was no microphone, as they decided on an overall theme.) During the din of this time, various teacher candidates said things like "It will be a lot easier to do it all together," (Keith) and "I picture a big vine, you know, like frayed edges, and rocks, " (Mandy) and "OK, what are we doing? " (speaker unknown). From this cacophony, the exchange

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represented in Figure 5 emerged. In Figure 5, overlapping talk is represented by the symbols [and]], [indicating the beginning of talk that overlaps,]] representing the end of such talk. Overlapping talk is also underlined, in order to make it more visible, although that convention has not been used throughout the representation of data in the dissertation.

A few teacher candidates tossed out suggestions. Mandy suggested a vine with frayed edges. Kelly suggested, on lines 2-4 a place with a house and a rope and trees. Neil echoed her suggestion, agreeing with it and naming the place as the "grove of trees" (beginning on line 5). Renee built from these to Terabithia suggestions First, she asked if the mural was "supposed" to be about Terabithia, and then she raised the notion of a continuum, of Jesse and Leslie being from two different worlds, worlds connected by Terabithia. Gina and Elise, on lines 32-43, supported this design by suggesting that Terabithia be painted in the mural, with "bridges to each." Several teacher candidates claimed that the design was cool, and the group moved seamlessly from the conversation about what to paint to conversations about the specific logistical decisions needed to create the mural, such as who would paint. This switch in conversational theme began on line 39 when Elise asked "Who can draw?" Renee's suggestion, designing the mural around two different worlds connected by a Terabithia in the middle, with, as Elise put it, "bridges to each," harkens back to the *Bridge* Discussion. At the end of that discussion, the teacher candidates had talked both about what is being connected and what

Aaron: Someone should [do a big chalk outline

Kelly: With the house, the thing they built,]] and the rope, and the then the trees or [where they, their secret place

Neil: Yeah, that's what I was thinking,]] was the grove of trees, where you know the sun's always shining and she's up there doing her little, invoking the spirits or whatever she was doing, and he's just standing there, I don't know what's going on, but I'm just here anyway

Renee: Are we supposed to do a mural of Terabithia or a mural of the whole book, the themes–

Unknown: The [whole [book

Unknown: The whole book]]

Mandy: The]] whole book], well then we could, you know, like the farm house, or whatever, cow,

Renee: Yeah, we could do the real thing here

Unknown: Well, let's [pick a theme.

Renee: Cause I was]] thinking, Like, I don't know, maybe we could do it on some sort of a continuum, well,

Figure 5: Excerpt of Transcript: Decising on the Mural's Design

the way I thought of it, there's a lot of different continuums you could do, but just like, how Jesse's family is so, you know, ultra traditional and every role has to be the certain way, and then, um, Leslie's family was so, you know, the hippies, their modern-ness and everything, and there was a continuum of how in some ways Jesse was closer to Leslie's world and Leslie was closer to Jess' and like Terabithia was sort of in the middle, where they could be their own, like Jesse could draw and not have it be his gender thing.

Gina: Well, we could do Terabithia in the middle, and then do like, their two worlds that came together–

Elise: Yeah, and bridges to each

Unknown: Co[ol.

Unknown: Cool]]

Elise: There you go.

Renee: We could put like the real thing here,

Elise: Who can draw?

Figure 5: Excerpt of Transcript: Decising on the Mural's Design

served as the bridge. In the discussion, the teacher candidates, particularly Kelly, Neil, Gina and Elise had talked about Jesse's two different worlds, and had seen Leslie as well as Terabithia as the metaphorical bridge. Renee revised that understanding just slightly for the mural design. In this case, the two worlds were the children's homes and lifestyles, and the bridges were both literal bridges and the magical kingdom of Terabithia. During the novel, Jesse moved from being firmly planted in his own world to not being afraid to reveal the qualities that made him more like Leslie, and this change was represented in their mural design.

The teacher candidates' decision for their mural interpreted the novel by naming its most important features. Terabithia became the central image, and the children's lives, their families and responsibilities, their passions and interests became the major elements of the novel that were represented with various symbols. During the painting of their mural, Elise asked if they had done an interpretation or an illustration, since Sue had given them the choice of doing either one. Gina replied, more to herself than to the class, "It's our interpretation, but we're illustrating it. We're illustrating objects from the book." Gina's sense of the mural was accurate. By putting Terabithia in the center, with bridges to each of the two main characters' worlds, they mural interpreted, symbolically, the main themes portrayed in the novel. As they chose the particular items for each section of the mural, the teacher candidates chose things they could illustrate, specific items that

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were important to the plot of the story, such as the dog, the rope, Jesse's art things, their two homes.

Deciding the overall theme provided the teacher candidates with an opportunity to interpret the novel, in terms of sharing their readings with one another. As they went about the task of getting paint onto paper, the teacher candidates continued to interpret the novel as they decided just which items and images were most important for representing Jesse, Leslie, Terabithia, and the plot of the novel. But before I begin to closely examine the content of the talk and the teacher candidates' accomplishment toward Sue's goals, I will illustrate the form of the talk by discussing a brief excerpt of the transcript.

The Form Of The Talk

In the last section, I described the features of the discourse during the *Bridge* Discussion. The teacher candidates spoke one at a time and there were distinct pauses between their turns. The turns lasted a long time, and a small number participated in the conversation at any one time. The representative sample on pages 310-311, for example, lasted nearly three minutes. During that time, five teacher candidates spoke for an average of 71.4 words. The talk during the mural painting was very different, which is perhaps most easily seen on the visual representation of the discourse, which can be found on the following 3 pages. The transcript excerpt in Table 2 on the following three pages represents 63 seconds of discourse selected from Group A's discussion during the painting of the mural.

	Off screen at the paint table	Left of Mural	Center of mural	Right of mural	Off screen on right	
0	Elise: There's gray.					0
1		Keith: I guess I'll				1
2		just??				2
3	Aaron: That's a					3
4	good idea, look at it					4
5	Kelly: Yeah. Let's			Mandy: (to Keith)		5
6	draw it with this			OK, does this look		6
7	color		Gina: There's too	like the truck, old,		7
8	Steve: [inaud]		many people	not old, , rusty,		8
9			watching, and not	not rusty, I		9
10	Elise: OK, I'm		painting.	Lisa: (looks at	Candace: It's	10
11	coming.	Aaron: With	Renee: I'm just	Mandy's painting)	kind of rickety,	11
12		weeds growing all	trying to figure out	Mandy: Huh?	though	12
13		in front of it, like	what to do			13
14		it's just run down		Mandy: you know,	Candace: rickety	14
15		and stuff		know, this looks		15
16		Steve: Old, beat,		???		16
17		run-down				17
18			Elise: I don't know,			18
19		Aaron: that's	the water might			19
20		pretty good, that	turn out to be two			20
21		looks good	different colors			21
22			Gina: That's OK			22
23			Elise: Yeah, like it	Lisa: poor people		23
24			just did	They're probably		24

Table 2: Transcript of Talk During the Mural Paitning Activity

25		Aaron: make sure we've got room for a gold window though				25
26						26
27						27
28						28
29	Steve: like make big windows	Kelly: Okay,				29
30						30
31		Kelly: I'll make a bay window				31
32						32
33	Steve: There you go					33
34		Kth: there you go				34
35		Arn: bay window		L'ra: bay window		35
36						36
37			Arn: someone's got to draw the little dog on there, too,			37
38						38
29						29
40		Erin: Oh, yeah		Laura: oh yeah		40
41			Aaron: Little pt			41
42						42
43			Neil: and the cow, shouldn't we draw that, too?			43
44		Kelly: OK				44
45					Cndc: Nope, the cow isn't gonna fit now	45
46						46
47						47
48			Neil: could put his head here and his body would be	Laura: It could be, in a pen		48
49		Elise: I hope they don't mind paint on the table				49
50	Mandy: What makes brown,					50
51						51

Table 2: Transcript of Talk During the Mural Paitning Activity

52	Red and yellow?					52
53	That makes orange,					53
54	right, red and					54
55	orange?					55
56	Yellow and orange?				Candace: I used to	56
57	What makes				work at a child	57
58	brown?				care center, we	58
59	Aaron: What				had paint every	59
60	makes brown?	Kelly: Brown is			where	60
61		like every color				61
62	Mandy: I've got			Laura: Blue and		62
63	orange		Elise: Blue and	orange		63
64			green			64

Note: Some names are condensed so they will fit on the approporiate horizontal.

Table 2: Transcript of Talk During the Mural Paitning Activity

There are seven columns on this table. The first and seventh columns represent seconds elapsed from the beginning of the segment, providing a timeline. In the body of the table, each utterance has been placed at its appropriate location along the timeline. The other five columns represent the relative location of the speaker. So, for example, column two is labeled "off screen at the paint table." While Kelly was standing to the left of the mural itself, out of the visible range of the video camera, she spoke, and so her utterance is located in this column of the table. The 5th column is labeled Right of Mural. The utterances of the teacher candidates who werepainting together at this end of the table are located in this column. In other words, the location of each particular utterance in the body of the table reveals both the time at which that utterance was spoken and the relative location of its speaker. In this way, I have been able to capture the flavor of the conversation.

As you can see, the talk during this Mural Painting Activity was remarkably different from that during the *Bridge* Discussion. Each utterance was quite short. In fact, the average length of the utterances during this segment was 5.7 words. Eleven of the 12 teacher candidates present spoke during this 63 second segment. There were no distinct silences during this conversation, and brief pauses were rare. What this chart indicates most clearly, however, is the overlapping nature of the talk. The teacher candidates spoke simultaneously as often as they spoke one at a time.

The conversation itself, on paper, probably does not make sense. This is because the topic being talked about changed rapidly, and so did the participants in any sub-conversation. At times, the whole group seemed to pay attention to a comment, and some comments were clearly directed at the whole group. Other conversations were private, spoken and attended to by three or four students. Because they were all working together on the same mural, even these side conversations often became the province of the whole group.

As the segment began, for example Elise and Kelly were mixing paint at the paint table while Keith and Aaron talked about something indecipherable. Kelly decided to use the gray she had to paint Leslie's house, and Aaron began to watch her and make comments about its appearance. Steve joined Aaron in watching Kelly paint. Meanwhile, at the center of the table, as she worked on the Terabithia image, Gina called her peers who were not painting to get to work, saying, "There's too many people watching." Renee and Elise both replied to her. Meanwhile, Keith wandered over to where Mandy and Candace (off screen) were working on images of Jesse's life on the right side of the mural. Mandy asked Keith if the truck she was making looked OK, and Candace replied to her that it looked "rickety." Laura paid attention to this smaller conversation.

Elise then announced that her color of blue was not the same as the color already on the stream, and Gina said it would be OK. Aaron reminded Kelly, in a side conversation, to leave room for the window, and Kelly

decided to make it a bay window. Laura turned to attend to this conversation, repeating the phrase, bay window along with Aaron. Then Aaron announced, quite loudly, that they needed to add the dog, Prince Terrien (or PT) to the mural. Lisa and Elise agreed, Kelly said OK to herself as she kept painting, and Neil wondered if they should also paint the cow on the mural, as he himself was working on the leaves on the trees at the top of Terabithia. Candace said there was not room for the cow any more, and Lisa and Neil began to think about how a cow might be included.

Meanwhile, from over at the paint table, Mandy was trying to make brown, which she eventually used to paint the cow. She spoke with Aaron, still wandering around, about how to mix brown. Even though she was only talking to Aaron about mixing brown, Candace made a comment about painting at a child care center where she worked, and Elise, Laura and Kelly, from their varying positions around the mural, all chimed in with paint mixing advice.

This excerpt is quite typical form of the talk during both groups' painting of the mural. Throughout the entire 35 minutes of getting paint onto paper, conversations shifted from topic to topic, lasted only briefly, and overlapped. The members of any smaller conversation were as fluid as the topics themselves. At times, the teacher candidates did quietly work side by side for a second or two, but the quiet times were far outnumbered by the overlapping, noisy times.

You will notice that the excerpt began with a couple of inaudible comments. Even with two microphones and two separate recording units, I was unable to decipher every comment made by every student. When talk overlapped and when teacher candidates spoke quietly in a more private conversation, that talk was generally lost to the recording equipment. That said, I have tried faithfully to capture as much of the discourse during the painting of the murals as I could.

I have used this excerpt as a demonstration of the form of the talk, but it also is representative of the content of the discourse during the mural painting. Generally, the teacher candidates talked about *particular* things. They talked about what to paint, where to put it, what color to make it, and how to mix just the right shades. They nominated or sought clearance to paint particular images before they put them on the paper, and this ongoing negotiation of color and image and placement was marked by a large number of questions. The content of the teacher candidates' talk revealed their engagement with the task, and their negotiation of the best way to represent their reading of the novel.

The Content of the Talk

The task of painting the mural took much of the teacher candidates' attention, bringing them to talk about color and location more than any other topics. This is not surprising. Once the overall design of the mural had been decided, the teacher candidates needed to work together to create the mural, and their talk reflected that. The Mural Painting Activity asked the teacher

candidates to interpret one work of art, the novel, by creating another work of art, the mural. Interpretation of this sort is often difficult. As Louise Rosenblatt writes,

> Some few, in order to achieve as direct a transfer of experience as possible, attempt to use artistic means, words or some other medium, to parallel the feelings, the tensions, the moods, of the work. . . .
>
> Evidently we are being asked to engage in another aesthetic transaction deemed analogous to the one the interpreter has lived through. This usually simply compounds the original problem and draws the attention away from the original transaction or work of art, which then serves mainly as a stimulus for a new creative enterprise. Moreover, probably no work of art can suffice as an interpretation of another work. To do full justice to the literary transaction, we want not only to depict the work as we envision it but also to characterize it in terms of the second stream of responses that contributed so much to its texture and import. Hence in most instances the reader or critic resorts to words as the medium of interpretation (135-136).

Rosenblatt questions whether or not an artistic interpretation can represent, somehow, a reader's lived through experience with a literary text. She hypothesizes that the work of creating such an artistic representation

distracts readers from considering, explaining, and doing justice to their readings. Part of interpreting work is thinking and talking about what Rosenblatt calls the "second stream of responses," paying attention to not only the words and what they evoke, but elements of the experience, the memories, experiences, and knowledge the text evokes, the way the reading changes over time in light of new interpretations. When we try to fix an interpretation of a work into images or sounds in an artistic way, it becomes very difficult to convey or even to consider the multiple sources of meaning that led to our reading of the novel.

During the Mural Painting Activity, the teacher candidates talked mainly about color and location, and less about childhood, teaching, learning, and their interpretations of the novel. Their talk reflected the realities of the task at hand. When she gave the teacher candidates directions for the Mural Painting Activity, Sue encouraged them to think carefully about brush strokes and colors that could capture mood and emotion. Once an overall motif had been selected, these are the topics their talk turned to. The challenges of interpreting a work of art with another work of art were compounded by two other factors. First, they had to work together in a group of 12 to create a cohesive whole. Group work is challenging under any circumstances. Second, painting was a very unfamiliar task. Many of the teacher candidates told Sue that they had not painted since elementary school, and during the painting several expressed concern over their artistic ability.

The challenges of creating a work of art, as a group, with an unfamiliar medium, shaped the teacher candidates' discourse. In the next several sections I will show that these challenges led the teacher candidates to engage in an on-going negotiation about such things as color and placement. The negotiated nature of the talk can be seen in both the high number of questions and the frequency of what I have come to call clearance-seeking moves. I will also show that the teacher candidates' focus on the painting of the mural is evidence that they found the mural painting to be a very engaging activity.

When I say that the artistic nature of the Mural Painting Activity led the teacher candidates to engage in negotiation about color and placement, I do not mean to imply that they stopped interpreting the novel. What I mean to say is that their interpretations became framed and shaped by the activity at hand. The mural painting brought the teacher candidates to consider which images represented each character's life, and which images represented the overall themes and events in the novel. As they did so, some, like Aaron, continued to work on ideas they had raised during the discussion.

On-going negotiation: Color and placement. One of the things the teacher candidates frequently talked about was how to represent the images in their heads. Mixing colors, selecting the proper shades of blue for stream and red for the vehicles was an important feature of the talk. The teacher candidates also talked about just where, on the mural, to put the objects they suggested. In the excerpt above, the teacher candidates talk about color many

times, the yellow for the window, the blue of the stream, how to make brown. They also talk about placement, such as when Aaron suggested that they "make sure we've got room for a gold window though."

On-going Negotiation: Questions. The work of representing their reading of the novel with painted images was not easy, and this can be seen in the ways the teacher candidates used talk to negotiate location and color and to divide up the painting tasks so that everyone helped to paint and everyone was satisfied with the results. One marker of negotiation was the large number of questions.

During the *Bridge* Discussion, the teacher candidates almost never asked any questions. During mural painting, however, members of Group A asked at least 56 questions during 34 minutes of work, almost two per minute.[i] I defined a question both by inflection (a question tends to rise in tone toward the end) and by function, in that a question served as a request for assistance or a response of some sort. Not all questions were answered, but the content of the utterance seemed to ask for some sort of response from the other teacher candidates.

The questions that the teacher candidates asked served in the joint construction of the mural.

contains a representative sample of the questions that Group A asked each other while they painted the mural.

As they worked on the mural, the teacher candidates asked each other questions that related directly to the creation of the mural. Some of the

Kelly: Did you make the gold yet?
Mandy: Does this look like the color yellow?
Aaron: So, what side is this?
Mandy: Is this his house, right here?
Elise: Hey, Gina, how can I make a book look like a book?
Renee: Do we want to put people, or no?
Neil: And the cow, shouldn't we draw that too?
Gina: So, now what?

Figure 6: Examples of Questions

questions were about shades of colors and whether or not the right colors had been mixed, such as "Does this look like the color yellow?" and "Did you make the gold yet?" Other questions had to do with painting different images on the right spot on the paper, including "So, what side is this?" and "Is this the house, right here?" Other questions showed the teacher candidates were turning to each other in the construction of the mural. These questions included, "Hey, Gina, how can I make a book look like a book?" "And the cow, shouldn't we draw that too?" and "So, now what?"

The mural had three distinct zones, Jesse's life, Leslie's life, and Terabithia. Each teacher candidate generally painted just one of those zones. However, while they divided the mural into areas and painted them independently, they worked as a group of twelve to create the mural as a whole. The frequency of the teacher candidates' questions and the nature of

those questions showed that they were working together, as a group of 12, to create one overall image. This can also be seen in the teacher candidates' tendency to seek clearance before adding images to the mural.

On-going negotiation: Seeking clearance. Another prominent feature of the teacher candidates' talk was the high frequency of utterances which served the purpose of what I have come to call "seeking clearance." Before painting virtually any image or item on the mural the students sought permission or gave their peers a chance to reject their suggestion. With two notable exceptions, images were not added to the mural unless they had been tacitly or explicitly approved by the rest of the group.

Clearance seeking was generally done in one of three ways. Not surprisingly, given the large number of questions, the teacher candidates often asked each other directly about how, what, and where to paint. For example, Gina asked "How do we want the house to look?" and Neil asked, "And the cow, shouldn't we draw that, too?"

But clearance seeking was not always done with questions. Sometimes teacher candidates announced what they were going to paint and then paused, as if to give their peers time to disagree. For example, Neil announced "I've got tree tops" before adding leaves to the tops of trunks that Gina had painted. Aaron announced "I'm doing the sun, because that's easy," paused, announced again, "A big ass sun, right in the corner," and finally, after hearing no rejection, added a yellow sun to the top of the mural.

The third way that items generally were painted on the paper took place when one student made a direct request for an item to be painted. For example, Aaron suggested, "Someone's got to draw the dog on here, you know, P.T.," Laura responded, and, several minutes later, painted the dog. On first glance this third category, requesting others paint an image you've thought of, might not seem like seeking clearance. However, I include it in this grouping because it was part of the overall tendency to discuss items (or at least announce them) before they were included in the mural.

Table 3 lists the items that were mentioned in one of these three ways before being included on the mural, and the items which are on the mural but do not seem to have been mentioned before being painted.
The table points out the ways that the teacher candidates painted very little that they did not clear with one an other. Even the grass and weeds, even the rocks in the stream, were mentioned before they were included on the mural. Clearance seeking was part of the on-going negotiation of the mural. The teacher candidates continued to suggest or ask permission to add images to the mural right up until the last minute. In fact, Kelly suggested they draw some grass as many of her peers were cleaning up and washing brushes. My use of the term negotiation implies debate of some sort, as if some ideas might have been rejected. Because all the items suggested were eventually added to the mural, it might seem as though on-going negotiation is not the right word to use to describe the work the discourse did during the Mural Painting Activity. What I have meant to convey by calling clearance seeking

part of the on-going negotiation of the mural is the way the teacher candidates used talk to work together to create one mural that cohesively represented their reading of the novel.

Table 3: Mention of Items Painted on the Mural

Items mentioned before being painted	Items not mentioned but painted
sun	a small pond with ducks
farm house	drops of red on the rocks
cow	
udder	
fence	
truck	
moat	
bridges	
Terabithia	
castle stronghold	
Jesse's house	
trees	
rope	
bridges	
books	
Leslie's house	
yellow room	
dog	
water	
car	
rocks	
clouds	
birds	
roof	
Washington DC/Monument	
border	
grass and weeds	

As the teacher candidates worked on the mural, they remembered more and more details from the book that would represent Jesse, Leslie, Terabithia, or the plot. In this way, the Mural Painting Activity kept them continuously interpreting the novel. After they had painted the main images for the children, the house and the vehicles they drove around in, they added more images, including art supplies for Jesse and books for Leslie, that added to the representation. When the mural was nearly done, Keith suggested they add something that represented Jesse's trip to Washington DC, and the Washington Monument was added to the corner. Each addition to the mural rounded out their artistic interpretation of the novel.

In this way, the teacher candidates were engaging in a literary experience. They were thinking about their memories of the novel, the parts that stood out to them, and suggesting those as important to include. They did not reject ideas or justify their importance with passages from text itself, but they were thinking about the novel and using their memories to decide what to add to the mural, and, by working together this way, came up with a well-rounded and visually striking set of images that conveyed much of the novel's story line and themes.

Two items that were added to the mural did not get discussed before they were painted. The first, a pond and ducks, was painted on the Jesse's side of the mural and was out of the range of the camera. It is likely that Mandy, Candace, and Renee, who painted Jesse's world and who often talked very quietly, discussed the pond before painting it like they did the other images

on that section of the mural. The second, the red drops on the rocks in the stream, stands out as an exception to the norm of clearance seeking. The painting of these red drops also makes an interesting story.

When Aaron announced, "I'm going to paint some rocks," no one responded, so he went to the paint table, returned with a cup of paint, and added several boulders to the stream. After a couple of minutes of painting rocks, Aaron, without saying anything, walked over to the paint table, picked up a cup of red paint, returned to the mural, and put a few drops of red on one of the rocks without asking for permission or announcing his intentions. By adding red dots to the mural without clearing it with his peers, Aaron broke with the unstated norms of the group, and even went against the pattern he himself had established by announcing his intentions before he painted the "big ass sun" and the boulders. When someone eventually noticed the drops, and Aaron explained they were drops of blood representing where Leslie fell and cracked her skull, Aaron got a strong reaction from his peers. They called the blood "morbid"," they cringed and laughed and cried "ewwwww" and "That's awful!"

Aaron's decision to add the drops of blood without clearing them with his peers heightened the reaction that he got from his peers. Their shock, their laughter, could not have arisen if Aaron had somehow asked permission first. This supports my claim that clearance seeking was a norm that supported the joint construction of the novel.

Aaron did not just add the blood to add an element of humor or shock. He also was challenging the group's construction of a bitter-sweet mural. As Aaron explained to the group:

Aaron: I wanted to make it racy, it's just too,

Gina: nice

Aaron: too nice, too happy, we needed something else going on.

During the *Bridge* Discussion Aaron admitted he could not identify with the novel, that it did not make him sad, or evoke strong emotions, and he worked to describe why he had had that response as he talked about the novel with his peers. His first explanation was that Jesse's life, in particular Jesse's experiences with death, were so unlike his own experiences that he could not identify with the novel. Aaron's inclusion of the blood on the mural showed he was continuing to think about Jesse's childhood as he painted the novel. The group's mural, as a joint construction, did not really represent the sorrow and pain found in the novel. The only representation of the day of Leslie's death was the Washington Monument (Jesse was visiting DC when Leslie drowned). When Aaron wished to challenge the group's constructed mural, he did so by painting an image he did not first seek clearance for. The blood shocked and amused the other teacher candidates; it also made the mural more true to his understanding of the novel. Death was the most important aspect of the novel to Aaron, the part that he had felt the least identification with.

Although Aaron's drops of blood were unsanctioned, they remained on the mural as part of the group's representation of the book. It would have been easy to paint over these small red drops, but no one did or even raised the possibility. They let the drops stand. The blood did not become part of the formal story of the novel when Gina explained their mural to the other half of the class, but Kelly and Lisa both pointed those drops out during the class break to a couple of their classmates from Group B.

During the Mural Painting Activity, the teacher candidates talked about what they would paint, what it would look like, what color it would be, and where it would be painted. The discourse served to keep the teacher candidates engaged in working together and in constructing a mural that represented the novel. Question asking and clearance seeking were two of the ways the teacher candidates worked together as a cohesive unit to try to interpret the novel with paint. In the end, they were very proud of the mural they did create. As Gina said to the rest of the group, "All I can say is why are we all going into education? We should all be art majors." The teacher candidates were very engaged with the task of getting paint onto paper. The talk reveals less, however, about their accomplishment toward Sue's other two goals, deep literary experience and complicating childhood.

Engagement and Interpretation. The teacher candidates enjoyed the task of painting the mural. This can be seen in their comments during and after the painting. Keith was one of the two agriscience majors, and planned to work with the FFA. Keith rarely spoke unless he was directly called on.

During the *Bridge* Discussion, for example, Keith spoke twice, and then only when Sue called upon him by name. During the painting of the mural, however, Keith spoke 26 times, and some of those times he sounded genuinely excited. For example, when Keith was deciding what he would add next he said genuinely, "Oooh, ooh, the Washington Monument." Keith rarely seemed this engaged.

Keith was not the only teacher candidate who enjoyed the Mural Painting Activity. After they had returned to the whole group, Sue asked which task the class had liked better, the painting or the discussion. All of the students who answered her chose the painting because, as Renee said, "It was pretty easy going, to, know, like, that we weren't going to be graded on how we did." Neil, the other agriscience major, said that this task was more enjoyable because it was different from what they normally did, saying, "It seems like we always put our ideas into what I would consider an academic side of things."

The teacher candidates brought their inner attention to the task of getting paint onto paper in a satisfying way. Another piece of evidence that the Mural Painting Activity was both enjoyable and engaging was that there was very little off-task talk. In the excerpt I selected and transcribed beginning in Figure 5 on pages 238-240 there is only one utterance out of 43 that was not directly related to the task of getting the right image onto the right spot on the paper, when Candace briefly mentioned that there was paint all over everywhere at the day care center where she had worked. And even that

comment was loosely related to the activity taking place. In this regard, the excerpted transcript was much like the rest of the discourse. The teacher candidates rarely talked about anything but the mural, and even when they did, it was somehow related to what they were doing. They talked about toe-nail painting and Bob Ross the public TV painter for example. These very brief conversations stemmed naturally from the work they were doing.

The absence of what would be off-task talk is striking because generally any less structured work, especially work with no instructor present, like this activity (I was present running the video camera but did not interact with the teacher candidates unless they spoke to me directly) lead to at least some talk not directly related to the task at hand. The teacher candidates in this section of EDU 200 often took part in talk about their lives, their parties, and their field experiences whenever they were given small group tasks away from the instructor. In contrast, the teacher candidates found the mural painting task to be very engaging, and their discourse reflects that.

Not only did the teacher candidates focus their inner attention on getting paint onto paper, they took the task of creating their own interpretation with paint very seriously. Early in the Mural Painting Activity, Kelly suggested that they use the cover of the novel as a guide for figuring out what Terabithia should look like. Her idea was quickly rejected. As Renee said, "That's an interpretation, though." And Mandy, flipping the novel over so the illustration could not be seen, said, "Yeah, we could make believe we never saw that."

Gina, who eventually did paint Terabithia, said to Kelly, "Now I'm just gonna want to paint boards," causing Kelly to apologize. Their rejection of Kelly's suggestion to use illustrations from the novel as a guide to creating the mural shows the teacher candidates were invested in creating their own interpretation of the novel. Many of them had their books with them, and their copies of the novel did have illustrations of Jesse and Leslie's homes and of Terabithia, but those books did not get opened, and the teacher candidates drew on the images that the text evoked in their own minds, and their painting skills, to create their mural. Painting allowed them to try and represent their readings by making decisions about form and color and location and, as I showed earlier, about just which items to add, and so the painting task did support their literary experience. As Gina told me during one of our interviews,

> I think that it got us to all talk about what we felt was important in the book, what we wanted to represent was what we got out of the book, how we decided to lay it out was how the book had meaning to us, the way we painted it was the connections we saw. So, it was a visual representation of what we had read and what we had comprehended of it.

Steve also thought that the Mural Painting Activity gave him an opportunity to explore the novel. He said that the painting "got across" the same ideas as the discussion, including "the different themes of the book, friendship was one, and how to deal with a loss."

The Mural Painting Activity supported the teacher candidates' exploration of the novel, but it did so in ways less complex and diverse than the *Bridge* Discussion. This is evident in the things the teacher candidates did not talk about. For example, interpretation is defined as the naming of an understanding of a text, the attempt to justify or explain that understanding based on features of the text or elements of the self that the text evoked, and revision of understandings based on elements of the text that others point out. The conversation that brought the mural to life did not engender in-depth examination of the second and third of those things I just listed–the elements of the text or elements of the teacher candidates' lives that evoked their initial and on-going transactions with the novel. People did not talk about or try to explain their emotional reactions to the novel, as Aaron did during the *Bridge* Discussion. They did not compare their readings or discuss elements of the authors' craft they attended to, nor did they talk about children's likely reactions to the novel. All of these were topics that were discussed during the *Bridge* Discussion. I am certainly not trying to say that the teacher candidates' *should* have talked about these things. The painting activity was one of three experiences meant to let the teacher candidates develop, think, and talk about their understanding of the book. I mention this only to point out the ways interpretations of the novel were different from one part of the Sequence to the next.

Another piece of evidence that the interpretations the Mural Painting Activity engendered were limited surfaced when I was talking with Kelly

during one of our interviews. Kelly, whose suggestion to use the cover of the novel as a guide was rejected, said that the mural did not reflect her interpretation of the novel. The images she had imagined were not those that ended up on the paper, and, as she put it, "you just had to go with the majority and give in if it wasn't what you wanted." Kelly's talk during the Mural Painting Activity itself did not reflect her dissatisfaction with the group's interpretation. She suggested a couple of items that got included on the mural and she painted several images representing Leslie's life such as the house and Leslie's golden room. Still, she somehow felt the mural did not represent her interpretation of the novel.

Perhaps, working within the norms to accept suggestions without debate or critique, Kelly could not find spaces to assert her own interpretation. Perhaps she was reacting to the rejection of her suggestion to follow the book's illustrations. Either way, Kelly's dissatisfaction highlights the ways that clearance seeking, question asking, and logistical conversations left little room for joint interpretation and deep conversation about the novel. The teacher candidates' were thinking carefully about their experiences with the novel, as indicated by the on-going additions to the mural, but they did not use talk to explain or justify their selections based on interpretation or on the process of reading.

You can see this in the following exchange. Kelly posed one of only a few highly interpretive questions when she asked "What do you think of when you see, like, Jesse's place?" In the context of a different time or

activity, a question like this one could provide a space for readers to talk and even turn directly to the novel, to look for passages where Jesse's home and farm are described, or such a question could encourage readers to explain the memories and experiences the text evokes as they visualize scenes from the novel. Within the context of the Mural Painting Activity, and coming off of the heels of a detailed and extensive discussion of the novel, the teacher candidates did not need or choose to engage in such a discussion. Instead, they brainstormed a few things that eventually got painted onto the mural (except for Jesse's family), and switched over to talking about color.

Kelly: What do you think of when you see, like, Jesse's place? And then, what do you think of [when you see

Mandy: A farm house,]] a cow

Renee: Fences

Mandy: A truck. His family.

Renee: A truck

Mandy: I think we should make the house, off white, like a dusty yellow. Dusty Yellow

Kelly: This is a good color for a farm house.

One of Sue's targeted interpretations of the novel was thinking of the novel in terms of ways it challenged the teacher candidates' notions of childhood. During the Sequence, Aaron continued to explore the death in the novel. Other teacher candidates did not as directly use talk to explore death or isolation or bullying or any of the other issues they had listed during

the discussion. Even though such issues were not mentioned in talk or represented in visual images, it is quite likely that the teacher candidates were thinking about childhood as they painted. As Steve said in an interview, the painting activity "got across. . . the themes of the book, friendship was one, and how to deal with a loss."

Dealing with a loss and friendship were not things the teacher candidates talked about, but they were represented in the images on the mural. During the *Bridge* Discussion, the teacher candidates had emphasized the bridge, both literal and symbolic, that Jesse found in Terabithia. Terabithia and his friendship had helped him to bring to be more like the Terabithia version of Jesse in his real life. Dealing with Leslie's death, moving on from it, those were the times Jesse finally let himself be more like the self he was in Terabithia. This idea was reflected, at least in part, on the mural. The teacher candidates put Terabithia in the middle, and drew bridges to each, representing the way that Terabithia helped each child to cross over the continuum their two different lifestyles represented.

In this way, the content of the mural, rather than the talk about the mural, represents the teacher candidates' explorations of childhood. The images they created, the peaceful, joyful Terabithia, the bridges connecting them were one way they did this. They also included many images of the children's lives. For example, Jesse was represented by his family's farm and the cow he had to milk every day. His house was run down and "dusty," representing his poverty. The mural represented the things the teacher

candidates had noticed about the children's lives. These also included several of the positive aspects of the children's lives, including Leslie's reading habit and her love of stories (the book), Jesse's talents as an artist (the easel and paints), and the characters' friendships.

The Mural Painting Activity built from the *Bridge* Discussion, and both served as the foundation for the *Bridge* presentations. I the next section, I will describe the directions for and the form and typical content of the teacher candidates' *Bridge* presentations.

Presenting About the Novel

Context

For the Presentations, Sue asked the teacher candidates to talk about their understanding of or interaction with the novel. The Presentations can be seen as "final draft talk," in the sense that the teacher candidates planned ahead to share their interpretation of the novel with their peers. Some read essays and others ad libbed, but all of them had planned ahead for this public sharing of their interpretation of the novel.

While each person's presentation was unique, they generally fell into one of three categories. As you will see in the following sections, most teacher candidates spoke about places and times in their lives that reminded them of Terabithia. Others told stories about their own experiences with death, and a significant minority talked about how they understood the novel's role in this particular class about teaching. The remaining handful of presentations centered on a variety of topics. Most teacher candidates told

narratives to represent their transaction with the novel, although a few shared in other ways by reading poems or playing music. The remainder of this chapter will describe the *Bridge* Presentations and what they reveal about the teacher candidates' interpretations of the novel.

Expanding back to the whole class. I have discussed the Discussion and Mural Painting Activities by focusing on the experiences of the 12 members of group A, rather than just the six featured students. In order to continue to show the ways the featured students are fairly representative of the rest of the class, and to provide a foundation for chapter 5, the six featured students are portrayed in great detail here in this last part of chapter 4, balanced with comments and tables that illustrate the ways that these six students are similar to and representative those of the rest of the class.

As I analyze and describe the *Bridge* Presentations, I will only refer to brief portions and quote excerpts of the teacher candidates' talks. Readers who are interested can find the entire transcript of each of the featured students' Presentations in Appendix C.

Directions for the Presentations: Sue began the directions for the presentations by referring to their individual experiences reading the novel, and the "collective" experiences of discussing and painting. Based on these experiences, Sue asked the teacher candidates to "make sense of your individual reading and what you took from today's conversation and painting, and come back next week having represented your understanding of or interaction with the book." The presentations could take any form,

including music or art or poetry, as long as the teacher candidates "come and share with us what is your take on this book." Sue provided a model, an essay about a time she had found a bridge to her own curiosity. She also suggested some themes, saying,

> I think the bridge is a pretty powerful theme that we've talked about today, or the idea of Terabithia in thinking about what is your own, who is your bridge or what is a Terabithia for you, that's another way to approach it.

On the day of the presentations, Sue asked the teacher candidates to speak from the front of the classroom. The two murals from the painting activity hung on the wall behind the presenters as a background. The rest of the students sat in a semicircle to watch and wait their turn.

Form of the *Bridge* Presentations

As might be expected of an assignment called a "presentation," the teacher candidates spoke one at a time. They did not interrupt each other during the presentations or discuss them at the end. Each presentation ended with a brief round of applause as another teacher candidate volunteered to speak by standing and moving to the front of the classroom. Twenty-three presentations were given that day. (Geraldine was absent for both days of the *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence.)

Table 4 summarizes the formats the teacher candidates used for their presentations. While these formats will become more clear in the next section, I will mention them briefly here to characterize the nature of the

presentations. Sixteen of the 23 teacher candidates who gave presentations used a narrative format. Narratives, according to Bruner (1993), are temporal, in that events are related to one another according to a timeline, and narratives have dramatic quality, that is, they are told for a purpose. Narratives are metaphorical, they serve to represent experience. The teacher candidates' narratives were generally memories, places they used to go, things they used to do, events in their lives that the novel reminded them of, times they had read the book before. The narratives they told both represented experiences that connected to the novel and the teacher candidates' interpretation of the novel. Steve, for example, told about times he used to practice hockey in his driveway. Kelly talked about the dirt pile at her family's cottage. The narratives were both personal and general. They represented events in individual lives as well as ways to understand the novel. Most of the teacher candidates who gave narrative presentations did not explicitly speak about the ways their story, as an interpretation of the novel, helped them to understand the content of EDU 200. Some teacher candidates did explain briefly that their story reminded them of the novel, but many did not even go that far. Steve, for example, did not mention the novel at all during the telling of his hockey narrative. Three of the teacher candidates, however, ended their narratives by making the connections between their narratives, the novel, and the rest of EDU 200 explicit. For example, Renee talked about her changing understanding of subject matter as

Table 4: *Bridge* Presentation Formats

Name	Narrative (and explanation)	Essay Like	Aesthetic Interp.
Aaron			X
Elise		X	
Gina	X		
Kelly	X		X
Renee	X(+expl.)		
Steve	X		
Amber	X		
Bill			X
Bonnie	X		
Candace	X		
Janet	X		
Jackie	X		
James			X
Keri	X(+expl)		
Keith	X		
Lisa	X		
Mandy			X
Mary	X		
Neil	X(+expl)		
Shelly	X		
Sheila	X		
Tracy			X
Tamara		X	
Total: 23	16	2	5

she reflected on her narrative and why it mattered in EDU 200. These three teacher candidates are marked by the symbol (+expl.) in the table.

Two of the teacher candidates gave more essay-like presentations. Elise and Tamara's presentations were not related to a particular time or meant to represent their personal experiences. Elise and Tamara talked about the lessons the novel had taught them about teaching and learning, and used evidence from the novel to support their claims.

The final category on the table is "aesthetic." Six teacher candidates interpreted the novel with another work of art. Aaron and Bill shared poems that they had written in response to the novel, Aaron's about friendship and his identification with the novel, Bill about freedom and fear. Mandy and Kelly shared poems they had found that they thought were similar to the novel, because they were about similar themes, including friendship and death. Kelly also shared a print of a painting that reminded her of the novel. The painting was of a trellis hanging with vines in a country garden. James and Tracy made music the focus of their aesthetic presentations. James played a tape of a song about childhood, and Tracy clipped together portions of modern rock songs to create a soundtrack for the novel.

Content of the *Bridge* Presentations

The content of the *Bridge* Presentations can be divided into three recurring topics and a handful of infrequent topics. Table 5 lists the topics that the teacher candidates spoke about. Twelve of the 23 teacher candidates told narratives about their own Terabithias, generally a place or an activity

that had the same qualities (e.g. freedom, safety, imagination, ownership) as had been raised during the *Bridge* Discussion. The place or activity the teacher candidates named as their Terabithia are listed in column one. Seven teacher candidates told narratives or talked about experiences with death or loss These are listed in the second column. Eight teacher candidates either remembered something about school as they read the novel or drew lessons from the novel about teaching and learning. A fourth category, "Other," summarizes the remaining several themes such as friendship, freedom, childhood, and "how I'm like Jesse." The last column on the table names the items or artifacts that the teacher candidates shared during their Presentations. All but five of the teacher candidates prepared a piece of writing or brought in photos or other artifacts to represent their understanding of the novel.

My Terabithia. Twelve of the 23 presenters spoke about "My Terabithia." These included three of the featured students, Kelly, Renee, and Steve. The *Bridge* Presentations took three forms, as is indicated in Table 6. Six of the teacher candidates spoke about a special place, usually an outdoor place, that reminded them of Terabithia. Five talked about an activity they had done as a child that made them feel like Jesse and Leslie felt in Terabithia, both special and safe. And one teacher candidate, Janet, spoke about a pet, her dog Blackie, who was "my Terabithia" because she could share secrets and feel safe with Blackie.

Table 5: Themes and Artifacts Shared in the *Bridge* Presentations

Name	M y Terabithia	Death/ Loss	School/ Teaching	Other	Artifact Shared
Aaron		X		friendship	his two poems
Elise			X		collage, writing
Gina			X		writing
Kelly	dirt hill at lake	X		friendship	art print, poems
Renee	swamp in backyard		X		
Steve	hockey in driveway				
Amber		X	X (brief)	childhood memories	collage
Bill				freedom, fear	his poem
Bonnie	friend s house				notes
Candace				making a friend	
Janet		X			photos
Jackie	playhouse in yard	X			photos
James	music			childhood	music
Keri	close friend		X		writing
Keith	tricycle				
Lisa	J Hughes films				writing
Mandy		X			poetry
Mary	Barbie, art				Barbie fashion designs
Neil	hay forts		X		writing
Shelly	skating rink		X (brief)		
Sheila		X			
Tracy				themes in novel	soundtrack-like musical clips
Tamara			X		*Bridge* quotes
Total: 23	12	7	8	8	

Table 6: My Terabithia

Special, secret place	Special, safe activity	Pet
Kelly **Renee** Bonnie Jackie Keri Neil	**Steve** Keith Mary Shelly Lisa	Janet

Kelly spoke about a place, her family's land on a small lake in the Northern part of the state, an area with a large dirt pile and the huge roots of a fallen tree. When she and her cousins played there, they would use their imaginations to create a pretend house. Kelly said fondly, "I can remember we would go out there in the summer, and we were just like trying to make it look like a house, and digging steps and chairs." This land was a fun andimaginative place, and it was also a learning place. As Kelly said, "we would pick flowers and trees and just discover them." Kelly equated this land at her family's cottage to Terabithia because of how special it was to her. As she said, "I just remember that was my special place, and I can relate to having a special place where it was in the middle of nature." She also returned to the theme of secrecy that had been discussed during the *Bridge* Discussion. In Kelly's words, "I can relate to having special place, and you don't want anybody, well not anybody, but adults, you don't want adults to find out."

Renee's Terabithia shared many of these same features. Renee spoke about the swampy land behind her home in a suburban subdivision, a low area in the land shared by all the houses on her block. Renee had "discovered" the swamp and invited her neighbors to play with her there in the "wilderness." Together, she and her neighbors made up imaginative games. As Renee said, "we just had elaborate play schemes where we were stuck on this tropical island somewhere and because there was a swamp it gave the illusion that we really were on an island." When they went there, they were smart and adventurous. "We were marine biologists . . . collecting specimens, you know, doing all this research out there." They were protective of their play land's secrecy. Renee said, "if anyone else like children were riding bikes on the road that was adjacent to it, we'd get all up in arms because they couldn't come in there, it was our secret place." Imagination, learning, secrecy, and friendship, these were the key characteristics of her play in the swampy land behind her home, a place she was reminded of when she read *Bridge to Terabithia.*

Kelly and Renee's Terabithia stories represent the narratives of special places told by the other four teacher candidates who made use of this genre and who told tales of special places of imaginative play, secrecy and ownership, friendship and learning. The six teacher candidates who shared Terabithia stories about special activities and people also used these same characteristics to define their Terabithias. Steve, for example, the elementary

education major who did not speak much during the *Bridge* Discussion, gave a presentation about practicing hockey in his driveway.

Steve began his presentation, like so many of his peers did, with a disclaimer as to why his presentation did not have just the right artifact. He had wanted to go home over the weekend to get his hockey stick, but he could not. Because of this, he asked his classmates to imagine he had a hockey stick in his hands, and then talked about playing hockey by himself in his driveway. As Steve said, "When I was little, I would always go outside and practice playing hockey and shoot every day so I could become really good." When just hitting the old tennis ball into the battered net would get boring, Steve created another world to keep things interesting. With drama in his voice, Steve said,

> Suddenly it would be Joe Louis Arena and I'd be on a line with Steve Yzerman in game seven of the Stanley Cup Finals and I'd come in on my break away and shoot and score and win the game, and I'd jump up and down and you know, have the Stanley Cup and everything, and it didn't matter that I was just standing in my driveway looking like an idiot jumping up and down. You know, I was at Joe Louis Arena.

Steve also talked about a neighbor man who often teased him by shouting from next door, "Hey, Gretzky, aren't' you in the NHL yet?" Even though Steve tried to ignore the taunts of this mean old neighbor, he would

find himself wondering if "my slap shot was good enough to shoot it over at him and hit him in the head. That was just for a second, though."

While Steve did not explicitly say why he chose to tell this story, his narrative shared many of the features of Kelly and Renee's outdoor play. Steve used his imagination to create another world, one very different from his usual life. As he played he was successful, winning the Stanley Cup, and he used this play to learn, in Steve's case, to practice and improve his hockey shots. Although in the body of his presentation Steve did not name hockey playing as his version of Terabithia, that was how he described it in an interview. Steve said he gave this particular presentation:

> 'Cause hockey has been such a big part of my life, and I thought about what would be my Terabithia, it would have something to do with hockey, the I remembered playing in the front yard, pretending I was on the [local professional hockey team]. That was the same idea they had in Terabithia.

Steve's self-effacing story at the conclusion of his presentation, the anecdote about his neighbor, evoked laughter. It also revealed the consequences of a Terabithia that did not remain secret. The neighbor's taunting invaded his private game and made him angry enough to fantasize hitting this man in the head with a tennis ball. Privacy, ownership, imagination, and, friendship, these Terabithian qualities were part of the teacher candidates' Terabithia stories.

The teacher candidates' ability to find places and other memories of their own childhoods that connected them to the novel was a part of their continued exploration of the nature of childhood. The features of childhood evoked by their memories of Terabithia, including ownership, imaginative play, and safe exploration of themselves and make-believe worlds, these were not parts of childhood they had listed on the Map of Childhood. The Terabithia narratives also show how engaged the teacher candidates were, both with the novel itself, which evoked powerful and important memories, and with the presentations, during which they were willing to tell personal stories about their own lives.

Death/Loss. Seven of the teacher candidates spoke about death or loss. Kelly and Aaron were the only two featured students who spoke about this theme, but their presentations do not represent the majority of those who presented. Because of that, I first briefly recount Janet's story, and then contrast that to Aaron's and Kelly's. Janet was a secondary agriculture education major. She had described her dog, Blackie, as "My Terabithia." The main focus of her presentation was how she learned about and the dealt with death. She talked about her grandfather's funeral, where she broke down until her father, "had to take me aside and tell me that everyone was remembering the good things." Janet said that Blackie was ill for a long time, and when she was away at college he died. She cried as she remembered how hard it was to go home for the first time after Blackie's death. Janet concluded, "I guess that's my bridge to Terabithia, I didn't have anybody to

talk to when I was younger, I had my dog, we would go play catch and we had our own little spot." Janet's stories about death were moving and emotional. In fact, Janet cried as she gave her presentation. Four other students told narratives like hers during their *Bridge* Presentations. As they did so, they revealed that death and loss were aspects of their own childhoods, or if not childhood, their young adulthood, and they explained the ways that the novel evoked these memories. Though they had not mentioned loss and death as issues for the Map of Childhood, clearly several of the teacher candidates had dealt with painful losses when they were young.

In contrast, Kelly did not talk about her own experiences with death, Instead, after telling her Terabithia narrative about the land at her family's cottage, Kelly also talked about the ways she recognized that death was an important theme in the novel. Kelly did this by sharing two poems she had found. The first poem started and ended with the following pairs of lines:

I'm always here to understand you

I'm always here to laugh with you . . .

Even though we might not always be together

Please know that I'm always here to love you

Kelly explained that this poem went with the novel because it represented their friendship and why it was such a difficult friendship to lose. Kelly explained that if Jesse were older, he might have read this poem to Leslie to express his feelings, "but, since they were younger they probably didn't understand how all these things that they felt were their friendship."

Kelly's second poem addressed death even more directly. Kelly read this anonymous poem:

The pain we feel when someone leaves our lives

is in direct proportion

to the joy they bring while a part of our life.

Kelly explained the significance of this poem in terms of the novel. She recognized that Jesse had reaffirmed Leslie's life and her role in his own growth at the end of the novel. Even in death, "she was still there, she was still part of him, and will always be the bridge that he created that was part of her as much as it was part of him." Kelly had not herself experienced a loss as great as Jesse's, but by sharing these poems, she was imagining and connecting to that experience, and, in turn, considering aspects of childhood she had not heretofore considered. Another interesting thing to note about Kelly's presentation is that she returned to an issue she herself had raised during the discussion, that of naming and understanding Leslie's role in Jesse's life.

Janet and Kelly, along with four others, thought that death was an important and powerful theme in the novel, one they had identified with. Aaron, however, had a different interpretation of the death in the novel. During the *Bridge* Discussion Aaron had claimed he did not identify with Jesse because their lives were so different. Aaron began his presentation by referring to the differences between his take on the novel and his peers' connection to it. He said, "I think I was significantly less struck by this book than most people were, that's a good and a bad thing, I mean, I got something

out of it but it wasn't what most of you guys got out of it." Then Aaron read a poem, a sonnet, that he had written for the presentations. The poem was called "Sonnet for Youth," and Aaron said that he did not normally write sonnets because "they are really hard."

In the poem, Aaron said that his memories of childhood were sunny, with "few potholes along the way." Aaron's sonnet concluded:

Though death my have not been a part of my life,

I've nonetheless had my own share of strife.

With his opening comment about not identifying with the novel like the his peers had, Aaron showed he was continuing to understand his reaction to the novel and to work for an interpretation that satisfied him. As he wrote his poem, he began to claim some similarity between his life and the characters', as evidence by that last line of the sonnet, "I've nonetheless had my own share of strife." Although he did not name an experience just like Jesse's, Aaron identified death as an important theme in the novel, and he claimed, eventually, to recognize similar events, in this case, "strife," in his own life. We cannot make too much of this last line. Sonnets, do after all, have to rhyme. But Aaron also shared a second poem, one he had written a couple of months before class, about sharing your secrets with a close friend. That second poem, which I discuss in more detail later, supports Aaron's clams that he had begun to identify with the novel and with Jesse.

The teacher candidates who spoke about the death theme continued to think about the book in terms of its revelations about childhood. Though

death and loss were not part of their initial Map of Childhood, several of the teacher candidates had, indeed, experienced death, and the book evoked those memories. Aaron continued to work on his understanding of death as an issue in Jesse's life and ways he could begin to identify with that theme. By focusing on their reactions to the death in the novel, the teacher candidates continued to explore and complicate their understanding of childhood during the *Bridge* Presentations.

Schooling and teaching. Eight of the teacher candidates spoke about teaching or schooling as part of their interpretations of the novel. These school- related presentations took on two forms, as is indicated in Table 7. Four of the teacher candidates spoke about memories of schooling that the novel evoked. Gina and Keri told stories about the time they had read the novel in elementary school, Amber and Shelly described teachers who reminded them of the teachers in the novel. Five of the teacher candidates talked about things they had learned about teaching or learning based on the novel. These included Elise, Renee, Keri, Neil, and Tamara. Gina remembered reading the novel in school, in fact, she mentioned that reading during the *Bridge* Discussion. When she was in elementary school, she had said during the discussion, she did not remember "it being so upsetting." During the *Bridge* Discussion, Gina's memories sparked the conversation comparing children's readings to adults'. Gina returned to that memory for

Table 7: Types of Schooling/Teaching Presentations

Memories of Schooling The Novel Evoked	Lessons Learned About Teaching or Learning Based on the Novel
Gina Amber Keri Shelly	**Elise** **Renee** Keri Neil Tamara

her *Bridge* Presentation. She claimed she tried to come up with a story like her peers' (she had called them to find out what they were doing) but she did not really want to tell about her Terabithia or experiences with loss or friendship. In fact, her reaction was different from her peers because, as she explained, even with this adult reading of the novel, and even though she had cried when she read it, "there was not a strong attraction to the story and its characters. I had not placed myself in the story and seen connections to my own life."

Gina prepared a written essay, which she explained and then read for her presentation. Gina used the writing of her essay and the presentation itself as opportunities to try to remember what it was about her first reading of the novel that kept her from having a strong reaction this second time around. As Gina said, "I began to think that perhaps the reaction I needed was the one of the 10 year old that had read it years ago, and not the 21 year old reading it for the second time."

Gina explained that she had read the book in fourth or fifth grade, when "The book was presented to the entire class to read and discuss and answer all important ditto questions." She remembered not enjoying the book, as she said, "In fact I distinctly remember not enjoying the story, and being uninterested page after page." In fact, she could not really remember enjoying reading ANY books in elementary school. Gina explained that she and her family had moved frequently and she had been tracked into the low reading groups. At each new school she was "at different reading level than a majority of the class and therefore conveniently pushed aside." Gina did not become a strong reader until sometime toward the end of middle school, when, in some unexplained way, she realized that "A book was no longer the one dimensional page filled with words. It had real meaning." Gina wondered if she did not enjoy *Bridge to Terabithia* this time around because it was associated with a time when reading was so difficult. As she said, "Perhaps what I did not enjoy about this novel was simply that it was associated with a time that reading was challenging and a requirement that I dreaded."

In her presentation, Gina worked to understand and describe her own history as a reader. She engaged in a deep literary experiences in terms of trying to think about features of her own experience that led to her own understanding of the novel. One of the interesting things about Gina's presentation is the ways she continued to work to understand the reading process. When the issue of childhood readings was first raised, Gina and her

peers concluded that children, as less experienced readers, probably respond less intensely to literature. Gina, in fact, seemed comfortable with this conclusion, claiming that when you are older "You put more of yourself into books" than when you are younger.

Revisiting this issue for the presentation, however, Gina came to a very different set of conclusions about why her response to the novel was less intense or less moving when she was a child. It was not a lack of experience she described to explain her first reaction, it was a set of teaching practices and her poor reading abilities. Gina made indirect references to the kinds of experiences that failed her as she described the experiences in school that hurt her as a reader–moving, being placed in a low reading group, being ignored at school after school, those "all important" dittoes. It was these, and not a youthful naiveté, that shaped her lack of engagement with the novel.

Gina's presentation about schooling and the novel centered on describing the features of schooling that kept her from engaging in an emotional reading of the novel as a child. Three other teacher candidates also talked about the memories of schooling, teaching, or reading the novel as a child that were evoked when they read the novel. Five other teacher candidates talked about schooling and teaching not in terms of their own memories, but in terms of lessons they gleaned as they read and interpreted the novel.

Elise was one of those students. Earlier Elise described Terabithia as a metaphor for the classroom during the *Bridge* Discussion. She continued

with that theme during the presentations. The center of Elise's presentation was a collage with pasted-on pictures of students in desks and an apple, which she titled "create the community." Elise explained that the collage represented her ideas about the role of the teacher. She said, "I think that's the role of the teacher is to create the community in which the student can learn, and can have the environment where students can take the risks, ah, the safe classroom is the place where students can learn and grow." Elise's written statement, which she had taped to the back of her collage and read to her peers, explained what she meant by "Terabithia as the Classroom."

> Jess and Leslie have created a classroom of one's own. As teachers we strive to create the Terabithia where students feel safe, willing to take risks, and learn. The Terabithia classroom is filled with imagination, literature, fun, art, and stimulation. Tera- this is cheesy–Terabithia is the classroom that I will create.

Elise ended her presentation by explaining that her presentation built from and extended her classmates ideas. As she said, she was taking "all the things that we focused on in childhood, and moving that into our own classrooms."

Renee also learned about teaching by reading and interpreting *Bridge to Terabithia*, however, instead of focusing on the learning community, Renee said she had come to a better understanding of the importance of passion, particularly passion for subject matter. During the bridge conversation, Renee had spoken about Ms. Edmunds who was that "one teacher" that made

a difference in Jesse's life. I have already talked about the main theme of Renee's presentation, the story of the swampy land behind her home where she and her neighbors pretended to be marine biologists making important discoveries and warding off other neighborhood children who threatened the sanctity of their imaginary lands.

The week that the teacher candidates gave their presentations, they also had another assignment, and I mention it now because Renee drew upon it in her final presentation. For that assignment, Sue asked them to read a chapter from Robert Fried's book, *The Passionate Teacher* (1995). In that book, Fried suggests that teachers who care passionately both about the students and the subject matter they teach end up being the best teachers.

After Renee described her own Terabithia, she said she tried to understand why Terabithia–as a place and a memory and a theme of the novel–might be important in this class presumably about learning, learners, and teaching. Renee said, "Well yeah, I had a secret place too, but what, like what's the point?" The answer to this question, "what's the point?" became the coda to her Terabithia narrative, and her explanation for why this book mattered in this class.

Renee explained again that she had been very struck by the young music teacher, Ms. Edmunds, and her power to affect Jesse. As Renee said, "she was just that one teacher that, that really made a difference." Renee tried to reconcile her understanding of Ms. Edmunds as an influential teacher, her memories of learning as a child, her understanding of schooling, and her

Terabithia story, and as she did so she "started to think about everything more in the context of that passionate teaching article that we were reading," This led her to think more about Terabithia and Ms. Edmunds and Leslie, she realized that it was not so much the place Terabithia as much as it was the people in Jesse's life that helped him to learn and grow. As Renee said, "it was the support he got from Leslie and the creativity and he got that from Ms. Edmunds, too." The same was true in her own life, her family and teachers had supported her in ways that Leslie and Ms. Edmunds supported Jesse. She said, "I felt very loved and supported in my endeavors as a child."

As Renee continued to think about the novel and Terabithia in the context of the day's reading about passionate teaching, she said she felt "challenged." She wanted to be a teacher like Ms. Edmunds, and like Leslie, a person who makes a difference in students' lives. Thinking about how she might be a friend to children in the ways Leslie and Ms. Edmunds were friends to Jesse, Renee realized that one thing they shared was knowledge and passion–Leslie for literature and stories, Ms. Edmunds for both music and for children. Renee thought about Leslie and Ms. Edmunds in terms of the Fried article, and began to think about what it would take to be like them as a teacher, which led them to think about "what particular content areas can you apply this to, in your teaching, what can you be passionate about."

Renee used her presentation both to share her interpretation of the novel, by telling a detailed Terabithia story, and to think about the significance of Terabithia and her reading of the novel in terms of this class

on teaching. As she did so, she made connections to the more theoretical reading, and began to see content areas as something she should consider more carefully.

Renee and Gina and Elise, and the four other teacher candidates who spoke about learning and teaching, engaged in deep literary experiences by interpreting the novel. They were naming the ways they understood the book, and the contexts and experiences which shaped their reading of the novel, including its placement in an education course, their own memories as children, and other readings in the course. By thinking about teaching and learning and classrooms, they were working to understand the experience of the child, Gina by understanding her own experiences, Elise and Renee by extrapolating from the novel and their memories to make conjectures about the kinds of experiences children in classrooms should have. And they were certainly engaged, not only in the novel, but in making sense of the novel in light of the class and in light of each others' interpretations. They brought their inner attention to the process of finding a way to represent their understanding of the novel.

Other. The final category on Table 5 (p. 277) is labeled "other," as a means of summarizing the seven topics that did not fit neatly into any of the other three categories. Because these seven presentations were all very different, it is difficult to represent them with pieces of just one or two presentations. In this section, I briefly describe the content of several of the teacher candidates' presentations. I will be more thorough in talking about

the ways that Aaron and Kelly's presentations fit into the "other" category, because they were featured students and their presentations will become important in chapter 6. I will use less detail to summarize the other five "other" presentations.

Kelly's presentation had three parts. I have already spoken about her narrative of My Terabithia–the dirt pile at her family's cottage, and I have spoken about the two poems Kelly shared to represent understanding of death as a central theme in the book and the nature of Jesse and Leslie's friendship. Kelly also brought a print of a painting that she borrowed from one of her housemates. The painting was of a vine covered trellis in the garden of a country home. Kelly explained that the picture "totally reminded me of the book, because of how they described it."

Aaron also shared two poems for his presentation, but instead of sharing preprinted poems about friendship and loss, he read two poems he himself had written. I have already described Aaron's "Sonnet for Youth", the poem about how he was beginning to empathize with Jesse, as he realized, "I've nonetheless had my share of strife." As he was sitting in front of the class flipping through his poetry journal to find this "Sonnet for Youth, Aaron said he found another poem, called "Not a Small Thing," that he had written several months before this time, and that, as he said, "now that I think about it it has to do with the story."

This second poem, which he claimed he had written two months before he shared it with his EDU 200 classmates, was "about finding someone,

like how Jess finally found somebody to share his secrets with, in, in Leslie, and how we all have our secrets and it's really hard to find someone" to share them with. By sharing this poem, Aaron continued to find ways to interpret the novel in light of his own experiences, in spite of his claim of not "identifying" with the book.

Aaron's second poem started out, "I guess we all have our secrets, some big, some bigger," went on to describe secrets people might keep, such as abuse, anger, vulnerability, and cruelty. One phrase from the poem (which you can read in it's entirety in Appendix C) perhaps best represents these "secrets"–

Or is it the twitch you've developed
at the mere thought of taking your own life
Is it a fear, or lack thereof that causes this twitch?

Aaron's poem went on to talk about how it's "not a small thing" to find someone to share your secrets with, and ended:

You must find a way to not let yourself be consumed
by your own secrets.
Let them go, carefully.
Taste the freedom that only trust in others,
and more importantly yourself, can bring.

Aaron's willingness to read this heart wrenching poem, in front of 22 relative strangers, is evidence that Aaron was engaged in the presentation activity. By choosing to read this poem, Aaron also continued to take part in

a deep literary experience, revising his interpretation in light of his peers' reactions to the book and his own attempts to justify his sense of the novel. With each activity in the *Bridge* Sequence, Aaron continued to explore his identification with the novel and ways his childhood was like or unlike Jesse's.

Five other teacher candidates gave presentations that do not fall in to any of the categories (death, schooling, My Terabithia) already described. Summaries of these other presentations help to elaborate the full range of responses to the novel.

Candace, who was a secondary chemistry and theater major, told a narrative about a quest to find a best friend, someone to share her secrets and joys with. She had only just found that friend a couple of months before the class started.

Amber, who was preparing to teach elementary school, brought in a collage of pictures and drawings that represented several her memories of childhood that the novel brought to mind, including going to school, experiencing the death of a family member, making friends, and playing imaginary games.

Bill, who was preparing to teach elementary school, wrote a poem to interpret the novel. In this poem, an eagle teaches a young boy to fly. First the boy is frightened, but when he realizes he can fly on his own he feels a great sense of accomplishment.

James was an elementary education major, and he was the only student in class who was also a parent. James' presentation was about childhood. He played a tape and shared copies of the lyrics of a song by Antonio Carlos Jobim, called "Waters of March. James said the lyrics reminded him of the novel. One stanza from the song read:

It's the wind blowing free,

It's the end of the slope,

It's a beam, it's a void,

It's a hunch, it's a hope

Tracy, the elementary education major who hoped one day to teach special education, also used music to share her interpretation of the novel. Tracy had pieced together bits of several songs to create a mini-soundtrack for the novel. She typed up a sheet with lyrics and explanations, to show which elements of plot or mood each song clip represented. Her soundtrack included themes such as friendship, joy, fear, sorrow, and acceptance.

Concluding comments about the Presentations. With comments in class, and in the interviews, the teacher candidates talked a bit about the experience of giving the *Bridge* Presentations.

The teacher candidates found this assignment to be both engaging and challenging because it was very open ended. As Kelly said in an interview,

It took a lot of time and it was kind of pressure, I remember the night before people were calling and saying "what exactly we are

supposed to be doing, I've got this thing written down, "Presentations, what are these?"

Shelly, one of the members of Group B, also felt that the open ended nature of the presentations made them difficult. During their end-of-class conversation about the presentations, Shelly told Sue,

> During schooling we were usually told exactly what to do, it was all drawn out and you [Sue] were being vague because you wanted us to come up with what we thought. I'm used to that structure. I thought about it a lot. Correct me if I'm wrong but you were being vague because you wanted us to come up with our own, that was difficult for me because I'm used to having that structure.

Even though the presentations were challenging, the teacher candidates were very engaged in the task. They were willing to put a lot of time into coming up with just the right presentation, even though they were relatively low stakes because they were not graded or evaluated in any way. Kelly and Gina both told me they called several classmates to try and figure out what to present. Aaron was willing to spend the time it took to write a sonnet (which, after all, has to rhyme) even though he claimed he did not identify with the novel. Steve told me he had "thought and thought" till he came up with just the right idea.

Another piece of evidence of their engagement in the Presentations: only six of the teacher candidates did not bring an artifact to share, and five of

those said that the reason they did not was because the artifact they wanted was still back at home, and there was not time to drive back and get it. (As a counter example, however, there were two people who said that they came up with their idea at the last minute. These two said they had a hard time figuring out what to present.)

The teacher candidates were also engaged as members of the presentation audience. In class Sue asked them whether or not it was "worth it," even though it was a challenging assignment. They claimed that it was "worth it," and their appreciation of the presentations has more to do with their interest as audience members than it did with the work they did to create and give their presentations. For example, Mandy replied, "Yeah, it was so neat to see how you know, everybody, um, interpreted it so different, you know." And Gina said:

> It was just interesting, I mean we got to learn more about each other as we did our interpretations of the book, knowing what someone pulled out of the book, we kinda learn more about them.

Gina and Mandy, and presumably other teacher candidates as well found that interpreting the novel as a group, that is, hearing about each others' understanding of or interaction with the novel was interesting. The deep literary experience of giving and hearing presentations became a subject matter specific instance of engagement. Kelly, in an interview, told me that hearing other people's presentations was valuable because it helped her to

think about the ways readers construct meaning with texts. She told me that she believed one of Sue's purposes for the presentations was to show "how different people perceive one story . . . you can get a different story form the same book."

Being an audience member was an interpretive experience, for these three women and presumably for the many other teacher candidates. Presenting was also, by design, a deep literary experience because it required the teacher candidates, in some way, to name or represent their understanding of the novel. Some, like Gina and Aaron, used the presentation as an opportunity to think about why they were not as struck by the novels as their peers had been, and in so doing interpreted by naming the things in themselves or in the text that evoked their response. Others used the presentation as a time to think about their own childhoods, or the novel's role in the course, or friendship, and in so doing continued to define and describe their reading of the novel.

The presentations are also a testimony to the learning community that had been established in EDU 200. Many of the teacher candidates took huge emotional and personal risks in the telling of their *Bridge* Presentations. Steve's solo hockey games and his mean old neighbor, Aaron's very moving poetry, Gina's admission that she did not really learn to read until third grade, Kelly's willingness to bring poems and painting and to talk about digging chairs in dirt piles for pretend play, even Elise's self-described "cheesy" learning community collage, each of these was a risky endeavor. The teacher

candidates must have felt relatively safe with one another, assured that their ideas would be both accepted and respected, and that they would not face embarrassment or teasing, no matter what they shared.

Finally, all of the teacher candidates' interpretations related to childhood in some way. Whether they were talking about their own secret, special places, experiences with loss, or schooling and teaching, or any of the several themes in the "other" category, each teacher candidate spoke about ways this novel had brought them to think about childhood. Some shared memories, others drew lessons about the kinds of learning environments children need, but they all thought about childhood.

The presentations the teacher candidates gave represented their individual interpretation of the novel. The themes of their presentations, including the features of Terabithia such as safety, imaginative play, ownership and freedom, their memories of death and other issues they had dealt with in childhood, their considerations of friendship and the safety they felt to share personal stories with one another, these and other elements of the *Bridge* Presentations became part of their understanding of teaching, students, and learning. Many of the teacher candidates made sense of other aspects of the course in light of their experiences during the *Bridge* Sequence. During the *Bridge Presentation*s, some teacher candidates spoke in ways that revealed they were transforming their understanding of course readings and experiences in light of the novel. Others gave presentations which later served as a foundation for learning they constructed later in the course. As I

will show in chapter 6, interpretations of the novel from the Discussion, Mural Painting, and Presentations, played an important role in shaping the teacher candidates' learning in unique and individual ways.

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[i] I say at least 56 questions because some may have been missed during transcribing. Side conversations and overlapping talk that was untranscribable was likely to contain questions.

TALKING ABOUT TEXTS: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN A TEACHER PREPARATION CLASSROOM

VOLUME II

By

Devon G. Brenner

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Chapter 5: The Role Of The Novel In The Teacher Candidates' Learning

Introduction

In chapter 3, I answered the first half of the dissertation question, What did the teacher candidates in EDU 200 learn about the role of the teacher and the experience of the child? In chapter 4 I described the teacher candidates' participation in the *Bridge* Sequence, documenting and analyzing the various ways teacher candidates interpreted the novel as they disussed, painted, and presented their understanding of the book. Describing the teacher candidates' transactions with the novel and the interpretations it sparked has been an important step in preparing to answer the second half of the dissertation question, which asks, What role, if any, did their reading and interpretation of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

The real question at hand is whether or not those interpretations were connected to overall learning in the course. Did those interpretations in some way shape the teacher candidates' understanding of the experience of the child, the role of the teacher, or of learning? In chapter 2 I defined learning as the process of socially appropriating and transforming concepts which can then be returned to the learning community through the processes of publication and conventionalization. I said that as the teacher candidates spoke, drew, and wrote, they made their learning public, but that what I was really interested in (and still am interested in) were these processes of

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appropriation and transformation, the processes by which learners take up, personalize, and come to deeply understand knowledge.

Appropriation is marked by the repetition and appropriate use of ideas. Ideas, when appropriated, reoccur in talk much the same as the first time they appeared. Transformation, on the other hand, is a marked by both connections and elaborations. (The concepts of appropriation and transformation are discussed in much greater detail in chapter 2.) When learners appropriate knowledge, they deepen it by constructing complex webs of ideas. Learning also becomes flexible, as learners move beyond the immediate context, using new concepts to understand past experiences, and bringing past experience to bear on new ideas, changing (or transforming) both in the process. It is important to remember that appropriation and transformation of knowledge are private processes.

The process of transformation has been especially crucial to chapter 6. I have tried to illustrate the ways that the teacher candidates not only interpreted the novel, but they brought those interpretations to bear on situations and experiences and theories outside of the text, or constructed complex webs of ideas connecting their understanding of the novel to experiences in classrooms and theories read in the rest of the course.

Narrative theorists such as Brunner and Bruner (see chapter 1) provide a conceptual framework for understanding how the teacher candidates transformed their interpretations of the novel into deeper and more flexible conceptions of the role of the teacher and the experience of the child. Bruner

and Brunner, and other advocates of narratives in classrooms, talk about the ways that narratives can make abstract theories understandable by providing concrete, specific examples of those theories in situated contexts (readers learn with texts) and talk about the ways that the structures of narratives lend those stories meaning, and those meanings can be generalized and abstracted to help readers make sense of other experiences (readers learn from narratives). When readers use interpretations of texts as concrete examples of theories (when they learn with texts), those theories are transformed. The theories move beyond the context of the academic article and the in-class discussions in which the theories were appropriated and become connected to narrative events. When readers generalize theories from texts in order to make sense of other experiences (when readers learn from texts) it is the interpretations of the novels themselves that are transformed. Readers construct an interpretation of a text, and then that interpretation moves beyond the text itself to help the reader understand experiences both past and yet to come.

In the following sections of this chapter, I have used the concepts of appropriation and transformation, as well as narrative theories about the ways readers can learn from and with texts, to describe the ways that the six featured students learned as they interpreted *Bridge to Terabithia*. To do so, I have traced the ways that the teacher candidates' understanding of teaching, children, and learning changed over time throughout the course, searching for echoes of and connections to their interpretations of the novel in those changes. Based on the complex and interconnected webs of understanding

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about teaching that the teacher candidates constructed which echo and build from their work with the novel, and based on their direct references to the novel in statements about their learning, I am confident that the novel played an important role in the teacher candidates learning in EDU 200. However, there are two important caveats to add to the discussion.

First, it is important to recognize that I am investigating learning with one introductory teacher education course. I had no access to data that would help me to understand whether or not the transformations I document represent relatively permanent changes in epistemology and conception of teaching, nor did I have access to information about whether the teacher candidates transformed their knowledge in-action rather than knowledge about teaching.

Second, the analysis in this chapter relies fairly heavily on surveys that the teacher candidates completed on the first day of class. On those surveys, the teacher candidates wrote about their hopes and fears for their future classrooms, and I have used those statements to make claims about the teacher candidates' understandings of teaching, children, and learning as they entered the course. Whenever possible, I have triangulated that data source with other written work and interview data, but it is important to acknowledge that this survey provides limited evidence. The extent to which this survey represents the understandings the teacher candidates brought to EDU 200 is unclear.

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In the following section, I discuss my decision to portray the teacher candidates' learning as a series of six cases, rather than to work theme by theme as I did in chapter 3. Following that, I present the learning of each of the six teacher candidates, and, finally, draw some overall conclusions about the role of the novel in the teacher candidates' learning about learning, the role of the teacher, and the experience of the child.

Documenting the Role of the Novel

One way to approach the role of the novel in the teacher candidates' learning would be to go learning theme by learning theme, and interpretation by interpretation. I could, for example, try to show that the teacher candidates' My Terabithia interpretations (their presentations about their own private Terabithia-like experiences) map onto their developing understanding of the classroom community and the importance of knowing students well. Or I could try to show that the engaged nature of the *Bridge* Sequence maps onto the teacher candidates' emerging understanding of learning as an active, engaged construction.

There are two reasons I have chosen not to organize this chapter in this way. The first is the lack of one to one correspondence between interpretations of the novel and overall EDU 200 learning themes. If the My Terabithia interpretation of the novel were related only to theme of creating a particular kind of learning community, then I might be able to demonstrate that relationship and the role of that interpretation of the novel for helping the teacher candidates think about the kinds of classrooms they one day hope

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to create. I could illustrate that transformation from interpretation of the novel to understanding of teaching by providing specific examples of the ways individual teacher candidates made this connection. But this is not the case. Some teacher candidates wrote or spoke about the ways that reflecting on their Terabithia-like memories helped them to think about future classrooms, but others linked that interpretation to their understanding of subject matter and passion in the classroom. Some used their thoughts about the novel to think about Dewey and Elbow and to understand the metaphor of balance. Others talked about the ways that teachers must create Terabithia-like experiences of success and meaningful learning, and so must get to know each child well as an individual in order to provide meaningful experiences.

The relationship between each category of interpretation and the overall learning themes is not a simple one. This can be seen in Figure 1. In this figure, I have drawn arrows from particular ways of interpreting the novel to the overall learning themes to which they seem to be related for at least one student. As you can see, the relationship between the reading of the novel and the learning in the course is complex. Any attempt to illustrate each of the relationships with any sort of detail would be too lengthy and complex to be comprehensible.

Not only are the relationships between learning themes and categories of interpretations of the novel complex, these relationships are unique for each individual student in the course. No two teacher candidates learned expressly the same things in expressly the same ways, and no two teacher

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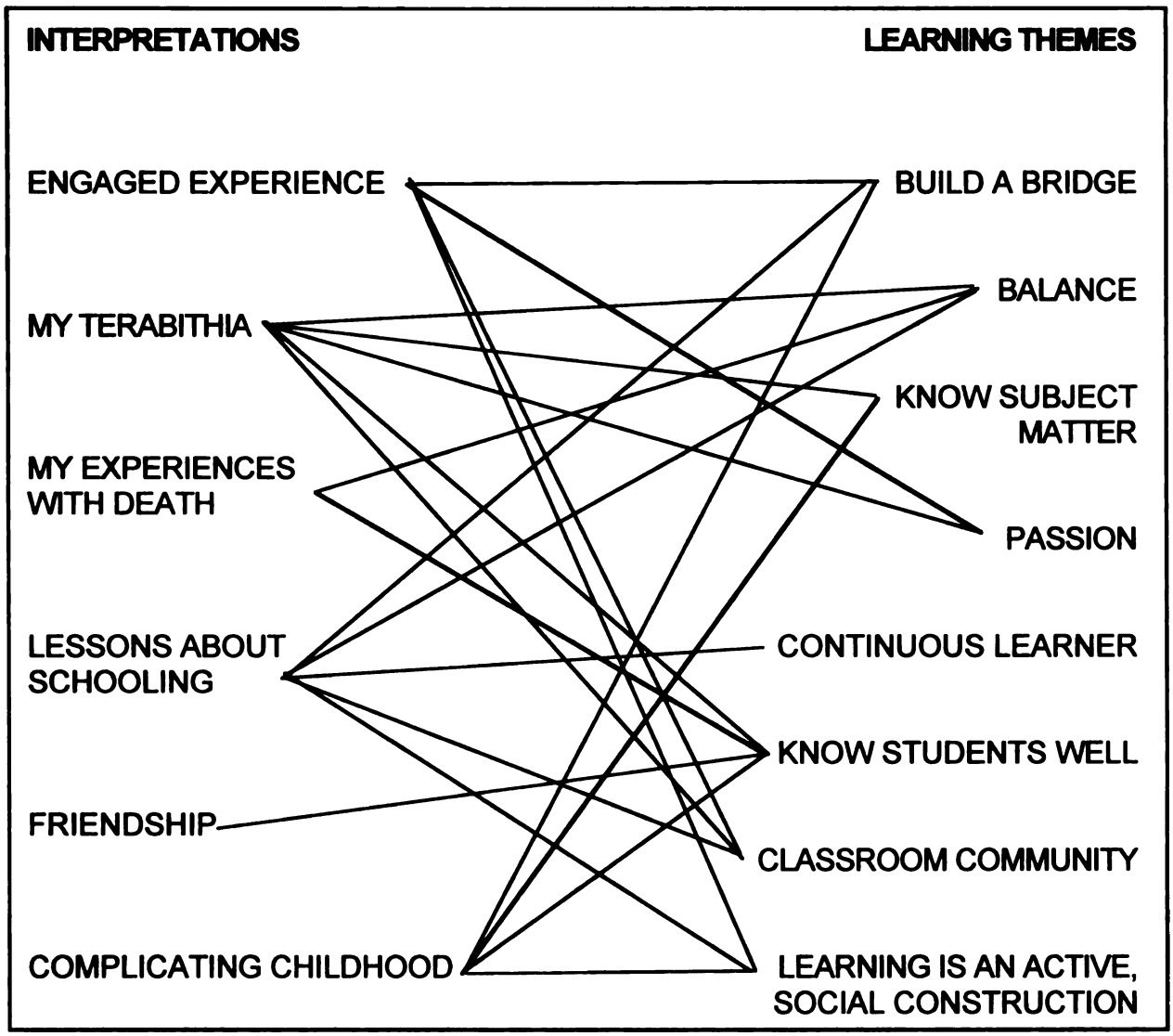

Figure One: Relationships Between Interpretations and Learning Themes

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candidates talked about the novel or the ways it supported their learning in the same ways. A few teacher candidates wrote explicitly about the role their reading of the novel played in their learning in the course. Most, however, said very little about the role of the novel. For some, the Terabithia interpretations played a major role in their learning in the course. For others, the novel played a less significant role, as one of several educative experiences they took part in. In general, however, the teacher candidates transformed their interpretations of the novel into important learning about teaching, children, and learning.[i]

The only way to represent the individuality of the teacher candidates' learning is to present that learning one case at a time, and so that is what I have done. In other chapters, I have worked to present featured students in the context of their classmates and as representative of their classmates' learning. In chapter 6, I have necessarily narrowed that focus. Aaron, Elise, Gina, Kelly, Renee and Steve serve as examples that represent the rest of the class, but not because 60% learned like Renee did or 82% made a connection just like Steve's, but because the novel played an important role in almost all of the teacher candidates' learning, and it did so uniquely in each case. Presenting six cases allows me to talk about the ways interpreting the novel in light of the course, and connecting the novel to the rest of the course, was an individual but important process for each student.

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In this chapter, excerpts and anecdotes that have already been presented will reappear. At the risk of being redundant, evidence that was presented in other will now be used to support claims about the role that interpretations of the novel played in the teacher candidates' learning. I have tried, in this chapter, to balance the repetition of data and examples necessary to provide convincing detail with summary and explanation and references to other sections of the dissertation.

As you will see as I present each individual case, the teacher candidates learned from the novel, generalizing from its plot and themes and characters to their understanding of children and teaching. They also learned with the novel, using it as a grounded example that helped them to make sense of theoretical pieces they read in the course. Elise and Renee were the most explicit about the ways that reading *Bridge to Terabithia* helped them to transform their understanding of teaching and children, and so I have begun with their cases. Aaron and Steve were both less explicit about the role their interpretations of the novel played in their overall learning. Both Aaron and Steve came to a greater appreciation for the experience of the child, in part as a consequence of their efforts to interpret the novel. I finish the chapter with Gina and Kelly's cases. The connections between Gina and Kelly's interpretations of the novel and their overall learning in the course are more subtle than Aaron and Steve's, yet the roots of the learning that they constructed in EDU 200 can, at least in part, be traced to their interpretations of the novel.

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The Six Cases

Elise's Case

Elise was the teacher candidate who coined the term "Terabithia as the classroom." That metaphor summarizes the role the *Bridge* Sequence played in Elise's overall learning. Elise was preparing to teach high school English. Elise also described herself as an activist concerned about women's issues and children's issues. When the course began, Elise had some ideas about classroom community that were important to her. She hoped that her students would describe her classroom as "safe," for example, and she imagined that the best thing about teaching would be "the students." During EDU 200, Elise learned by making her understanding of the classroom community more complex. She used her knowledge and skills as an English major to interpret texts she read (including *Bridge to Terabithia*), connected her ideas about the classroom community to a specific example (Jesse and Leslie in Terabithia) and to academic readings (e.g. Short, 1991), and developed sophisticated ways of explaining why the learning community matters and what her own learning community will be like.

Using background knowledge and experiences to interpret Bridge to Terabithia. During the discussion of the novel, Elise often spoke of herself as an English major and used concepts from her English program to help explain her own and other's readings of the novel. For example, when she and her classmates were wondering if and why children's reading of the novel might be less powerful that adults', Elise explained that she had

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learned in English classes that "each time you read a book you get different things from it depending on what's going on in your life right then." When Aaron was struggling to explain why he did not identify with the novel, Elise paraphrased his comments about the novel being "passé" into the more academic term, foreshadowing, saying, "I knew she was going to die, from the beginning, and I knew the foreshadowing, it was just very obvious." She attributed that understanding to her experiences as an English major, saying, "I think part of that comes from being an English major, we are reading so much."

One of the powerful tools for analyzing and discussing books that Elise brought from her English studies was that of metaphor. Even before Sue raised the issues of Terabithia and the bridge as metaphors, Elise was beginning to think about what Terabithia stood for in the novel. When Sue asked the class to think about what the children were doing when they played in Terabithia, Elise suggested that "Terabithia is the child, where they learn. " Elise went on to read a quote form the novel:

> Now it occurred to him perhaps Terabithia was like a castle where you came to be knighted. After you stayed for a while and grew strong you had to move on, for hadn't Leslie even in Terabithia tried to push back the walls of his mind and make him see beyond to the shining world, huge and terrible, beautiful and very fragile.

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As Elise explained the significance of the quote, she talked about the ways that childhood is like that place, because "that's what childhood is about, it's about learning, what is to come and what isn't, the future and learning that there is a world outside of the little walls that you have created which is what Terabithia is." Sue followed Elise's comment with a request for others to name suggestions for Terabithia as a metaphor, and Elise listened as her peers talked about Terabithia. Neil suggested that the kingdom was like their "own little world" and described it terms of "their imagination," noting that it "made them feel safe and secure and still be what they really want." Aaron described Terabithia as "adulthood" for the ways that "they can do whatever they want" and "that's something they look forward to in their real, in their actual lives." As he said, "there's no boundaries." Elise referred to these qualities of Terabithia when she made a second suggestion, revising her own Terabithia metaphor. This time, Elise suggested that Terabithia is a metaphor for the classroom. Elise stated:

> I also think that, that Terabithia is the metaphor for the classroom, it is the ideal classroom, it's the, that is where, it is in that quote, it is where he learned about art, literature, and all those places, that's what we strive to create, everything that you just, you just said, is what you want the classroom to be, so that you can learn from it.

Elise's understanding of this metaphor developed in talk about the novel. As she and her peers considered Jesse and Leslie and their play in

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Terabithia, as they used Sue's questions as a forum for deepening and extending their understanding of the novel, Elise's ideas developed and became more refined. She had opportunities to use talk to make connections between the novel and her future role as a teacher, to interpret the novel with both the tools of an English major and with the lens of a future teacher.

Using Terabithia to generate a theory about teaching. Elise returned to this conception of Terabithia as the classroom in her *Bridge* Presentation. Elise brought a collage on which she had pasted cutouts of students in desks and an apple, with the title "Create the Community." As she spoke, Elise explained that the mural represented her understanding of the role of the teacher as one of creating "the place where students can learn and grow." Elise read a short statement she had written, explaining her understanding of Terabithia as the classroom.

> Jess and Leslie have created a classroom of one's own. As teachers we strive to create the Terabithia where students feel safe, willing to take risks, and learn. The Terabithia classroom is filled with imagination, literature, fun, art, and stimulation. Tera–this is cheesy–Terabithia is the classroom that I will create.

After she read this statement, Elise explained the way it connected to her peers' more personal Terabithia stories. She said, "Which is kind of taking the idea that everybody else brought along, all the things that we focused on in childhood, and moving that into our own classrooms." The presentation gave Elise one more chance to develop an idea she had begun

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during the discussion. As she interpreted the novel, Elise sought for meaning that related to the rest of the course and to her own role as a teacher. She took the examples of Jesse and Leslie, and made inferences about the nature of classrooms.

Elise's decision to transform her reading of the novel into a lesson about teaching does not mean that her engagement with the novel or her aesthetic response to the novel were somehow diminished. While Elise may have been trying to give a presentation that she thought Sue would like, I believe the Terabithia as the Classroom metaphor intrigued Elise. Certainly there was nothing in the assignment, the directions, or even the classroom norms for giving presentations that required or even suggested that Elise try to draw a lesson about teaching from her reading. Elise was one of only five teacher candidates who decided to make the connections between the novel and the course's content explicit. The others all shared personal stories or pieces of music that interpreted the novel more personally and more aesthetically, which leads me to assume that Elise followed up on the Terabithia as the Classroom metaphor because that interpretation of the novel interested her and represented her "take" on the novel.

Transforming the text into an example of a theory. Elise's Terabithia as the Classroom metaphor became an organizing concept in her own statement about her learning in the course, the final reflection. In her final reflection, Elise talked about the web of ideas that connected readings (from early in the course) about the learning community and her understanding of Jesse and

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Leslie's play in Terabithia. Elise named *Bridge to Terabithia* as one of the three valuable resources in the course. (Her other two resources were the peer teaching experience and Fried's chapter, "The Passionate Teacher.") Elise wrote,

> Although, the course work included articles about "creating a community of learners", it wasn't until the novel Terabithia was read that the concept sunk in. In the novel Jess and Leslie create their own classroom where literature, history, theater, music and world affairs are discovered. As a teacher, it will be my job to create that kind of safe environment where students can feel comfortable enough to explore the world around them. How do we create that environment? All of these answers: I'm still looking for and the continual learner in myself begins its journey.

Elise's explanation of why *Bridge to Terabithia* was one of the three most important learning resources in the course sounds very similar to her *Bridge* Presentation. She used the same kinds of words to describe the classroom, including safety, comfort, and filling the classroom with art and literature. Two things make this passage different from her *Bridge* Presentation. The first is her explanation about why this was such an important idea. The second is her commitment to keep learning in order to find out *how* to create such a learning community.

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Elise claimed that even though she had read about "creating a community of learners" it was not until she had read (and, I would add, talked about) *Bridge to Terabithia* that those articles became meaningful for her. Elise had been asked to read Kathy Short's (1991) "Creating a Community of Learners." Short uses excerpts of interviews with children, examples from two teachers who successfully created strong learning communities, and summaries of learning theory to talk about the importance of, the reasons to, and the methods by which teachers can create powerful learning communities. She argues that the important features of a classroom community include ownership and choice within a supportive structure, shared responsibility for decision making, reflection on learning, a focus on consensus and problem solving within an atmosphere of acceptance, and a value for each child's contributions that communicates safety and the sharing of ideas.

Short's chapter is relatively readable (especially compared to Dewey!) but it was also quite formally written. In the article, formal passages and sentences such as "The kind of social setting within which learners form relationships and dialogues with others has a major impact on the potentials and constraints those learners perceive for their own learning" (p. 34) are balanced with more accessible sentences and passages such as "For children who have not worked in small groups, partner activities seem especially helpful because they are less threatening and overwhelming" (p. 37).

In her final reflection, Elise did not claim that she did not understand Short when she read it the first time[ii], instead, she said that it was not until reading the novel that the concept "sunk in." As she worked to represent her interpretation of the novel, in talk with her classmates and individually for the presentations, she found that Jesse and Leslie were concrete examples of these ideas about the learning community, a concrete example she could take hold of and understand.

In her final reflection, when Elise claimed that the novel *Bridge to Terabithia* helped the concept of the learning community to "sink in," she also asked herself, "How do we create that environment?" The next several paragraphs of her final reflection served as initial answers to this question. As she talked about her stance elaborated her understanding of the classroom community, and ways teachers can develop strong, safe, positive relationships with children.

Making the metaphor more elaborate and interconnected. Elise's stance drew on the Terabithia as the classroom metaphor, connecting it with other concepts also discussed in class, such as balancing dichotomies and seeing children as active learners. Elise described her stance as "tough but caring, sincere but creative and constantly changing views and opinions as I evolve as a person." She said that "Creating a Terabithia for my students and teaching them how to create their own learning experience is the most important thing to do for my classroom." Elise connected these ideas and this

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stance to prior experiences in classrooms, saying that her stance had been "shaped by the teachers and classrooms of the past."

Building from all these connections, Elise then listed several specific strategies for enacting her stance and "Creating a Terabithia."

> The safety of the classroom will be increased by the aesthetics of the room. Paintings, pictures and posters that describe my own personality will be on the walls, but the majority of the walls will be filled with the students own work. The first day of class would consist of students creating their own coat of arms: describing who they are, will be displayed in the classroom throughout the year. . . Students and myself would be arranged in a circle, so it is made clear that I am not "running" the class. Instead, we are all participants in this exercise. There will be a tape recorder with various types of music to be played during journal writing and project assignments. Students will choose their own music . . . I will take an active part in the student's life. Standing in the hallways and asking students about their weekends would be routine.

Elise's decision to list so many specific strategies for creating the learning community is important. Each strategy is a concrete expression of one of the important "Terabithia-like qualities" of the learning community. Safety and freedom to take risks were describe as important Terabithian qualities, and safety can come about when teachers know students well. Elise

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listed strategies for getting to know students as people, including the coat of arms project and "standing in the hallway" to ask students about their weekends. She also imagined that ownership and choice were important elements of the learning community, which she imagined bringing into her future classroom by letting students choose music and hang their own posters and artwork on the wall. Elise also frequently described art and imagination as important parts of Terabithia, and these activities, the coat of arms, playing music, journal writing, hanging student work on the walls, these are ways to bring art and imagination into her English classroom.

Elise attributed the ideas she listed to former teachers, saying she was sifting positive memories from negative ones. Another interesting thing about this list of strategies is that it is very reminiscent of the Short article. That article weaves theory with concrete examples of ways teachers have successfully built learning relationships with children. These include ways to personalize the classroom community such as asking students to write in journals and doing other "getting to know you" activities, as well as ways to share responsibility, such as giving students responsibility to manage the classroom and make decisions about classroom resources.

Elise's strategies are also reminiscent of her experiences as a student in EDU 200. At the beginning of the course, Sue worked hard to model the building of the classroom community. Elise's coat of arms project is reminiscent of Sue's Personal Profiles assignment, for which teacher candidates brought in artifacts and pictures to introduce themselves to the

rest of the class. Sue hung all the posters and artwork the teacher candidates created on the walls of the education classroom, even though she had to switch classrooms midway through the semester, a strategy Elise plans on replicating. Elise's ability to draw on these several experiences, reading, being a student, interpreting the novel, to create specific strategies is evidence of transformational knowledge. Not only could she describe "Terabithia as the classroom," she could move beyond the metaphor to specific actions that bring the metaphor to life. These multiple, concrete, classroom-based examples are evidence that Elise had transformed her understanding of the classroom community, both by drawing connections between a wide variety of concepts, readings, and experiences, and by taking those connections out of the EDU 200 classroom and applying them to her imagined future classroom.

Conclusion. On the surface, it would be easy to say Elise learned from the novel by developing the Terabithia as the Classroom metaphor, and then using that metaphor to make sense of the rest of the course. And while that statement rings true, it glosses over several important features of the role that the novel played in Elise's transformation of learning in EDU 200.

The narrative itself played an important role in Elise's learning. The plot and characters portrayed in *Bridge to Terabithia* pointed out certain things. The children learned more, grew more, in their imaginary kingdom than they did at school. Paterson (the author) used metaphor and symbol and tension and carefully crafted words to illustrate Jesse's growth over the course of the novel, especially they important role that Terabithia and Leslie played

in that growth. None of that was lost on Elise. Elise used the particulars of the narrative to think not only about the book, but about her future role as a teacher and the kinds of experiences she would want to provide for children. She learned from the novel by generating a theory, that classrooms should be like Terabithia.

But it was not simply the text itself that Elise learned from. Elise had several opportunities to talk about and to further interpret the novel in the EDU 200 classroom. First, Elise interpreted the novel with the tools and ways of seeing she brought with her from her experience as an English major. She recognized literary structures, attended carefully to Paterson's craft of language, and developed metaphors of her own to understand the book. Second, Elise interpreted the novel by talking with her classmates. In conversation, Elise heard her peers name the important features of Terabithia. She listened to them give presentations that illustrated quite powerfully the importance of ownership and safety that made Terabithia a powerful learning environment. She talked with peers about Terabithia as a metaphor, revising hers from Terabithia as childhood to Terabithia as the classroom in light of conversations with classmates. Third, Elise interpreted the novel in the context of the EDU 200 classroom. She worked to craft a teaching-related interpretation in this course about teaching. She connected that interpretation to other pieces she had read, using the narrative as an example of a particular theory in ways which made the theory more relevant and powerful.

Elise wove all these experiences together, prior knowledge, the narrative of the novel, her interpretation of the novel, and pieces of academic theory, to learn from and with the novel in order to powerfully transform her understanding of the experience of the child and the role of the teacher.

In the next case, you will see that Renee was equally explicit about the role that reading and interpreting the novel played in her learning in the course. While Elise interpreted the novel in terms of the experience of the child, Renee used the novel to help her to think about the role of the teacher, particularly the role of the teacher to learn and care about the content she teaches.

Renee's Case

Renee was the child development major who proclaimed that her faith was very important to her. The metaphor of a bridge was an important part of Renee's learning. Renee connected her several experiences with the bridge metaphor, including interpreting (particularly painting) the novel and the use of the metaphor in the syllabus and throughout class to explain the role of the teacher. Eventually she organized her final reflection around the bridge metaphor. More importantly, Renee read the novel concurrently with a more academic piece, and wove the two together into a set of theories about the importance of subject matter knowledge. Theory and narrative wove together as Renee transformed her understanding of teaching.

The bridge metaphor. Renee had read the syllabus, in which Sue talked about the importance of bridging together children and subject matter.

She participated in the *Bridge* Discussion, and heard several of her peers talk about the metaphor of bridge, considering the ways that Leslie and Leslie's death and Terabithia served as bridges between Jesse's two selves. It was Renee who, during the Mural Painting Activity, made the suggestion for Group A's motif. She talked about the ways the two characters were kind of "on a continuum, how in some ways Jesse was closer to Leslie's world and Leslie was closer to Jesse's and like Terabithia was sort of in the middle." Her classmates translated that suggestion into the idea of "bridges to each" and painted Jesse and Leslie's worlds, with Terabithia in the middle. Terabithia was the bridge between the two characters' lives, and the teacher candidates literally painted two bridges, one from each world into Terabithia.

As she wrote her final reflection and thought back on the entire course as an experience, Renee transformed the bridge metaphor from her original suggestion of connections between the continua of Jesse and Leslie's lives, to a way of making sense of the course overall. In the introduction of her final reflection, Renee wrote,

> I was struck by the metaphor of teaching as bridge building, and the importance of knowing the terrain on both sides, the breadth of the gap to be spanned, as well as the methods and techniques of bridge-building.

Renee's use of the bridge metaphor in her final reflection is reminiscent of the way Sue wrote about the metaphor in the syllabus. In that

document, Sue told the class that they would begin with a piece by David Hawkins ("I, Thou, It), and summarized that piece with the bridge metaphor.

> His argument for the teacher's role can be illustrated by comparing the act of teaching to that of bridge building. One side of the riverbank contains the student's prior knowledge and experiences, attitudes and interests and abilities. The ideas, concepts, and relationships of your subject area lie on the other side.. . .your task is to span the gap . . . .

Sue went on to explain that the rest of the course would be about both sides of the river, and ways teachers can work to span that gap. Renee's use of the bridge metaphor in her final reflection repeats many of the same concepts, and even same phrases, that Sue listed in the syllabus. Repetition, according to the definition of learning I am using, is evidence of appropriation, but it is connection and complexity that allows me to make the claim that learners have done more than take up ideas, that learners have actually understood and taken flexible ownership of ideas. The ways Renee went on to explain why she thought that bridge-building was a good metaphor for her learning in the rest of the course are more elaborate and complex, and show that the bridge metaphor supported Renee's learning about teaching. Renee named experiences in the course that helped her to learn about each side of the bridge:

> This really pulled it all together. Yes, I could see that this is where we have been. We have explored our own childhoods,

> and past experiences as well as those of another child, to re-familiarize ourselves with the child's world and their position in it. We also explored the importance of subject matter (something I had hitherto not fully grasped) and its powerful potential as the substance, or connecting force, between the teacher and student.

The metaphor of bridge building was important to Renee. And while she interpreted the novel partly in terms of the bridge metaphor, it seems more likely that Sue's use of the metaphor in the syllabus and occasionally in class were as or more powerful for helping Renee make sense of the course in terms of a bridge than reading the novel. The novel did not necessarily bring Renee to think about teaching in terms of building bridges, but it did help her to explore one side of that terrain, the side having to do with subject matter.

Appreciating subject matter. Renee's appropriate use of the bridge metaphor is not nearly as interesting, in terms of the dissertation question about the role of the novel, as her development of the subject-matter side of the bridge. Renee learned a great deal in the course about teaching, and interpreting the novel helped her to significantly change her understanding of and appreciation for subject matter knowledge. Renee saw this change in her understanding and wrote about it in several ways in her final reflection. For example, Renee wrote:

> As it stands my passion is and probably will always be the children-- that's the way I want it to be. But I see myself

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becoming more passionate than I have ever been about subject matter as well!

This newfound appreciation of subject matter and of teaching children content was no small change. Renee was a child development major. At this institution, all future elementary school teachers take the sequence of professional education courses offered by the education department that included EDU 200. Most also earn minors or majors in subject areas from various academic departments on campus. This academic coursework is meant to give teacher candidates a deep and thorough understanding of one or more content areas they will eventually teach. Child development majors, however, do not take extensive classes in an academic field analogous to a school subject. Instead, they study children's growth, psychology, and development, and take part in extensive field experiences observing, interacting with, and eventually teaching young children at a university based laboratory preschool.

Like many of her classmates, particularly those planning to teach the primary grades, Renee came to class thinking about teaching in terms of loving relationships with children. Renee wrote on the first day of class survey that the best thing about teaching would be "The rewards–I love being w/ kids." She hoped that her students would describe her classroom as "kind, accepting, enabling, helping . . . perhaps "challenging" and added the caveat, "needs more thought." As you can see, Renee already had definite ideas about the kind of learning community and the kinds of experiences for

children she would like to create. However, the content, that thing that might "challenge" students, was something she needed to think more about.

Subject matter and academic readings–Hawkins and Dewey. In keeping with her comments on the first day of class, Renee claimed in her final reflection that when she entered the course, she thought of teaching as an activity analogous to loving children. She said, "I already had the emphasis on the child." In her final reflection, Renee claimed that it was the Hawkins article, an article she read the second week of class, that brought her to rethink her understanding of teaching. She wrote

> We started off with the Hawkins article "I, Thou, It" where I was hit with the idea that loving kids is not enough. The thought hit me so negatively, and I wrestled with it. *Of course* it's not enough to just love kids, I know that; but why then did it seem so harsh? I began to realize that I had indeed been focusing on teaching as loving children, and given very little thought to what I would actually *teach* them.

The Hawkins article does challenge the notion that loving children is sufficient for teaching them well. Hawkins says that neither teacher nor child are sufficient to establish a learning relationship, that you need "some third thing which is of interest to the child *and* to the adult, in which they can join in outward projection. Only this creates a stable bond of communication, of shared concern" (pp. 57-58) The article is dense and multisyllabic and quite formal in tone. It was hard for many of the teacher candidates (including

Renee) to understand the article, and according to my Field Notes, the discussion (one of the first of the semester while teacher candidates were still working to know and trust one another) did not move much beyond restatements of the I, Thou, It title of the article.

Even though Renee claimed, in her final reflection, that the Hawkins article sparked her thinking and really challenged her, she did not seem to be immediately moved by the article. In class on the day the teacher candidates discussed the Hawkins article, Renee claimed that the article "didn't hit me" because it was a long and drawn out way of saying something basic, that the parent and child relationship is different form the teacher child relationship. At the end of class that day Renee wrote a fast-write to summarize her experiences during class. In this fast-write Renee did not seem particularly impressed by Hawkins, or his ideas. After reflecting on the nature of her participation in class, Renee wrote "I appreciated the fact, too, that even though I (and others) may not have been particularly struck by Hawkins today, we dug into it anyway and looked at it from different perspectives." In this brief in-class fast-write, Renee was not specific about the article or how it had helped her think about teaching. Although Renee claimed that she had seen the article from "different perspectives," she did not go on to say what any of those perspectives were or to describe her understanding of the article.

Since she claimed that Hawkins pushed her thinking and challenged her to reconsider her understanding of teaching as loving children, some experience or set of experiences must have helped Renee reconsider her

understanding of teaching in light of this article. I believe that three readings and the activities surrounding them shaped Renee's understanding of and appreciation for the ideas in Hawkins' "I, Thou, It" paper: 1) an article by Robert Fried about passionate teaching, 2) Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum*, and 3) the *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence.

In her final reflection, Renee linked her understanding of Hawkins to her reading of Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum*. In the quote below, notice how she returned to the bridge metaphor to tie her reflection together. Hawkins pointed out that loving children was not enough. Dewey helped her understand the importance of subject matter. The bridge metaphor, thinking of the teacher's role as a connection, summarized her understanding of both pieces. After writing about the ways that Hawkins challenged her understanding of the teacher-child relationship, Renee explained how Dewey helped her to understand the third part of the I, Thou, It triangle, the content that creates the relationship between the child and the teacher. Renee wrote:

> Dewey's "Child and Curriculum" really helped me in this by clarifying the role of subject matter. His systematic argument demonstrated how there could be harmony between the child and their experience, and logical types of information taught in school. What made sense to me was that without instruction into the ways of adult thinking, children would not be able to progress. . . . I saw that to neglect subject matter was to deny children the skills and resources they need to survive in our

society. It is from here that I am naturally brought again to the metaphor of bridge--relating and connecting the "where they have been" and the "where they are going."

This was an important realization for Renee. She worked hard to understand both academic pieces and to interpret them in light of her own experiences and her own understanding of her future classrooms. One thing that helped Renee in this process, or that at least organized her understanding of both pieces, was the bridge metaphor. Another thing that supported her learning about subject matter was reading and interpreting *Bridge to Terabithia* concurrent with Fried's "Passionate Teaching."

Interpreting the novel to understand theory: Fried and "Passionate Teaching". Renee's understanding of subject matter was an extension of her interpretation of *Bridge to Terabithia.* Renee was one of several teacher candidates who gave a "My Terabithia" presentation. Renee's Terabithia was the swampy area behind her suburban home. She said, "I had my own little place like [Terabithia], and it was out in the woods, too, well, sort of." Renee talked about going to this spot with her neighbors. Together, they would use their imaginations to create fantastic worlds. They would be explorers, making discoveries and learning together about plants and animals that lived in the swamp. They were "marine biologists . . . who just happened to get stuck there, so we were collecting specimens, you know, doing all this research." They felt possessive of this land and hated it when other children rode their bikes nearby, because "it was our secret space." Renee loved this

land, and when she moved away she wrote in her journal wondering how she could leave "this place of my solace." Like her peers' Terabithia presentations, Renee's Terabithia was significant for the friendship, imaginative play, safety, ownership and learning she experienced there. (See Appendix C for Renee's presentation in its entirety.)

As I mentioned in chapter 4, Renee worked hard to figure out why her Terabithia story mattered in the context of EDU 200. Although simply telling this story would have been sufficient for the assignment, Renee wanted to make sense of the novel and her interpretation of it in light of the course and her future role as a teacher. Renee concluded her Terabithia story with an explanation of its significance. Renee could identify the important features of Terabithia, but she wondered why they were important. Renee said, "And I was just thinking about how does this relate to, well yeah I had a secret place too, but what, like what's the point?" The presentations were due the same day that the class was asked to read Fried's "Passionate Teaching" chapter, and as Renee tried to understand the significance of her presentation, she moved back and forth between the two texts, novel and theory, to think about the lessons to be learned from her own Terabithia. As Renee put it, "I started to think about everything more in the context of that passionate teaching article that we were reading."

Renee concluded that the specialness of both Terabithias (hers and Jesse's) had more to do with people and events than it did with setting. As she continued to talk about the connections she was making, Renee stated

that both of the people Jesse learned from–Leslie and Ms. Edmunds–were important to his learning and she hoped one day to play the same role for her own students. Renee said:

> It wasn't really the place that made such an impact on him, it was the people, it was the support he got from Leslie and the creativity and he got that from Ms. Edmunds, too, and so um, it really challenged me to start thinking more about, you know, that I want to be that kind of friend, that I want to be that kind of teacher, that's passionate, like that, to provide that for children.

Renee's use of the word passionate in this sentence is interesting. She said that Leslie and Ms. Edmunds gave Jesse "support" and "creativity," and certainly those were qualities both characters possessed. Leslie was a great friend and together Jesse and Leslie played fantastic imaginary games. Ms. Edmunds was a kind and compassionate teacher, and she was also the music teacher and took Jesse to an art museum. Friendship and creativity were important aspects of Jesse's relationships with both characters. *Bridge to Terabithia*, as a narrative, pointed out certain things. The novel was all about Jesse's growth, and the importance of his relationship with Leslie (and, to a lesser degree, Ms. Edmunds) in that growth. Paterson used the narrative structures of plot and craft of language and characterization and metaphor to point out the nature of Jesse's relationship with both characters. Jesse grew and changed not just because of their love for him, but because of a love structured around particular things, music and art in the case of Ms.

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Edmunds, literature and story and play and Terabithia in the case of Leslie. Renee was able to learn from the narrative by paying attention to the specifics of Jesse's experience as they were related in the novel.

The chances Renee had to talk about and interpret the novel in class supported this learning. During the *Bridge* Sequence, Renee worked hard to use talk, both individually and with her group, to ascribe a particular significance to Terabithia and to Jesse's relationship with Leslie and Ms. Edmunds. She did so by using the narrative of the novel as a concrete example of theory.

The Fried article, an accessibly written and compelling discussion of the characteristics of powerful and successful teachers, talks about the importance of really caring about *something* and the ways that caring can be communicated to students. Fried, however, did not craft his argument only around passion for content. Friend wrote, in successive paragraphs that "You can be passionate about your field of knowledge . . . . you can be passionate about issues facing our world . . . you can be passionate about children" (p. 18). Renee was already passionate about children but she did not use the Fried article to reify that conviction. Instead, she used her particular understanding of the novel to think about the content and subject matter aspects of Fried's emphasis on passion. She realized that in order to teach children, and to make a difference in their lives, she would need to teach them about *something,* something that she cared about. Her understanding of the novel's significance, and a handout that Sue shared to help them think

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about Fried, on which she asked the teacher candidates to list subject matter that they could be passionate about, shaped Renee's interpretation of the article. Renee said,

> I was thinking about that Study Guide that Sue gave us, you know, what particular content areas can you apply this to, in your teaching, what can you be passionate about, and that was something I really wanted to start thinking about.

Weaving all four texts together: *Bridge*, Dewey, Hawkins, Fried. Shortly after working with *Bridge to Terabithia* Renee read and wrote about Dewey's "The Child and the Curriculum." In her short response paper Renee continued to develop ideas about her role as a teacher in terms of subject matter. She wrote, "I had, in effect, been thinking of teaching in terms of caring about the kids and in dealing with them in the optimal way to encourage their well-being and development, but very little at all about subject matter." This paper was also the first time Renee claimed her understanding of Hawkins and the teacher-child-curriculum relationship was changing. Renee said, "I was a little taken aback by the initial Hawkins article, though I found afterwards that I essentially agreed with it." Renee went on to talk about her understanding of Dewey, and the ways he gave "logical explanations" that "served to cement my still-forming ideas on the topic of how the child and the curriculum fit together."

Renee wrote about a fairly sophisticated understanding of Dewey (a daunting task for any graduate student, let alone an undergraduate in her

third education course.) For example, she explained that she had an understanding of the interrelationship between logical and psychological types of information, both of which are mutually dependent. She said that logical referred "to its meaning and significance, function and purpose within its own field–theoretically separate from the child's own life experiences" and that psychological referred "to the material in relationship to a the child, their past and present experiences and environment." Renee went on to consider Dewey's understanding of teaching. She said she liked "Dewey's assessment of the fact that it is useless both to force irrelevant 'adult' material on a child from without, or to simply leave the child to his own childish devices."

Renee did not explicitly talk about either Fried or *Bridge to Terabithia* or her interpretation in her paper about Dewey, but there is an echo of Terabithia-like ideas in her writing. During the *Bridge* Sequence, Renee had described her the environment in her back yard, its important elements of safety and ownership and imagination and play. She had heard several of her peers echo Elise's metaphor of Terabithia as the classroom. Renee concluded her paper by quoting Dewey, and wrote,

> My interpretation and summation of the whole issue is this: Create the right environment to match the child's capacities, and then "let the child's nature fulfill its own destiny." (209)

Here, Renee suggested that what teachers can and should do is create the right "environment." In her selection of that word, "environment," I

hear echoes of her interpretation of the novel and her Terabithia Presentation, the right "environment" for both play and learning.

Renee made the connections between the three academic authors, Dewey, Hawkins, and Fried, more explicit in her final reflection. In that paper, in sections I have already quoted fairly heavily, Renee moved from one paragraph about Hawkins to another about Dewey to a third about Fried, each time repeating, extending, and elaborating on her ideas. She asked herself "*Of course* it's not enough just to love kids . . . Why then be a teacher?" (in reference to Hawkins), explained that Dewey helped her see that teaching content was a way of loving children, that "to neglect subject matter was to deny children the skills and resources they need to survive in our society," and went on to explain that Fried helped her to understand that balance between both children and content was important, that "my passion is and probably will always be the children . . . but I see myself becoming more passionate than I have ever been about subject matter as well!"

Remember that the final reflection asked teacher candidates to list resources that were valuable to their learning. Renee had put all three of these articles and her understanding of them under the heading of "the issue of child and curriculum," one of her three listed resources (the others being her classmates and her child study). To her, the three sets of readings were interconnected.

Interpreting *Bridge to Terabithia* helped her to make sense of and draw connections between these theorists. Terabithia provided the context for

making sense of Fried, and brought her to think about specific examples of learning environments, her own back yard and Terabithia. Her continued use of the bridge metaphor is part of that interconnection between theory and story. Dewey brought her "again to the metaphor of bridge--relating and connecting the 'where they have been' and the 'where they are going." Fried she described as helping her to "view teaching as an exciting challenge of relating the child and curriculum." The narrative, in particular Renee's interpretation of the reasons that Terabithia was an important place and her understanding of Jesse's relationships with Leslie and Ms. Edmunds, was the strand that held together the web of connections Renee constructed about these three pieces of theory. Renee used her understanding of the novel to create a complex web of connections about the role of subject matter in classrooms.

Elaborate connections and interconnections are one kind of evidence that an individual has engaged in learning in a transformative nature. Another is taking ideas and moving them beyond the immediate context. As Renee connected all these theory pieces, and made sense of them in light of her interpretation of the novel, they stayed hypothetical. That is, the ideas continued to be abstract theories, albeit complex and interrelated theories. At the end of her final reflection, Renee made these theories more concrete, by considering her own passion, her Christian faith. While her faith may not be a kind of subject matter that she brings directly into the classroom, Renee was aware that it would shape her decisions as a teacher, and guide her decisions

in the classroom. The end of the reflections was the section where teacher candidates were asked to add one item to the list of knowledge, skills and dispositions that good teachers possess. This is what Renee wrote:

> After poring over "the list" several times, I feel blocked to think of new additions . . . . I could talk about loving students, or being "passionate", but either of these seems to be just a combination of the favorable knowledge, skills, and dispositions we have already listed. Rather than try to describe something that would seem like a stretch to me, I decided instead to add an item that pertains only to me personally being a good teacher. I am unsure as how to label it, but perhaps it would be best described as "Being faithful to God with what he has given me to do." For me, teaching is a way to touch lives with a love that comes from God. A verse that I often go back to in all areas of my life is found I Colossians 3:23. It says, "All that you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord." This is what I seek to do as a teacher . . . . For me, being a good teacher will hinge on how well my life is representative of what the Bible calls the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faith and self-control.

Renee decided to end her final reflection with a connection to a passionate interest in her life, her faith. I have interpreted that decision as a concrete example of Renee's learning in the course. Hawkins claims that in educative situations there is a third thing, outside of teacher and child, that

cements the relationship and enables learning. Renee named faith as one possible "third thing" outside of her self and her students.

This highlights the limits of what we can know about Renee's transformation of knowledge. Renee has expressed a firm commitment to love children by knowing and caring abut subject matter as well as students. She seemed well prepared to take full advantage of the subject matter specific courses that follow EDU 200, but I cannot claim that Renee has either demonstrated that commitment by becoming passionate about a particular aspect of subject matter, or found ways to communicate that passion to children.

Conclusion. The bridge metaphor, passion, the importance of subject matter, these were important ideas that Renee appropriated and transformed during EDU 200. They were, of course, not the only content of Renee's learning. She also wrote and spoke about a wide variety of new insights and understandings she was constructing for herself such as ways to build the learning community, how to teach by guiding and not telling, and the importance of reflection during teaching, among other examples.

The bridge metaphor, passion, and caring about content were perhaps the most important ideas she learned. She dedicated more time to these ideas in her writing than any others. She worked hard to interpret articles that were very difficult to read. She was willing to return to these ideas over and over again. Renee talked and wrote repeatedly in ways that helped her to make connections between the readings and her own experience. Renee's

interpretation of *Bridge to Terabithia* played an important role in that process. During the *Bridge* Discussion, she worked with her peers to define and describe Terabithia and to explore the bridge metaphor. She nominated the metaphor as an organizing principle for her group's mural. And then she related a personal narrative about Terabithia, searching for that narrative's significance in the class. As she did so, Renee found ways to understand the academic pieces she had read. Her understanding of the novel, of teaching, and of theory were transformed as she sought to make connections between all three.

Aaron's Case

According to his written work, Aaron's understanding of and thoughts about teaching changed remarkably over the course of the semester. There are important differences between Aaron's final reflection and his responses on the survey completed the first day of class. During EDU 200, Aaron's understanding changed from a conception of a teacher standing in front of students delivering information to an understanding of teaching as working with children to build from their existing knowledge.

The changes in Aaron's understanding. On the first day of class, Aaron reported that his own memories of schooling, both high school and at the university, were very negative. He said that other teacher education courses were "too much on psychology, abstracts," and that he hated school because it was "busy work–no need to think." In spite of taking two education courses already, Aaron did not feel like he knew much about teaching. In answer to

the prompt asking him to list experiences he saw as relevant to teaching, he could see only one: "student." He also said he had had few experiences with children, and "no classroom experiences."

Aaron's conception of teaching at the beginning of class was fairly teacher centered. For example, he thought that the best thing about being a teacher would be his "role as teacher/learner." He claimed his biggest fear was "freezing in front of class." He wanted to become a teacher to "help others appreciate what I do." The only attention that Aaron paid to the experience of the student on this first day of class survey was in response to the prompt "what words would you like students to use describing your classroom," to which he replied, "fun, positive, relevant." These brief comments lead me to believe that Aaron brought a self-oriented understanding of teaching to EDU 200, and that his understanding of the role of the teacher was consistent with those of many beginning teachers who tend to see themselves of the keepers of knowledge that they will deliver to students, such as those described by Prawat (1992).

Aaron's responses to the first day of class survey stand out sharply against his final reflection. In that final paper, Aaron wrote about how his conception of teaching had changed:

> I'm proud to say that my stance as a teacher is growing more and more towards that of Mr. Ed Clarke, as described by Fried. When I first started studying teaching, I wondered how in the world I would fill my students' head with all the wondrous thoughts I

had been accumulating throughout the course of my college education. I wanted them to be able to appreciate great works of literature on the same level I did, yet I didn't know how this was possible. I didn't think that students are dumb, just inexperienced.

That view has changed a great deal. Through my studies in teaching and experiences with students, I now view students as extremely smart and experienced human beings. Though they may not have the educational background I do, we do share many experiences that are valuable to our learning. I want to make my students understand that we all have something valuable to share, and that they can help me just as much as I can help them.

Aaron developed a new understanding of the role of the teacher, moving from a conception of teaching as delivering information to teaching as being one member of a community of learners. He developed a more sophisticated understanding of the experience of the child. When the course started, Aaron thought of teaching almost primarily from the teacher's point of view, but at the end of the semester he imagined sharing many experiences with his students, and knew that he could learn from them. Underlying both of these developments is a changing epistemology. Aaron, at the end of the course, conceived of learning as an active construction where learners build

from what they know and make sense of new experiences in light of past experiences.

Although this passage I have quoted is the one that most explicitly represents Aaron's own understanding of his learning in the course, other portions of his final reflection elaborate on his understanding of teaching, learning, and the child's experience. For example, he talked in the final reflection about wanting to know students, not just as learners, but as human beings. He felt that knowing students as people would be one way to communicate his caring and respect for them. Knowing students well, understanding what they think and who they are, became an important part of Aaron's conception of the role of the teacher. In addition, Aaron was able to extend that conception of the teacher's role to his own imagined future in a classroom. Aaron wrote:

> I think above all, I want to learn how to make my students understand that I do care about them as human beings, not just as students or learners. Once I can gain such a stance, I think the students will respect my honesty, and want to help themselves and myself to learn as much as we can, together.

Aaron repeated this idea in the section of his final reflection about the knowledge, skills and dispositions that good teachers possess. Aaron said that he would add "letting students know you care" to the skills portion of that list. He went on to explain,

> Perhaps I feel this way because I don't remember any of my teachers ever making me feel as though my thoughts, my actions, my life was important. How can teachers expect students to listen to what we tell them if we don't care about what they want to tell us?

This quote highlights the contrast between Aaron's stance at the beginning and the end of class. Where as in the beginning he seemed to conceive of teaching as just telling, and wondered about how to get students to understand the teacher's point of view, at the end of class he had begun to see teaching as both telling and listening, and understood that teachers who listen to students are better teachers.

Aaron also brought his developing understanding of teaching and learning to his interpretation of a video he saw in class. This video, in which several high school students discuss a piece of literature, was one of the three valuable resources that Aaron listed. In particular, Aaron noticed that in the video, "the students felt comfortable blurting out their ideas and opinions to the teacher. They were able to take an active part in their own learning, which is a success for that particular teacher." Aaron said the video showed that valuable things were going on because the students had chances to be active learners, to be using talk to make sense of and understand a piece of literature. He attributed that learning to the classroom community. As he put it,

> It also helped to see how a high school class can be a comfortable learning environment for students. . . . Though we weren't able to see how that particular teacher established such a comfortable setting, it helped my learning a great deal to see what can happen once such an environment is established.

Aaron also extended these ideas about the learning community and the teacher's role to his decision to name not being arrogant as an important skill teachers possess. His discussion of arrogance, and his worries about the effects of his own potentially perceived arrogance, are interesting extensions of his changing ideas about teaching. He worked hard, in this paragraph, to understand his own actions as a teacher and to think about the experiences of children he has worked with. Aaron claimed, "It's really important to me not to be arrogant as a teacher."

Aaron worried that when he worked with high schoolers in his field setting, they felt as though he was judging them, and he was not sure how to use his more advanced knowledge of literature and writing in less intimidating ways. Aaron said, "they always seem to feel as though I'm looking down at them or judging them as people based on their work." which was not his goal. Instead, Aaron claimed that "I want my students to look at me not as the ultimate authority of all things in the world of literature, but as a resource that is more is there for the sole purpose of helping them better understand reading and writing as it applies to their lives. Obviously I have a

lot of work to do in that department." This statement is a far cry from his stated goal as a teacher to "help others appreciate what I do."

Aaron used his final reflection to communicate the changes in his understanding of teaching, learning, and the child's experience. He made connections between an understanding of children as active learners, his growing appreciation for the experiences and knowledge children bring to classrooms, and his conception of the role of teacher as one of knowing students well, and working as one among a community of learners.

Course experiences that shaped Aaron's learning. Aaron's journey as a teacher candidate did not happen all at once. For Aaron, the entire course was interconnected, and he worked on ideas about teaching and children and the value and worth of the child's experience over and over. Aaron's experiences at a local junior high school, his responses to academic readings, and participation in class intertwined, as he worked hard to value and identify with children. He appreciated and learned from participating in the EDU 200 classroom environment. Finally, he worked hard to make sense of *Bridge to Terabithia*, both as a piece of literature and as a piece of reading in this teacher preparation course. Throughout all these activities, it is as if Aaron was asking himself, "Who are these children I will teach, what might they bring to the classroom, how can I connect with them?"

It all started on the second day of class. For that day, the teacher candidates read a piece by Henry James, called "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings." Aaron wrote a response to that article, summarizing his

understanding of it. In that response, he began to think about the experience of the child and to think about the importance and the possible benefits of trying to see things from the child's point of view.

> What I took from the piece was that as educators, we need to recognize and respect the views of our students. Though their problems may seem foreign to us, they are very real problems. We should try to use our unique perspectives to help eachother (teacher and student) see things that we may have not been able to see. The "blindness" we all have should not be seen as an obstacle, but a challenge, and we will be rewarded from taking that challenge by reaching a better understanding of others.
>
> What can we do as teachers to help our students see <u>our</u> perspective?

Aaron's response to the James reading, written the first week of class, makes a subtle shift from his more self-oriented first-day of class survey. Aaron wrote about seeing things from the child's point of view. In particular, he claimed that James was telling us to try to understand children's "problems," though they may be very difficult for us to understand. Thinking about the issues and difficulties that children bring to the classroom certainly is an important step in coming to think of children as learners who build from prior knowledge and experiences in the classroom. By the end of the course, Aaron was able to think of students bringing not only problems, but important and valuable knowledge and experience.

One of the things that is striking in Aaron's reflection is his decision to add on the last sentence. In that last sentence, he asks how teachers can help their students to see things from the teachers' perspective. This ending question is in keeping with his responses to the survey, and hoping that as a teacher children will "appreciate what I do."

Reading James was one of many ways Aaron began to explore the experience of the child and children as learners. In his final reflection, Aaron listed three course experiences that he believed had shaped his learning--the video tapes, which I mentioned above, his classmates, and the child study assignment.

Learning from his classmates. From the beginning, Aaron appreciated opportunities he had to learn about his classmates. In the first weeks of class, Aaron wrote that the getting-to-know you experiences Sue assigned "helped me to think of my classmates as real people rather than just as students." At the end of class, Aaron reported on the perceived benefits of knowing his peers so well.

> We began to feel more comfortable talking about our own ideas about teaching. We looked to eachother as resources, and asked eachother practical questions about our own ideas on teaching. We weren't afraid to challenge accepted philosophies of teaching, or to challenge our own preconceived notions of what makes a good teacher.

According to his final reflection, one of the most valuable experiences in the course was Aaron's work in a local junior high classroom. In the field Aaron was able to observe a classroom that shared features of the learning community with his EDU 200 classroom. He described his field placement as open and comfortable, which he said helped the students there to "answer questions or state their opinions" in respectful ways.

The major focus of the field placement was a child study assignment. In that paper, Aaron wrote about the ways that during his several visits to the field, he worked hard to understand one child, Alex, as both a person and as a learner. He watched Alex interact with peers and came to the conclusion that Alex's quietness had more to do with his relationship with classmates than his academic abilities. Aaron paid attention to the ways that Alex interacted with the teacher and found that when the teacher took an active interest in Alex and Alex's interests, Alex worked harder and learned more. He watched Alex complete several assignments, and concluded that when Alex was given ownership and choice, he was more motivated to work and to learn. Perhaps most importantly, Aaron learned about Alex's interests in magic and dragons, and saw that interest as a strength that Alex brought to the English classroom, a source of reasons to read, and inspiration to write.

The resources that Aaron listed in his final reflection, the video tapes, the field experience, and the EDU 200 learning community, were certainly experiences that helped Aaron to construct the complex understanding of children and learning that he represented in his final reflection. Another

experience was also very influential in this process–the *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence.

The role of the *Bridge* Sequence. Aaron did not list the *Bridge* Sequence as one of the three valuable experiences in the classroom. In fact, Aaron might tell you (though I did not get the opportunity to ask him directly) that reading and working with *Bridge to Terabithia* was an unpleasant experience. During the *Bridge* Sequence, Aaron frequently said he had not "identified" with the book. In spite of his lack of affection for the novel, the evidence suggests that the *Bridge* Sequence played an important role in Aaron's learning. Aaron used the *Bridge* Sequence as an opportunity to explore whether or not and how he might identify with Jesse, the main character of the novel. As Aaron worked to justify NOT identifying with Jesse, he found connections he thought did not exist. During the *Bridge* Sequence, Aaron took advantage of the EDU 200 learning community, taking risks by raising unpopular opinions and ideas, and sharing personal poetry. Echoes of this work with the novel are present in Aaron's end of class writing.

In the last chapter, I talked at length about Aaron's participation during the *Bridge* Discussion, Painting, and Presentations. I will summarize those experiences now, pointing out the ways Aaron's work with the novel was echoed in his final reflection. During the *Bridge* Discussion, Aaron claimed that the Initial Map of Childhood summarizing the class' memories was different from Jesse's childhood experiences in the novel. Aaron referred to

the sheet and claimed that it was "one sided" and "coming from a particular upbringing and background." Aaron also claimed that "I didn't identify with a lot of the stuff in this book, because that's not, I hadn't been through this stuff they did."

Aaron's classmates, Tracy and Elise, challenged this claim, and talked about ways that "every kid would probably be able to connect to either of the characters" (Tracy) and that "the idea of losing someone is played across the line" (Elise). After his classmates challenged Aaron's claim that it was hard to identify with the novel, Aaron went on to justify his response to the book in terms of aspects of the text. He implied that the book was too simplistic, saying, "They have to resolve it in 10 pages." He also described the novel as "passé," talking about the ways he "knew what's going to happen."

In spite of his lack of identification with the novel, Aaron did name some of the important qualities of Terabithia during the discussion. When asked to think about Terabithia as a metaphor, Aaron suggested that it's "more like adulthood," because in Terabithia, "they don't have to answer to anybody . . . there's no boundaries."

During the Mural Painting Activity, Aaron added a couple of elements to the mural that were consistent with the group's overall plan (one side for Jesse's world, one side for Leslie's, and Terabithia in the middle) by adding a sun and some boulders in the stream. Aaron then added the red drops on one of the boulders. These drops were meant to represent the place where Leslie struck her head, and then drowned. In chapter 4, I talked about the

ways that these drops of red challenged the bittersweet and sentimental mural his group was creating by adding the element of pain, sorrow, and tragedy that is so crucial to the novel. During the mural painting, Aaron continued to think about, and to find ways to express, these differences between his life and Jesse's, the experiences with death, that made it so hard for him to identify with the novel in the first place.

Aaron shared poems for his presentation. Aaron's first poem was called a "Sonnet for Youth." At the conclusion of the first poem Aaron read, he explained that it was "kind of about, it was hard for me to identify with the death aspect of, ah, *Bridge to Terabithia*, 'cause I know nothing about it." This poem, which he said he had written for the presentations, started out highlighting the differences, once again. For example, one pair of lines from the poem was: "My sunniest days knew no death or fear, nor torment in my darkest nights." The poem, however, ended by referring to some potential common ground between him and the character. He read, "Though death may have not been a part of my life, I've nonetheless had my own share of strife." (Both of Aaron's poems can be found in Appendix C.)

These concluding lines of Aaron's poem hint at some sense of commonalties, some way that Aaron might have "identified" with Jesse. As he was sitting before the class, explaining and talking about this poem, Aaron flipped through his poetry journal, and decided to read a second, one he had written two months before reading the novel. Aaron explained that this second poem, called "Not a Small Thing," went along with the novel because

it was about "finding someone, like how Jess finally found somebody to share his secrets with." The second poem lists several secrets young people might not tell, such as abuse or thoughts of suicide, and then concluded

> You must find a way to not let yourself be consumed by your own secrets.
>
> Let them go, carefully.
>
> Taste the freedom that only trust in others,
>
> and more importantly yourself, can bring.

Aaron's understanding of Jesse as a character changed over the course of the *Bridge* Sequence. Aaron's final poem is evidence of a search for common ground. Where first he had noticed only differences, eventually, Aaron found similarities. This is no small change, and it is a change echoed in both his final reflection and his child study, both of which were written after the *Bridge* Sequence.

When he read and worked repeatedly on open ended, interpretive assignments during the *Bridge* Sequence, Aaron moved from not being able to find common experiences between himself and a child to finding those commonalties that could forge understanding. This change parallels the way Aaron wrote about his overall learning in the course, as he came to realize that he and his potential students "do share many experiences that are valuable to our learning."

Aaron had other opportunities in class to try to understand the experiences of children, such as reading James (1899/1958) and Short (1991),

reflecting on in class experiences, and watching videos. One of the big differences between those other experiences and Aaron's work with the novel was his explorations of connections, and lack of connections, between himself and the child.

There were differences between the ways Aaron responded to and learned from the academic texts (i.e. James and Short) and the narrative texts, and those differences lie in the quality and amount of interpretation. When Aaron read and interpreted *Bridge to Terabithia*, he did not try to summarize what he had read or to even extend that reading to learning about classrooms. Instead, he worked hard to interpret the text and to engage in a deep literary experience. Aaron first described his initial response to the novel as a lack of connection. He then worked to articulate that lack of connection in terms of both features of the text and features of himself that evoked that reaction. He continued to describe, explore, compare, and justify his understanding of the novel until he came to an interpretation of connection and identification. In so doing, he treated the fictional character, Jesse, as a real person, a child with whom he might or might not identify. As he treated the novel like a piece of literature, considering and reconsidering his response to it, he also honed and practiced skills of observation, connection seeking, and learning about children.

Aaron's work in the field echoed and extended the work he did to identify with Jesse and the novel. Aaron visited the field several times over the semester, and he finished the field work and wrote his child study paper

after he interpreted *Bridge to Terabithia*. In that paper, Aaron talked about his focus student, Alex, in terms of both differences and similarities. For example, he wrote "I don't think Alex could have been more different that [than?] me as an eight-grader, and yet we both did extremely well." Aaron found few things in common with Alex in terms of either interest or experience, but he found a connection, that they both did well in school.

Aaron also, in his child study, showed he realized that teachers not only need to note differences between themselves and children, they need to find bridges across those differences, to appreciate and value them. In a mock letter to a future teacher, Aaron wrote of Alex:

> When [Alex] feels that there is an understanding between the teacher and himself, he feels much more comfortable approaching that teacher for help with his work. Though this may be true of virtually all students, it is especially true with Alex, as his interests often don't match those of his fellow classmates.

The *Bridge to Terabithia* Sequence was one of several experiences that shaped Aaron's learning in EDU 200. Coming in with a very teacher-centered, self-oriented understanding of teaching, Aaron began to look beyond himself as the teacher and his role in front of students, to imagine understanding and knowing students as learners, communicating respect and caring for students by taking an interest in their lives, and ultimately, teach English better by forging connections and identifying with students. Whereas

Renee used the *Bridge* Sequence to think about subject matter, and Elise used the sequence to help her think about the learning community, Aaron challenged himself to think about the experiences of one child, and to think about how he, as a teacher and an individual, was reacting to those experiences. The sequence, in concert with the field experience and the videos, among other activities, helped Aaron to change his views of learners and learning.

Aaron and the learning community. A safe, respectful learning community was one important concept in Aaron's final reflection. He had noted the dialogue he watched in videos of an English classroom, and concluded that kind of dialogue was the result of a carefully constructed learning community. He appreciated the ways that in EDU 200 the students talked with and pushed one another, furthering his learning. Aaron's appreciation of and for his peers and the EDU 200 classroom is no small thing. On the first day of class Aaron wrote that other education courses were not good, because they were "too much on psychology." Aaron could not have made sense of the novel, or repeatedly tested out his ideas about the characters and his interpretation of the novel, if he did not truly feel his ideas would be respected. According to Gina, Aaron took risks during the *Bridge* Sequence he was not willing to take in other classes. Gina talked with Aaron after the *Bridge* Presentations, and he told her he had never shared poetry in any of his other classes. As we were talking about the presentations, Gina said,

> I know I talked to Aaron and he has been writing since Freshman year and he never reads his writing, and we were talking the other day and he was like, he felt comfortable reading that, and that was like, he's never done that before.

Aaron's understanding of the value of the learning community is reflected in his comments on the last day of class. That was the day Sue asked the class to make posters representing what the class was "all about." Aaron's group decided each person would add one small image to their posters, and Aaron drew stick figures with word bubbles. One figure was saying "me, me, me, me, me." The others said things such as "cool," "why?" and "really?" When Aaron explained that image to the rest of the class, the talked about the learning community. Aaron said,

> Mine, in the lower corner there's a big person in the middle giving a presentation or a talk or something and saying like "me me me me me" which means he's talking about himself, him or herself, I should say, like with that first thing we did and all. There are four people around that are smaller–I don't know why they are smaller, it's supposed to be perspective or something but I'm not an artist–and they are saying, they're saying stuff like really, and cool and why, and stuff like that, so they are, maybe, it's about the community aspect, why do you think this or it's cool that you think that or I don't understand why you think that.

The learning community, the freedom to talk about self and individual interpretations, to puzzle things through in an atmosphere of colleagues who would both listen and challenge (or say "cool" and ask "why?") supported Aaron's learning. The community made his work during the *Bridge* Sequence possible, and shaped his understanding of teaching and learning.

Conclusion. In chapter 4, I quoted Terry Dean, who suggests that:

> There simply is no training program for teachers and can be no definitive research study that will ever account for the realities our students bring with them. Change is constant. Each generation is different. Given the lack of homogeneity in our classes, given the incredible diversity of culture we are being exposed to, who better to learn from than our students? (cited in Gomez, 1991, p. 106)

But a willingness and ability to learn from students about their lives, and to value and capitalize on what is learned, is not automatic. When teaching is seen as delivering content, children's experiences are inconsequential. During the course of EDU 200, Aaron learned a great deal about teaching and the experience of the child, and began to transform his understanding of the ways students learn. He arrived in EDU 200 conceiving of teaching as delivering content. Aaron transformed his conceptions of the role of the teacher, and the importance of considering the experience of the child, over the course of the semester. Aaron claimed in his child study paper

that he had begun to see students as experienced, and to think about ways to build from and value the experiences children bring to classrooms. In his child study paper, Aaron showed that these claims were not just words, but that he could actually use this sense of the child to understand and think about teaching a particular child, Alex. Aaron's work with the novel was instrumental in this transformation. The work that Aaron did to interpret the novel, in the safe, supportive learning community of the EDU 200 classroom supported the work he did to make sense of theory and to interpret his experiences in the field. The narrative of Bridge to Terabithia provided an example, his peers provided feedback, and the academic readings and conversations in class (both about teaching and about the novel) provided Aaron with lenses to use to interpret the novel.

Steve's Case

Steve, an elementary education major, also entered EDU 200 with a fairly teacher-centered stance, and was highly skeptical of his education coursework. And like Aaron, Steve came to appreciate the importance of the child's experience more than he had at the beginning of the course. Steve, however, was very shy and did not participate much in most of the *Bridge* Sequence or any of the other more discussion oriented components of EDU 200. Steve learned about the experience of the child, but there are important differences between his case and Aaron's.

Steve as a learner in EDU 200. When Steve came to EDU 200, he brought with him a very skeptical stance. In his experience, teacher education

courses were fairly impractical. Steve had worked as a fourth grade classroom teacher's assistant, and while he was there, he found that he could not apply what he had learned in his first teacher education course. As Steve wrote on the first day of class survey, "A lot of the things in [my other education course] didn't work when I tried them in the fourth grade classroom."

Steve attributed much of his skeptical stance toward teacher preparation coursework to talks he had had with his mother, who was an elementary school teacher. In February Sue asked how the class was going, and Steve wrote:

> One concern I have so far is that I've never seen any teacher do the kinds of things we've talked about, like groupwork or letting the kids have more control over what's going on in the classroom. That's been a concern I've had in every education class I've had so far. I tell my mother, a teacher for almost 30 years, some of the things we talk about and she just laughs at how silly it sounds.

In fact, Steve said, the kinds of things taught in education courses can get teachers in trouble. In this same reflection, Steve wrote:

> Also, my aunt, who has been a teacher for 30 years, recently started doing some of those things and she was met with mixed reactions. A group from here at [Steve's university] observed her and thought what she was doing was wonderful. Her

> principal saw the same thing and said that if she kept doing things that way she'd be fired.

Steve imagined (and the teachers in his life told him) that the university was at the child centered end of a pendulum. His mother reinforced this vision, and his experiences "trying out" university-advocated practices supported that supposition. Even the teacher at his field placement thought the university was on the more child centered (and perhaps impractical) end of a continuum. Right after the *Bridge* Sequence, I asked Steve what he hoped to learn about in the rest of EDU 200, and he named a "teacher centered" classroom as something he hoped they would learn more about. Steve explained this by describing a talk with his collaborating teacher, reinforcing the importance of knowing how to teach in a "teacher centered" way. This teacher "was telling me most things in education work in cycles. Twenty years from now no one will tell you to teach child centered, she said 20 years from now, she remembered when it switched, I wondered if we'd talk at all about a teacher centered classroom [in EDU 200]."

Steve described himself as a passive learner. In our last interview, Steve told me that as a learner he was like "a lawyer," because he is always searching for "shortcuts" and "loopholes." When Steve told me about the kind of teaching he liked best–lectures–he explained that he preferred them over discussions because you do not have to work as hard. He said:

> Well, it is easier to sit back and let someone else talk, I usually just sit there, you don't have to think if you don't want to you

> just write stuff down. I just write down whatever's on the board, I don't pay attention to what's going on. When you are in a discussion class you have to work. I've thought about stuff like this a lot. That's just the student in me. Take the easiest road possible to get done.

Steve's learning. Starting off with these skeptical and take-the-easy-path dispositions, that Steve learned anything at all EDU 200 is remarkable. And learn he did. According to his final reflection, sometime during the course Steve came to understand teaching in a new way. In his final reflection, Steve wrote:

> My ideas about teaching have changed since January. This course has shown me different things that I haven't thought about before. It challenged what I previously believed and forced me to think about issues in education in a different light.

Other evidence support's Steve's claim that he learned in EDU 200. The rest of Steve's reflection names the changes in his thinking, and generally those changes he described show evidence of markers of transformation, in that the changes he described were fairly complex and interconnected, and he was able to illustrate those changes with concrete examples that extended outside of the EDU 200 classroom.

In spite of his teacher centered stance at the beginning of the semester, Steve came to value the experience of the child, and to make a commitment to understand the child's experience, because of his experiences in EDU 200.

Steve wrote repeatedly, and in a variety of ways, about the importance of understanding the child's experiences, of attending to the child's emotions and interests and abilities as you make decisions as a teacher. As Steve wrote in his concluding paragraph, "This semester has been a real eye opener for me. I have learned a lot about myself, teaching, and how to understand students."

Steve claimed that the "idea of balance" was one of the three valuable resources in the course (the others being his field work and the EDU 200 learning community). To explain what he meant by balance, Steve wrote about Cammi, his child study student, and how he realized that the discipline and learning problems Cammi was having stemmed not from disobedience or a learning problem, but because "she did not understand all of the routines of the classroom and therefore could not get the approval from the teacher that she wanted." Steve concluded that this was an instance when balance was crucial. "By recognizing this balance between the student, teacher, and subject matter, problems like that can be dealt with quickly."

Steve's teaching stance was also one of balance. Steve hoped he would be "firm but fair." Steve used a coaching metaphor to flesh out this balanced stance, saying that firmness was important because good coaches "push their teams really hard and demand the most from everyone" but that fairness was also crucial in teaching, because coaches "cannot be dictators who take control of everything. The players have to have some input in the game plan."

Remember that in the final reflections the teacher candidates were asked to name one and add one to the list of knowledge, skills, and dispositions good teachers possess. Both of the qualities that Steve mentioned for this part of his reflection were "child centered" in that they attended to creating particular kinds of experiences for children and understanding children's experiences in the classroom. This attention to the child's experience continued when Steve wrote, "One disposition from our list that really sticks out for me is encourage students to make mistakes." To illustrate what he meant by this, Steve told another story about Cammi, his child study student, and the time he had helped Cammi to realize that it is OK to make mistakes when she worked on mathematics papers. The skill that Steve wanted to add to the list was "being able to work on more than one problem at a time." As Steve explained,

> Problems with students make up a lot of the problems that can be frustrating for teachers. Students will not always tell you what is bothering them, and trying to figure it out can be stressful. A good teacher should be able to get some idea of what is causing a student's change in behavior by observing them.

Steve learned during EDU 200, changing his understanding of the importance of understanding and attending to the child's experience. In interviews with Steve at the end of the course, he spoke about his learning in ways similar to the ideas in his final reflection. Steve said that the field experience was the most valuable experience of the semester because he got to

"apply" what he was learning in teacher education. When I asked what in particular he was applying, Steve explained that now, when he worked with children, he was trying to understand how they were experiencing things As he said, he was, "looking at kids in different ways, seeing how they react to things and different ways they do things." He also said in this second interview that his stance as a teacher had changed considerably over the last semester. He told me that when he was working with children on math problems, now he would stay long enough to find out how kids were making sense of his directions, whereas:

> What I would have done in the past is I would have just wrote out the problem and said this is how you do it, and I wouldn't see if the student understood, I would just assume that the student knew what was going on.

At the beginning of the course, Steve was skeptical of the importance of paying attention to the child's experience. As with Aaron, the assumption underlying this skepticism of child centered approaches is that when teachers are delivering information to students, then the experiences they bring do not really matter. The changes in Steve's attention to the child's perspective implies a significant shift in his epistemology. Students' experiences matter because learning is not simply acquired, it is constructed.

This can be seen in a story Steve told during an interview. Hoping to find out about his epistemology, I asked Steve to tell me about a time when his focus student, Cammi, had had an "worthwhile learning experience." One

day during math time he noticed that Cammi, a perfectionist, had made a mistake on a multiplication problem. When he pointed it out to her:

> she seemed really embarrassed that she would make a simple mistake like that, so I tried to reassure her that that was OK. She wanted to be perfect. She would have had to know everything. She doesn't like to make mistakes.

I asked Steve to explain to me what made this a learning experience, and he said,

> I hope she learned it's OK to make a simple mistake. She seemed to have, she had a smile on her face when I left, I told her that I make simple mistakes like that all the time, I know she still hates to make mistakes, cause I watch her in other classes, but I think she learned that she doesn't have to feel bad about herself.

In his final reflection, Steve wrote about the importance of making the learning community one where it's important for students to make mistakes, so that they will be willing to "stretch their bounds." He tried to communicate this to Cammi. Whether or not she paid attention to him, an important aspect of this anecdote is the way that Steve was paying attention to Cammi and to her feelings and her experiences. In spite of his initial skepticism about child centered teaching, Steve said this particular worthwhile learning about came about because of the way he tried to understand and respond to Cammi's needs.

> . . . . she was explaining it to me, and she saw that little mistake, and the expression on her face really changed, like real shock, like she was disappointed, and I had to figure out from her face what she was going through, and how to fix the situation. I didn't want to just walk away and leave her there feeling miserable, I had to say don't worry about it, I make mistakes like that all the time.

Cammi brought a need for perfection that Steve believed affected her learning in the classroom, and he tried to help her learn that mistakes are OK. Whether or not Cammi actually learned that "it's OK to make mistakes," Steve's selection of this incident as a worthwhile learning experience is evidence that he has come to understand the importance of paying attention to children and their experiences, and building from those experiences in the classroom. This is a big change from the teacher and subject -matter oriented stance he brought with him to EDU 200.

In some ways, Steve's learning in EDU 200 was transformational. The concept of balance, and of attending to the needs of both child and curriculum, were concepts he read about and discussed over the semester, especially when the class read the pieces by Dewey and Elbow. Steve was able to both describe his understanding of this concept of balance and elaborate upon it by using novel metaphors (such as the coaching metaphor) to explain his sense of balance, and to bring it to bear on an experience outside the EDU 200 classroom, his work with Cammi in the field.

There are ways, however, that Steve's understanding of the importance of the child's experience, and his sense of the balance metaphor, remained closer to appropriation of a concept (repetition, taken up but not changed) and lacked the complexity and interconnectedness that are the markers of transformational learning. For example, Steve continued to think of the child's experience as a "problem" that the teacher must recognize and overcome. Contrast that to the ways that Aaron not only came to realize that students bring experiences to the classroom, these experiences also reflect important knowledge that teachers can capitalize on and build from.

Steve's thoughts about how he might teach mathematics were similar. Steve imagined that now he would find out whether or not students can do the assignments he sets before them, rather than just delivering the directions and expecting students to handle them on their own. It is definitely important for teachers to stick around and find out how their directions are received, and so this anecdote is evidence that Steve was laying the groundwork for thinking of teaching in a different light. At the same time, he still seems to be thinking about teaching in terms of delivering content. And with his Cammi anecdote, Steve felt he needed to pay attention to Cammi in order to know what to say to her next, but he equated having told Cammi that it is all right to make mistakes as equivalent to Cammi learning that it is all right to make mistakes.

Steve appropriated the concepts of balance and attending to the child's experience during the course of EDU 200. He transformed those concepts

(albeit in limited ways) by being able to extend them to novel situations, make sense of future experiences, and create new metaphors for describing his sense of the concepts. Steve's work with *Bridge to Terabithia* played an important role in his ability to begin to transform his understanding of teaching, learning, and the child's experience.

Steve's participation in the *Bridge* Sequence. Steve's participation during the mural painting and the *Bridge* Discussion (in keeping with his participation during the rest of the course) was minimal. During the *Bridge* Discussion, for example, Steve spoke only once. My transcripts of the Mural Painting Activity and the *Bridge* Discussion do not provide a window onto Steve's interpretation of the novel.

In striking contrast to the other two segments of the *Bridge* Sequence, Steve's *Bridge* Presentation was both extended and animated. Steve gave a "My Terabithia" presentation. Using his voice for emphasis and acting out important scenes, Steve told a story about practicing hockey shots in his driveway. As he practiced his hockey shots, Steve used his imagination to make mastering the skill of shooting goals more interesting, by pretending he was Steve Yzerman shooting for the Stanley Cup. (See Appendix C for Steve's entire presentation.) Steve said that he thought of these times playing hockey when he read the novel.

> I was reminded of that when I was reading the book and Jess would go out running every day so he could work on being the best runner that there was and that was just like me, I always

wanted to be the best hockey player, so I'd go out there and I'd just keep shooting and shooting.

Steve ended his hockey story by telling about his encounters with the "mean old man" next door. This neighbor would taunt Steve as he was practicing shots by shouting "Hey, Gretzky, aren't ya in the NHL yet?" Steve would be both embarrassed and angered by this neighbor, to the point that he wondered "if my slap shot was good enough to shoot it over at him and hit him in the head."

Steve's presentation shared many of the features that his classmates' Terabithia presentations had. These included ownership, safety, and imagination. According to his presentation narrative, Steve was willing to practice hockey when he could make it interesting by using his imagination to think of himself as a Stanley Cup finalist, scoring the winning goal. Not only did he use his imagination, he put himself in control, he was the one calling the shots, defining the game, determining whether or not he had scored a goal and deserved the Stanley Cup. However, when the mean old man next door teased him, Steve's memories of hockey practice changed. He became both embarrassed and angry, and he had a hard time continuing to practice. This freedom to practice, or to learn, in a safe environment --where it is safe to make mistakes--was another of Steve's important conclusions about teaching.

In his final reflection, Steve wrote about the importance of these same two qualities that the mean old neighbor episode highlighted. He wrote

about ownership as part of his firm but fair stance, as he acknowledged that students need to have "investment in the game plan." He wrote about safety and comfort, the importance of knowing it is okay to take risks, when he named encouraging students to "make mistakes" as an important teacherly disposition.

The repetition of similar sets of ideas, ideas I have labeled ownership and safety, in his presentation and his final reflection do not necessarily prove that Steve learned about teaching by transforming his interpretation of the novel into a way of thinking about teaching or students. The mere co-presence of these ideas is interesting, but with just these two pieces of data there would be no way of knowing whether the *Bridge* Sequence or some other experience in (or out of) EDU 200 helped Steve to construct a more child oriented understanding of teaching.

Two other sets of evidence support my belief that Steve's work with the novel supported his transformation of knowledge in the course. One is our conversations in interviews, where I asked him directly to speak about the novel and its role in his learning. The second is the way the *Bridge* Sequence privileged narrative ways of knowing, and the ways that Steve made use of narratives and story devices such as metaphors to both make sense of course related experiences and to explain his learning about teaching.

The role of narratives. For Steve, one of the important features of the *Bridge* Sequence was that it was based on a narrative, on a story, rather than on an academic text. Steve found the book engaging, as he told me, "when I

was reading I didn't know time was going by." In fact, he found the book much more engaging than the other pieces he read for class, because it was a story. As Steve said,

> I think it was easier to get engaged in *Bridge to Terabithia* than a lot of the stuff because it was actually a story that was there, you could get to know the characters, know more what was going on. A lot of stuff we read is just academic stuff. We can't really get into it, at least I can't.

As a narrative, *Bridge to Terabithia* was more accessible to Steve than other texts. The novel also privileged narrative ways of knowing. Sue brought and made room for narratives in many ways throughout the semester, telling her own anecdotes, asking the teacher candidates to tell stories about their time in the field and to think of metaphors to describe teaching, learning, and their focus child, reading other short pieces of literature aloud in class. *Bridge to Terabithia* was, however, the primary way Sue demonstrated her value of narratives. Sue spent more time in class on the novel than any other reading – two full days of class rather than part of one class session.

Steve was a very narrative knower. In written assignments, he frequently used a story or anecdote to illustrate the points he was trying to make. In his written response to the Henry James article, for example, he told a coaching story that began, "While I was reading this article, I remembered an experience I had as a little league baseball coach." He told the story about

his aunt I described above when asked to comment on how the course was going so far. Steve's three big assignments, the final reflection, the child study paper, and his peer teaching paper, were all filled with short and longer anecdotes about his experiences in the field, as a coach, and as a student. A classroom like Sue's, that allowed and encouraged the use of narratives for understanding teaching and learning, suited the skeptical, easy-road-seeking Steve like other classrooms might not. This made the *Bridge* Sequence an important event in the course.

Generating theories about the experience of the child. By working so heavily with narratives as a reader and writer, Steve was able to make sense of the course in narrative terms, and he learned directly and indirectly from reading the novel itself. Steve focused his final reflection, his statement of his learning in the course, on a new found understanding of the importance of considering the child's experiences. He learned this, at least in part, from his work with the novel. Steve explained to me that the Mural Painting Activity "got across" the same ideas as the *Bridge* Discussion and the book itself, that children's experiences shape their actions in the classroom, or, in Steve's words:

> I guess, issues that children have to deal with things that aren't necessarily academic, children do have lives outside of the classroom, things that happen outside the classroom can affect how they are in the classroom.

Steve's more child centered, or more balanced approach to teaching, (as opposed to the teacher centered disposition he started with) was in part based on the importance of understanding that children's "problems" can affect their behavior and their learning. But it also had to do with just knowing that children respond to their experiences in the classroom, and that those responses are important. Steve claimed that this was a big idea he learned in class, and that his work with the novel was part of his learning. According to Steve,

> A few years ago, if I wouldn't have gone through this course, I may have never even thought about that, that there is different, certain things that students need and certain things that they do, and you have to remember that they have certain needs and they have certain ways of doing things, and it can't all be about you as the teacher.

Steve came to understand that as active learners, students make sense of experiences in the classroom in light of prior knowledge. During our interview, when Steve explained what in the course had helped him learn this, he cited his work in the field, reading the pieces about balance (Elbow (1986) and Dewey (1902/1990), in particular), and the *Bridge* Sequence. Steve explained that:

> the parents in the story didn't seem to know what was going on with Jess, or to see what was going on, he wanted more attention from his father, they wouldn't wrestle like before, he didn't want

to bring the subject up cause his father wouldn't think he was a man, so by observing people, not necessarily talking to them, you have to try and get a feel for what's going on.

Remember that observing students was the skill he would add to the list of good teachers' qualities. Ideas Steve shared as part of his understanding of the novel were also important components of his more child centered conception of the role of the teacher.

Conclusion. If transformation is marked by complexity and interconnection of ideas, and by the ability to bring ideas to novel situations outside of the context in which they arise, then we can say that Steve transformed his understanding of the child's experience, and the role of the teacher (albeit to a limited degree). His understanding of why teachers might pay attention to and learn about students' lives was transformed, because it moved from being an idea he was skeptical of, to an idea that helped him to make sense of his experiences in the field and to describe his stance as a teacher.

Steve's work with the novel played a role in that transformation. Unlike Renee and Elise, and even, to a certain degree, Aaron, Steve did not move directly from his interpretation of the novel to transformation of his conceptions of teaching, children, and learning. Steve did not use theory to specifically make sense of story, or use the story as a concrete example of a particular theory. Instead, Steve wove together a complex web of understanding. The novel, as a piece of narrative that demonstrated

acceptance for narrative ways of knowing, and as a particular story about a particular child whose experience is varyingly more and less attended to, connected to his reading of academic pieces which emphasized the importance of knowing about the child's experience, which connected to his work in the field where he applied these ideas and got to see first hand how students, like his focus child Cammi, responded when teachers carefully observed them. All of these echoed ideas that Steve spoke about when he talked about his interpretation of the novel and the ways that his neighbor changed how felt as he worked on his hockey skills. Steve built from the privileged narrative way of knowing the use of the novel implied to tell stories of his own, making sense of those stories in light of the rest of the class.

Gina's Case

Gina used EDU 200 as an opportunity to think about how and why teachers might try to understand the child's experience. She worked hard to develop ways to ask questions and learn about children, both as learners and as people. This work echoed her spoken interpretations of *Bridge to Terabithia*, which also centered on considering and understanding the child's experience, both her own experience as a child reading the novel, and the characters' experiences in and out of school.

EDU 200: Building from what Gina already knew and believed. Gina was a child development major, which at her university meant that much of her non-college of education coursework was spent on understanding

children's growth and development, ways of interacting with children, and ways of observing children in order to teach them well. This child-oriented lens that Gina brought with her to EDU 200 shaped both her understanding of the course content and her interpretation of the novel. In Gina's case, it is difficult to say "the novel brought her to a new understanding of the experience of the child," but I can say that Gina's work with the novel was an important experience in a web of experiences that helped her to build on the child-centered dispositions she brought with her to class.[iii]

As a child development major, Gina frequently made sense of the coursework in EDU 200 in terms of her experiences observing children and learning about their growth and development in her child development coursework. For example, Gina wrote that Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum* was a "description of developmentally appropriate education" because "he is taking many facts about material and how it relates to children. That it should relate to a child's experience to think about what materials to use etc." She went on to say that an example of this would be using slides on the playground to help children understand inclined planes.

Finding evidence of transformation in Gina's writing. When EDU 200 began, Gina already saw herself as a teacher. The first week of class, Gina reported that she had worked as a writing teacher in a sixth grade classroom, as one of many experiences she had had not only taking care of but teaching children. Gina also saw herself as an artist. To introduce herself to her peers, she shared her own reproductions of Disney illustrations and cartoons, and

talked about the ways the other women at her sorority often called on her to create hall decorations and posters for events.

In spite of her experiences as a writing teacher, Gina's writing for class was often full of both grammatical and spelling errors. Frequently in her writing, Gina would raise a point or make a claim, but would not support that claim with any specific evidence or explain what she meant. For example, after reading and talking about the Hawkins "I, Thou, It" article, Gina claimed that there were important points raised in the discussion but she did not explain what those points were or how they might have been developed. Gina wrote,

> The discussion on the article was also interesting we all seemed to get a basic idea from the article but did in a way fail to see beneath it. We don't always see the deeper point and after discussion there were a lot of points that deserved attention that no one saw.

Gina was equally unspecific in portions of her final reflection. For example, Gina claimed that the peer teaching experience "allowed me to practice my own stance as a teacher and lean [learn?] from the other stances my classmates presented." However she did not say what she learned or what those "other stances" were like. Gina also claimed that the field work was a valuable experience because she had an opportunity to observe and consider the role of the teacher. In particular, she claimed "Through observation I was able to consider how I would structure the class. And more importantly

to understand why I would make these choices and have conclusive reasons behind these decisions." Again, however, she did not say just what choices or decisions she was talking about or what conclusions she drew about structuring classrooms.

Gina did not always write vaguely, and there were instances in her writing when she developed her claims with a great deal of specific detail. Remember that according to the definition of learning that I am using, the markers of transformational learning include complexity and elaborations on ideas, connections between ideas, and echoes of concepts that show that those concepts are moving beyond the context in which they are learned. This point is especially important in terms of Gina's final reflection. In that document, I am less certain of her learning when she wrote more vaguely and with less explanation and elaboration, and I am more certain that her learning was transformational, rather than an instance of appropriation, when her writing included examples, connections between experiences and course readings, and explanations of the words and phrases she was using.

Gina was most specific and elaborate when she was writing about the implications of her understanding of the experience of the child. Gina's ideas about the learning community and ways teachers must know students well in order to create learning relationships with them were the ideas most common in her final reflection, and most thoroughly developed. I will illustrate both of these points in the next section. These are also ideas that contain echoes of her interpretations of *Bridge to Terabithia*. There were two

other sections in Gina's final reflection in which she wrote in detail to explain what she meant. The first was her description of teachers attending to subject matter, and the second was her list of ways she will continue to learn and develop her stance as a teacher. However, these are less related to Gina's interpretation of *Bridge to Terabithia*. Because I did not find connections between these elements of Gina's learning and the *Bridge* Sequence, they are not developed here in chapter 5.

Gina's representation of her understanding of the child's experience. In her final reflection, Gina wrote about a three-part stance. The first two aspects were related to the child: "creating a positive learning environment" and "building relationships with the students." The third aspect was more content oriented. The third part of her stance built on the other two components in order "to promote the subject matter necessary."

Gina first described the classroom community in Terabithia-like terms. She said that the classroom "must be safe and comfortable" and cited Fried (1995) to support her claims. She listed things teachers can do to help kids to become comfortable, including providing "a variety of learning materials and experiences each where the children become active learners and are free to provide their opinions" and outlining the "expectations and rule[s] set forth in the room." Teachers should also, she wrote, "be aware if they [the rules] benefit the children's needs."

Hand in hand with creating this free, comfortable, and carefully structured environment, teachers should work to develop particular kinds of

relationships with their students. Again, Gina referred to the Fried article with "the idea that the students must relate and respect you as a teacher to be in the best learning context." Gina suggested several methods for creating relationships with children, including teachers giving "of themselves," getting to "their level and interact[ing] with them throughout daily activities," and "using a child's prior knowledge to support your subject," all of which "related back to the concept that a teacher must show interest in the children, their work and accomplishments." Gina's decision to list these specific strategies is evidence that she understood what she was writing about, that is, that she had appropriated the concepts about which she wrote.

Gina elaborated on these same learning community and relationship-with-students ideas when she wrote about them again in another section of her final reflection. As she named the knowledge, skills and dispositions for the list of qualities good teachers possess, she said that one important quality already on the list was being "respectful" to students, which teachers can do by "treating them as individuals" and "valuing the things and accomplishments they do, taking interest in their lives and believing that any child is capable of learning." Gina suggested that a skill to be added to the list would be to "successfully recognize when an activity should be restructured to better support the learning of a child." As she described what she meant by this, Gina extended her ideas beyond the EDU 200 classroom. She described a teacher giving a math lesson, and then noticing how children are reacting to it in order to adapt it so that children can be successful. She said these kinds

of observations and adaptations help teachers to create "the most positive learning environment possible."

Attention to the experience of the child was an important part of Gina's work with the novel. When Gina participated in the *Bridge* Discussion she spoke about the experience of the child, including Jesse and Leslie's experiences in the novel and her own experience reading the novel for the first time in elementary school. When she gave her *Bridge* Presentation, she continued to pursue these ideas, describing in more detail her first reading of the novel. Each of these interpretations of the novel connects to the ideas described in Gina's final reflection, so that the novel became an important element in Gina's learning in the course.

Connections to the *Bridge* Sequence–Attending to the characters' experiences. When Gina spoke about the novel, she repeatedly named and described the experiences of children, including herself and the characters in the novel. Many times when she spoke during the *Bridge* Discussion, it was to name the ways Jesse felt and how he was understanding the events in his life. For example, Gina described Jesse as jealous during a conversation about the children's relationships with their parents. In one part of the novel, Leslie began to spend most of her time remodeling the living room with her father, and Jesse found himself increasingly alone. Gina said that Jesse became very jealous, because "he didn't have that and [he] couldn't relate because his dad wasn't around." In another turn she took during the discussion, Gina described Terabithia as "the one that saved him," because in

Terabithia he "felt comfortable." She talked about how Jesse learned that the person he was in Terabithia, he could be that person "anywhere." Gina also noted that one of the issues in Jesse's life was that he "had to worry about money."

On the one hand, Gina's comments are not remarkable, because they were consistent with the topics on the table, such as the issues in Jesse's life and exploring the various bridges in the novel. On the other hand, talking about Jesse and Leslie and how they as characters make sense of things was by no means a given. Aaron talked more about his own reading of the novel, and Elise talked as much about the literary structures with which the novel was put together as she did anything else. Steve did not really speak at all. Attending to the child's experience was in keeping with the child-centered stance Gina brought with her and it is reminiscent of her final reflection, in which she claimed it is important for teachers to "show interest in the children, their work and accomplishments."

One of the more interesting things that Gina paid attention to as she read and discussed the novel were the discrepancies between the children's the adults' versions of events. When she read *Bridge to Terabithia,* Gina was struck by the ways Jesse and Leslie, as characters in the novel, interpreted things differently than the adults in their lives did. When asked to name which character "struck" her, for example, Gina said she was not struck by a character as much as she had noticed the way that Leslie's parents claimed they moved to the country for Leslie's sake, but Leslie did not really enjoy or

appreciate being stuck in the isolated area where she was so different from all the other children. As Gina said, "she [Leslie] saw it so different, and she was talking earlier in the book and she was just saying that they didn't consult her about it."

Gina also noticed the way that Leslie had fooled her classroom teacher into thinking she was paying attention when she really was not. Gina described the way that Leslie's teacher, Mrs. Meyers, loved her, because she was so smart and involved, but that Jesse (and therefore the reader) know better. Gina said she had learned you can't take kids at "face value," explaining,

> Jess said at one point, like "if I didn't know her, I would think she was completely paying attention but she never was, she was always just kind of sitting there, with, you know, like looking and having her own world, and he knew that about her and the teacher didn't.

During the *Bridge* Discussion, Gina wondered what the educational consequences of this feigned attention would be, by asking what "if she has teachers for the next 11 years like that?" Gina noticed in Leslie what Dewey (19o4/1964) wrote about (described in chapter 5) in terms of inner attention. Children can become adept at positioning their bodies and faces just so, while their minds are engaged elsewhere.

Gina's ability to notice these discrepancies is important. She claimed that careful observation and knowing how to restructure activities was an

important teacherly skill for creating a positive learning environment. Though she never talked about the implications of these misinterpretations in this way, my hunch is that the novel showed Gina how easy it is for teachers and parents to misinterpret children's perceptions, making careful observations and strong relationships all the more important.

Connecting to the *Bridge* Sequence–Thinking back to her own experiences as a reader. When Gina talked about the novel, she frequently talked about her own experiences as a reader when she was a child. Gina initiated this topic during the *Bridge* Discussion, when she said that the novel had been "so upsetting" to read this time, but that she did not remember it being so sad the first time she read it. She wondered if perhaps it had to do with children's relative lack of experience which might lead them to having less intense responses, saying, "I had no personal experience to draw upon to really help me get emotional," and, as she ended the conversation, Gina concluded, "as you grow, you put yourself more into books than you do when you are younger."

Gina continued to explore this line of thought in her *Bridge* Presentation. Gina's presentation was about that first childhood reading of the novel. Gina claimed in her presentation that she did not have a strong reaction to or connection to the novel that she wanted to share, and so she wanted to use the presentation to take an "academic" look at that first reading. Gina had been assigned the novel in fourth or fifth grade, when "the book was presented to the entire class to read and discuss and answer all

important ditto questions that were presented." She said of that first reading "I distinctly remember not enjoying the story, and being uninterested page after page." As she looked back to try to remember why she disliked the story, Gina found she could not really remember liking *any* stories she read as a child.

Gina had many ways to explain why her teachers' decisions shaped her first reading, and, in turn, her adult reading, of *Bridge to Terabithia.* She remembered that "The book was presented to the class to read and discuss and answer all important ditto questions." But it was not so much how the book was presented that caused her to be disengaged with the novel as it was her teachers' failures to help her learn to read. She explained that her family had moved frequently, and that at each new school she was "at a different reading level than a majority of the class and therefor conveniently pushed aside." The teachers did not take the time to find out what she did and did not know or to ensure she was successfully learning to read. Eventually, she was tracked into the low level reading group, where she remained for some years. For many years, she said, "I only read when it was required."

Eventually, Gina did become a reader, although she was not sure when or how it happened. Sometime in middle school, she said, she discovered that "A book was no longer the one dimensional page filled with words." Gina said she became a strong reader, and that, as an adult, she "did to an extent enjoy *Bridge to Terabithia*" this time around.

For the presentation, Gina interpreted the novel by talking about the ways that her teachers' failure to find out what and whether or not she was learning. Her teachers' failures to build a relationship with her, to pay careful attention to her, to respectfully treat her as an individual, and restructure the learning environment when it was not working, shaped her reading of the novel. Because she could not read well and did not find reading interesting, she did not enjoy reading *Bridge to Terabithia* or any other books she was required to read when she was a young child. Her teachers' decisions even affected her reading of the novel as an adult.

The skill that Gina added to the list of qualities good teachers' posses–knowing when to restructure an activity based on careful observation of whether or not children are learning–was probably informed by this interpretation of the novel. Gina interpreted the novel by naming the teaching practices that failed her- teachers not respecting her or taking the time to know her well, "conveniently" pushing her aside and lumping her in with other children, assigning "all important dittoes." These were the teaching strategies that failed her, and that the novel called to mind. In contrast, in her final reflection she defined good teaching as doing just the opposite, adding the skill of restructuring activities based on observations of children's performances to the list of teacherly qualities, emphasizing the importance of seeing things from the child's point of view, showing an interest in children and their work, and building form children's prior knowledge to both "increase their learning" and "create a positive

relationship." Gina's spoken interpretations of *Bridge to Terabithia,* her attention to children's experiences and her realizations about the kinds of teaching that support or stymie learning, were echoed and developed in her final reflection.

Other sources of this learning. Gina thought of the class holistically. In our second interview, Gina summarized her understanding of the course and its content. She did so using a version of the bridge metaphor, the idea of connecting:

> We learned about how to connect, what the process was for connecting. The main thing was the subject matter, the children, and the teacher. Through the whole class we found out what we needed to connect those things, from management to actually understanding the children and their learning through our child study, to actually understanding teachers, you know what I mean?

Gina did not attribute her learning in the course to the *Bridge* Sequence. Instead, it was the set of experiences she had in class, she claimed, that helped her learn For example she had used Sue as a model for thinking about how you might create a successful learning environment. Thinking about Sue's teaching helped her to know what to write about in her final reflection and to think about not just why but how teachers might create successful relationships with their students. Gina said:

> She [Sue] had exercises like the personal profile and name games, that set up the comfortable atmosphere and built a relationship between the students and the teacher and then got into the subject matter, and I wrote about that, too.

For Gina, one important aspect of the entire *Bridge* Sequence, and of the course overall was that it mattered to her. Gina told me in the interview about the lengthy process she went through, trying to decide what to present. She called several classmates to find out what they were presenting, she talked with her friends at work at great length, trying out ideas until she hit upon just the right one. Gina explained that unlike other kinds of work that teachers might ask you to do, when teachers make assignments "personally relevant to your life" she cannot just "push it under the rug." Certainly the *Bridge* Presentation was, to Gina, "personally relevant." In contrast, when she does a research paper, she said, "there's no need to think about it."

Conclusion. Gina came to EDU 200 with a disposition that centered on valuing the experiences of children. The experiences in EDU 200, not the least of which was the *Bridge* Sequence, allowed her to transform that disposition into a set of specific skills. Gina constructed for herself an understanding of various ways and reasons teachers work to learn about and from their students, and ways teachers can use what they learn to help children master subject matter. Gina interpreted the novel in light of those dispositions, talking about the children in it and her own experiences as a child reading the book. Gina's interpretation of the novel was one of many

experiences that helped her to elaborate on and make connections between (that is, to transform) her ideas about the learning community and specific ways to know children well.

Kelly's Case

The last case I will present is Kelly's. Kelly stands out in contrast to her peers. Renee and Elise were quite eloquent and specific about the ways that their work with *Bridge to Terabithia* shaped their learning about the role of the teacher and the experience of the child. Aaron, Steve, and Gina were less explicit, but their work with the novel intertwined with the other experiences in the course to shape their learning over the semester. In many ways, Kelly serves as a discrepant case. Based on written work from the beginning and the end of the semester, it is difficult to tell how significantly Kelly transformed her understanding of the teacher's role or the child's experience. Kelly actively participated in the *Bridge* Sequence, working hard to interpret the novel in the context of the class in multiple ways. Although the changes in Kelly's understanding of the role of the teacher and the experience of the child were more subtle than those of her peers, the learning she did construct was informed by her interpretations of the novel.

Kelly as a learner. Kelly did not see herself as strong academically. In our interviews Kelly told me that "school was something very positive around my household and I enjoyed school," but she also admitted, "I was never, I don't know if you want to call it, a straight A student." Kelly said that she did not read much at all, and that "I don't like to read enough that I make

the time." She said she was more likely to pick picture books to read than any other kind of book, if and when she did read, because she liked bright illustrations.

Kelly tried to figure out what Sue wanted her to understand from many of the EDU 200 experiences. For example at one point Sue asked the class to consider "Why read this in a teacher education course." As Kelly suggested an answer (about learning from the teachers in the novel, which I will discuss in more detail below) Kelly qualified her answer with, "I don't know if that's what you were trying to get at." Even during our interviews, Kelly occasionally asked me what she was supposed to be "getting." For example, at one point I asked Kelly to read and respond to a picture book. After sharing her initial response to the book, ("It was cute") and explaining why, Kelly asked me, "What was I supposed to get out of this book?"

Teaching as a relationship. Kelly was a child development major, and she hoped one day to teach Kindergarten. Kelly had a great deal of experience with young children, having worked as a day care provider and a preschool teacher, as well as a volunteer. When Kelly began EDU 200, she wrote about the ways that she understood teaching primarily as a relationship between child and teacher. On the first day of class survey, Kelly named her Kindergarten teacher as the teacher who was "most important" to her. She said that this teacher "remembered me all through elementary school and I would like to be like her." Kelly declared that she wanted to be a teacher because "I love children and to watch a child learn is what has all ways made

me happy." She imagined that the best thing about being a teacher would be that "students respect and learn to love you," and admitted that her biggest fear was "students not liking me."

Kelly brought this emphasis on relationships with children to one of her first written assignments. Just as Kelly hoped that her students would love and respect her, she wondered about creating those respectful relationships as she read and responded to the Hawkins "I, Thou, It" article. Kelly asked:

> When we say mutual respect, we are not thinking of the way the children will learn to respect us. If we teach with group work where children teach each other, or we teach with individual work where children learn on their own, where do we as teachers fit in. How is this mutual respect gained if we are not involved.

According to the survey and the response to Hawkins, Kelly conceived of teaching as a loving relationship, where teachers and children share mutual respect. Her conception of this relationship is somewhat reminiscent of Aaron's teacher-centered understanding of teaching, in that while Kelly began the course committed to "mutual respect," much of her writing focused on what the teacher might get from students, including getting children to "learn to respect us," and "being liked" by students. According to her final reflection and our interviews, Kelly continued to think of teaching as a loving and respectful relationship between teachers and children at the end of

the course, with a few subtle differences from her stance at the beginning of the course. Those differences are the markers of transformational learning constructed during EDU 200.

Subtle changes in her teaching-as-a-relationship ideas. In some ways, Kelly's conception of teaching as a relationship of love and respect did not change much during the semester. In her final reflection, Kelly wrote the following about her teaching stance: "I feel mutual respect between a teacher and his/her students is very important." Notice the way Kelly used the same phrase, "mutual respect" in one of the first things she wrote for class, the response to the Hawkins, and her final reflection. Her understanding of teaching as a relationship did not seem to change significantly over the semester. She did not write about attention to subject matter, as Renee did, or explain how or why this relationship might help students to learn more in the classroom, as Steve, Aaron, Gina and Elise did.

When I wrote about Gina, I said that only concepts which were part of complex webs of ideas or which had been elaborated upon or extended to external situations were evidence of transformational learning . The paragraphs that followed Kelly's teaching stance showed that while she continued to think of teaching as a respectful and caring relationship, she had constructed more complex ideas about how a teacher might go about building that relationship. In particular, she had come to a new found understanding of the importance of knowing students well.

Amidst several sentences that explained how nervous she was about one day teaching Kindergarten because kindergarten is children's first "impression" of school, Kelly listed one strategy she had learned in the course that is an important part of forging relationships with students. Kelly wrote, "To show a classroom fill[ed] with 20 to 30 children that you are willing to listen and share your feelings is what children need." At the beginning of the course, in her response to the Hawkins article, Kelly wrote only about the importance of respectful relationships, and asked herself how those relationships might be forged. In her final reflection Kelly began to have some strategies for doing so, and to appreciate the importance of listening to children.

In the final sections of the paper, Kelly elaborated on her ideas about listening to (and knowing) students as ways teachers go about the work of demonstrating respect for students. For example, Kelly added "observation" to the list of knowledge, skills, and dispositions good teachers should possess. She said she had learned through the child study assignment that teachers can use their observations not only to provide feedback to students (or, as Kelly said, to "reply about their learning process,") she also recognized that carefully observing students was one way that teachers can "better understand their students and learn to know their students."

As she named one of the items already on the list that she found valuable, Kelly not only elaborated on these ideas about knowing students, she also made claims about her own learning in the course. Kelly wrote,

> I have learned about sharing yourself as a teacher as one of the dispositions of a good teacher. I have learned including yourself as a learner and participator is equally important. Your student[s] need to know you are learning right along with them. That they are not the only learners. It is also beneficial to students when they know they are contributing to your own knowledge and learning process. "We must study the learning process, we must be students of our own students–we must let them teach us if we are to teach them well."

Kelly ended this paragraph about her learning and her conception of the teacher's role with a quote from the syllabus. She had shared this quote on the last day of class, to explain her group's end of class poster. On that poster they had drawn stick figures of a teacher and student, with arrows pointing from each to the other.

In our interview, Kelly summarized the class in terms of a focus on the child. Kelly told me:

> OK, I guess I would say EDU 200 is about like stepping back from the actual curriculum and making sure you have your math and English and lah de dah done, and thinking about the student, instead of going in the classroom and saying gosh I have to teach these kids, depending on the age–addition–and instead of totally focusing on addition, totally focusing on them being able to walk in the classroom and learn addition, go behind the scenes, and

figure out what the best way to teach children is, the best way which these children will be interested, instead of just having the outcome in mind, have the whole process in mind. That's what EDU 200 is about.

She said that the course was about stepping back from the subject matter, and paying attention to the entire process, which to Kelly meant trying to understand what children are thinking (or "going behind the scenes"). If teachers understand the child's experience, that is, if they learn from the student, then they will be able to make learning "interesting."

Kelly's learning, as defined by the changes in her initial work in comparison to this final reflection, is less complex than Elise's or Renee's. She did not add a new dimension to her understanding of the teacher-student relationship in the ways that Renee did by adding subject matter to that dyad. She did not write about a well developed and highly detailed conception of the features of the classroom or the teacher-student relationship that supports learning, the way that Elise and even Gina did. Kelly's statements about her understanding of the teacher's role and the experience of the child also did not change the ways that Aaron's and Steve's. Kelly seemed to move from thinking about teaching in a teacher centered way (being liked, getting respect from students) to thinking of teaching as listening to and understanding children, in ways reminiscent of Steve and Aaron. However, Kelly did not extend this aspect of her learning to either her future classroom or her field study student with the detail and level of elaboration that let me feel

confident that Aaron and Steve could move the appropriated concept of attending to the child's experience outside of the EDU 200 classroom.

Tacitly learning about learning. One other aspect of Kelly's learning stands out as slightly transformational and, as I will show in the next section, informed by her reading and interpretation of the novel. In chapter 4 I talked about the ways that the teacher candidates' appreciation of the learning community and the opportunities they had to interact with their classmates was evidence of a tacit understanding of the socially constructed nature of knowing. Like many of her classmates, Kelly used her final reflection as an opportunity to talk about ways she learned from her peers. In keeping with the directions for the assignment, Kelly named three valuable resources. Two of those centered on relationships she forged over the semester, as she wrote about her classmates and the peer teaching assignment as valuable resources.

Kelly valued her classmates because of "how personal our class became." She valued being able to try out her own ideas during class conversations. She said, "I was comfortable going to class every day knowing my ideas were not going to be ignored because they might not be what everyone else was thinking." Kelly also appreciated being able to hear multiple viewpoints. She said that as they talked in class, she and her peers were able to "introduce new knowledgeable ideas." Learning from others in the class, Kelly claimed, "was more educational than any article or employee telling me what the field is like."

Kelly spoke in similar ways as she explained why the peer teaching assignment was valuable. It was not so much the opportunities she had to try out her teaching persona or to reflect on her students' learning that Kelly valued, as it was opportunities to hear divergent ideas and to work with colleagues to construct both a lesson plan and an understanding of the results of that teaching. When they were planning, Kelly said, "Each person in the group contributed something unique." When they worked together to analyze the lesson, it was valuable to have colleagues to reflect with. Kelly wrote,

> Together as a group we were able to look at different situations from different angles. Most importantly, we were comfortable explaining to each other why there might be different responses to a lesson plan.

The value that Kelly placed on the peer teaching assignment *as a group activity* is especially interesting in light of her response to the Hawkins article. The first week of class, Kelly wondered about the teacher's role during group work, "where children teach each other," and how and whether students develop respect for teachers when they are busy teaching themselves. At the end of the class, she wrote with detail about the ways she had learned during group work. Not only that, she followed this paragraph about the peer teaching assignment by naming Sue as the third valuable resource in the course. Kelly felt she had learned a lot from Sue because of the ways she was continually "modeling the author's ideas." Kelly told Sue in this reflection,

"You were a prime example of teaching your students how to teach because that is how you taught."

In EDU 200, Kelly learned something about learning, and the value of talking with a group. She also learned about reasons to and ways to attend to the child's experience. In the next several sections, I talk about Kelly's work during the Sequence. As I go, I analyze her talk during the Discussion, the Mural Painting Activity, and the Presentations for connections to these two aspects of her learning, as well as to other important aspects of her learning not represented in her final reflection.

Taking multiple perspectives. Kelly first approached the sequence with an efferent stance, defined by Rosenblatt as those times when "attention is directed outward, so to speak, toward concepts to be retained, ideas to be tested, actions to be performed after the reading" (1978, p. 24). Kelly assumed the novel would teach her lessons about teaching and learning. As she worked with the novel, however, she frequently interpreted it in very aesthetic ways, sharing her lived-through sense of the book, and interpreting the novel artistically.

When Kelly first saw that she would be reading a children's novel in EDU 200, she expected to learn how to teach reading. She told me,

> I thought we were gong to use the book and learn how to teach reading to children, learn how to incorporate it into, what important points, if you should have children read it or you read

> it aloud. I didn't know that we were going to get into the actual meaning of the book.

Even after Kelly found out that EDU 200 was not a course about the teaching of reading, she still worked hard to take a teacherly and an efferent stance toward the novel. Remember that Sue did not explain her purposes for assigning the novel or the *Bridge* Sequence because she wanted students to experience engaged learning and to have a deep literary experience. Kelly was an engaged reader–she told me that she was glad not to "have to be highlighting, it was just so different, reading a book for enjoyment." At the same time, she tried hard to figure out why this book might be assigned in an education course, and to learn whatever lessons about teaching might be learned from the characters in the book. When I asked her what the novel was mostly about, Kelly told me,

> When I was reading the book I kept taking it form a teacher's angle. I don't know if that was right. I kept thinking about the main teacher in the book who never smiled, and I kept thinking about that special teacher who was, the music teacher, and I kept thinking about those two.

This efferent stance of attending to the teachers depicted in the novel, seeing things from the teacher's point of view, also came up in the *Bridge* Discussion. When Sue asked why they thought she had asked them to read this novel in EDU 200, Kelly replied, "I concentrated when they talked about the teachers." In particular she noticed "the music teacher everyone loved

[Ms. Edmunds] who got to their level and understood them because she was on their same wavelength." Kelly said of Ms. Edmunds, "I want to find out how I can be that way, how kids can look forward to seeing me. Jess said that half hour [of music class] was his special time, how does she create that special time?"

Kelly noticed the ways the children in the novel both respected and loved Ms. Edmunds, and she wanted to figure out how she herself could be treated the same way. Asking herself this question was one of the ways Kelly laid the groundwork for her conclusions about listening to and sharing yourself with children in her final reflection. Whereas Renee asked herself this question and then answered it in part by thinking about her understanding of the novel and in part by connecting the novel to the Fried article about passionate teaching, Kelly did not make the same connections. Renee wove these different ideas into a newfound appreciation for subject matter and a commitment to learn and care about the content as well as the child. Kelly, on the other hand, continued to develop her teaching-as-a-relationship stance by trying to understand ways teachers build those relationships.

Attending to the child's experience. Part of how she did this was by paying attention to Jesse, and to his strengths. Whereas Aaron claimed he could not identify with Jesse or the novel because his life was so different from the character's, Kelly saw many parallels between the class' memories of childhood and Jesse's life. She challenged Aaron when she noticed strengths

depicted in Jesse that she and her colleagues had listed on the Initial Map of Childhood. Kelly pointed to this map and said,

> I think under strengths, there were a lot of things that I saw Jesse, that we really did think, that were similar, just, like, imagination, obviously they had a huge imagination, energy, having activity, just like he got up at five when his dad left, and then running, and then still having, you know, enough activity to go milk the cow and concentrate, then intensity of emotions, um, just his emotions to his sisters.

Each of these words she listed in reference to Jesse was also listed on the Map of Childhood. What is especially interesting about Kelly's comment is her decision to focus on strengths, rather than issues or vulnerabilities. Having just participated in the discussion of the issues in Jesse's life, Kelly was still able to see his many wonderful qualities. Noticing Jesse's strengths is reminiscent of her final reflection, and her stance of mutual respect.

Both, however, are aspects of learning that Kelly attributed to her child development coursework and her visits to the field, rather than to her work with the novel. In our interview, Kelly told me that in her child development coursework, "I've been learning a lot about that from my major, to respect the children and the individual." In her final reflection, Kelly wrote about observation as one way teachers can learn about students and teach them better. Kelly attributed that learning to her field work, where, she said, she learned and developed techniques for good observation such as

blending into the background so as not to interfere with the student. It is as though Kelly brought these observational skills, and a disposition of respect and appreciating strengths, to her reading of the novel, rather than learned to do these things as a result of reading the novel.

The value of others' interpretations. Kelly said she began the *Bridge* Sequence by paying attention to the teachers and trying to learn whatever lessons the author might be trying to teach by portraying those teachers. The discussion of the novel laid the groundwork for Kelly to reconsider the text not as a series of lessons to be learned, but as a piece of literature to explore. Remember the ways Elise renamed Aaron's claim the novel was "passé" and predictable as an awareness of foreshadowing. That was one of the aspects of the *Bridge* Discussion Kelly valued. Kelly said,

> I remember I was very interested in people who had read the book before, especially when they had read it when they were younger, I thought it was cool that we had some English majors in our class and how they could pick out the death, how I could never have done that, I was like oh, geeze, I thought that was kind of cool. Yeah. The discussion opened many more doors. It was kind of cool to see us talk about it not as a children's book but as an actual book that we could learn from.

Kelly valued hearing other's view points and interpretations during the *Bridge* Discussion. Other people had read the novel before, and pointed

out literary elements she had not noticed, or shared interpretations of the novel that were different from her own.

Participating in the discussion, and hearing others talk, helped Kelly to move from treating the book efferently to sharing her interpretation of the novel. For example, toward the end of the discussion Kelly spoke in a way that showed she was beginning to treat the novel as a piece of literature, or, in her words, "as an actual book that we could learn from" by giving multiple interpretations of a passage from the book that had caught her eye. In the book, Paterson (the author) used the phrase "it's like all the lights were coming back on after an electrical storm" to describe how Jesse felt when he realized he didn't need to be jealous of Leslie's relationship with her father. Kelly suggested that there was another way to interpret that phrase, saying that in a way Leslie and their play in Terabithia turned on the lights for Jesse as he became connected to parts of himself he had had difficulties expressing. Kelly quoted from the book and explained her interpretation of it. She said,

> During that part is the quote that I wrote down, when it says that all the lights were coming back on, and Leslie and Jesse were talking about why don't you like my dad . . . I think not only did it apply to that but that is what Leslie did for Jess, she's turned on the lights when he was, he was not knowing what was going on in his world, he knew of a place and a person where he could go to and be himself.

Kelly claimed in her final reflection that her peers helped her by introducing "new knowledgeable ideas." Her work during the Bridge Sequence is an instantiation of this claim. As she talked with others and heard different ways to interpret the novel, she herself began to interpret the novel more richly and complexly.

Considering children's experiences as readers. Another important aspect of talking with others about the novel and hearing others' interpretations of the novel was listening to others compare their adult readings of the novel to times they had read the book as a child. During the conversation, Gina had noted that the novel seemed so much more emotional to her reading it as an adult. Gina and many of the other women in the course worked to develop a theory that because children are less experienced, they might not react as strongly to literature. Kelly participated once during this conversation, saying:

> I think too, that we're all taking it like Gina said, personally, when probably a younger child would just be like, "Oh, this is a book," they wouldn't be like "Oh, this could really happen."

In the last section, I talked about the ways that Gina used her presentation to challenge this explanation for her own less emotional readings, and eventually came to the conclusion that poor teaching, dittoes, and a lack of reading ability shaped that initial less emotional reading. Kelly did not return to this topic during the presentations, but it did come up in our interviews. Kelly said she had felt left out during the discussion because she

had not read the novel before, and that she wished her fifth grade teacher would have asked her to read the book. More importantly, she said that hearing other students talk about their childhood readings of the novel challenged her to rethink the kinds of literature she would one day share with children.

Before the discussion, Kelly had assumed she would not share certain pieces of literature with children, such as *Bridge to Terabithia*, with her future students. She told me,

> When I read the book, there were so many different meanings that I would be afraid, I would be like gosh, can they handle this, and how do I go about explaining it?

Kelly explained to me that she had assumed that books like this one would be difficult for students to deal with because perhaps kids "are not developmentally ready, just taking it form their experience, how much experience they have had." However, her stance toward sharing literature with children changed as a result of the *Bridge* Discussion. She had heard several of her peers talk about childhood readings that were somehow less intense (or at least, their memories of these childhood readings were less intense than the present readings). Kelly realized that perhaps children could handle books with sad or emotional or challenging themes. Kelly said that a lesson this discussion taught her was that "I know that if I teach I need to put myself in their position instead of mine." She explained that although she

had wondered to herself, "They have elementary children reading this?" what she realized was that,

> people who have read it, they were like, "Oh, yeah, we were fine with that book," you know, they just took it for granted. So I am going to have to take myself out of where I am and put myself in children's shoes reading this book.

Children's reading experiences and Kelly's learning in the course. These conclusions that Kelly drew about sharing literature with children are related to the two well-conceived concepts I described from her final reflection. First, Kelly came to the conclusion that when picking literature for children she should put herself "in children's shoes." This is a specific, contextualized example of what she may have meant when she said she wanted to let students know they are a part of her learning process, one of the strategies she named for respecting students. Though she did not say so explicitly herself, trying to imagine reading literature from a child's perspective is certainly one way of attending to the child's experience in a respectful way. Second, Kelly claimed in her final reflection that she learned from participating with others, that hearing multiple viewpoints and ideas was valuable. She did not list the *Bridge* Discussion in her final reflection as a concrete example of how she learned from others, but she easily could have. During the discussion, she heard multiple interpretations of the novel, and drew conclusions about teaching and learning based on those divergent

experiences. Her colleagues helped her to learn something she could not have learned on her own.

Kelly and the Mural Painting Activity. Kelly's participation during the Mural Painting Activity was equally multifaceted. Kelly said in an interview that the Mural Painting Activity was difficult for her. She felt like she spent a lot of time just standing around. She wished she had had someone tell her what and how to paint, or, as she put it, "I just needed direction, and then I could have painted."

Kelly wanted her group's mural to accurately portray the novel. For example, as they were deciding on the images that would represent Terabithia, Kelly suggested using the illustration on the back of the novel. She got out her copy of the book saying, "I have a picture of their thing, 'cause I have my book. . . . This is what their place is supposed to look like, I'm guessing. That's why it's on the back of the book." Kelly's suggestion to copy the back cover of the novel was quickly rejected by peers who wanted to create their own representation of Terabithia. Later, Kelly told me in an interview that she wished she had not suggested using the cover as a guide for the mural because the other students reacted so negatively and told her that the image on the cover took away their own versions of Terabithia. Kelly told me, "I kind of felt bad, I felt like I kind of destroyed some of their creativity, but I guess that was more how I was, I remembered the picture so I got it out."

Sometimes Kelly came up with ideas, but she was not sure if they should be included on the mural. For example, Kelly stood with her peers

trying to decide which images should be added to the existing images (house, yard, driveway, vehicle) to represent Leslie's world. Kelly said, "I was thinking of books, but it's not going along with the house, the truck, the street." Later, Elise came over to consider that side of the mural and suggested books. Kelly told Elise that she had considered painting books already, but that based on the rest of the mural, "it doesn't make sense," Elise replied that, "it doesn't have to make sense," and went ahead and added the books.

On the other hand, Kelly did find ways during the mural painting to artistically represent her understanding of the novel. She painted many of the images on the Leslie's-world side of their mural, mixing just the right shades of gray and red to depict her vision of Leslie's house and car. Kelly also asked her peers one of the only interpretive questions that arose once the overall design for the mural had been determined. Kelly asked her peers, "What do you think of when you see, like Jesse's place?" When she posed this question, Kelly had moved from reproducing the back cover illustration to trying to think about how and what images might best depict their group understanding of the novel.

None of Kelly's comments during the Mural Painting Activity directly connects to either of the learning themes I am using as evidence of Kelly's transformational learning. Kelly worked, first literally, and then more figuratively, to create a visual image with her peers to interpret the novel. As she did so she, like her peers, did not talk about teaching, children, or

learning. Afterwards, Kelly and I talked briefly about the value of the Mural Painting Activity. Kelly claimed that the value came from seeing the images other people created, or, in her words, "Just from other people's ideas, like how they thought things looked, when they were painting, the actual Terabithia. In my head I thought it was different, so I thought that was kind of unique." Again, valuing other's viewpoints and ideas during the mural painting is a concrete example of the claim she made in her final reflection that she learned a lot in EDU 200 because she interacted with her peers, and may be evidence, as I claimed in chapter 3, of a tacit understanding of the dialogic nature of learning.

Kelly's presentation. Kelly's presentation was also multifaceted. In chapter 4, I talked about Kelly's three-part presentation. Kelly told a My Terabithia story, describing the land at her family's cottage. Kelly's Terabithia story shared many features of her classmates' Terabithias, including imaginary play, ownership or secrecy, learning, and specialness. At the cottage, Kelly and her cousins and sisters would create imaginary homes in a dirt pile, "digging steps and chairs." They would learn, they would "pick flowers and trees and just discover them," and they pretended that what the found were artifacts because "there were Indians here." Kelly called this land a "special place," a place that "you don't want adults to find out."

Kelly told me in an interview that she did not think of this land when she was reading the book, and that in fact, she decided to share this part of her presentation at the last minute, as she heard her peers talk about their

Terabithias. Interestingly, even though her Terabithia story shared the features of Terabithia that led Elise to reconsider her understanding of classrooms, she did not write about these qualities of the learning community in her final reflection. Even in our interviews, when I asked Kelly to talk about learning and teaching, she did not mention any Terabithian qualities such as safety, imagination, comfort, or ownership. Though her Terabithia story was like her peers', it did not seem to help her reconceptualize the classroom or to make sense of readings about the learning community.

During the Mural Painting Activity, Kelly struggled to figure out the best way to represent Terabithia. Kelly returned to this theme in the second part of her presentation when she shared a print of painting. This print, a pastoral scene with little girl playing under a vine covered archway, reminded Kelly of Terabithia. She said, "It has their little, what you want to call it, their house, like they had in Terabithia."

The third thing that Kelly shared as part of her presentation was a pair of poems, both by anonymous authors. Both poems were about friendship. Kelly said that she imagined Jesse might say the first poem to express his feelings to Leslie. This poem had lines like "Even though we might not always be together, please know that I'm always here to love you." The second poem went,

> The pain we feel when someone
> leaves our lives is in direct proportion
> to the joy they bring while a part of our life.

Kelly said this poem represented her understanding of the novel because "when Leslie was around she brought Jess, you know, all the joy in the world."

Interpreting Terabithia in terms of relationships. The third part of her presentation, the poetry, brought Kelly to think about the nature of the particular friendship in the novel, and the features of that friendship, love and joy and understanding, that made the friendship so worthwhile. Remember that Kelly's stance toward teaching focused on teaching as a loving and caring relationship, and that she had written about knowing students well was one way to demonstrate that respect. Kelly paid careful attention to the relationship between Jesse and Leslie, as evidenced both here, in her poetry selections, and in her interpretation of the lights-coming-back-on quotation during the *Bridge* Discussion.

Again, there was nothing in Kelly's final reflection to indicate that her interpretation of the novel helped her to think about relationships with students or ways to forge them. However, I do think that her attention to the children's relationship is a reflection of her understanding of teaching. In the second interview, I asked Kelly if there were any connections she could make between the Hawkins article and *Bridge to Terabithia*. As she made a connection, Kelly said that while the I, Thou, It triangle Hawkins talks about "has a subject matter," she tossed that subject matter aside as she considered the novel. In Terabithia, she said, "It's not the actual subject matter they are learning, in *Bridge* it was the growth of a person." Kelly said that the book

was about a "bridge . . .from being alone to being together with Leslie, to the childhood, to the imagination." In Terabithia, there is learning, she told me, but the learning is the forging of a particular kind of relationship, and not the learning of content.

For the first part of Kelly's presentation, she described a Terabithia that sounded much like those of her peers. There were no visible connections between this part of her interpretation and her learning about teaching and children. The second part of Kelly's presentation followed up on an issue she had struggled with during the mural painting, how best to represent Terabithia. The painting represented Kelly's second try to depict Terabithia, after her suggestion to use the cover of the novel was rejected. Again, there were no obvious connections between visually representing an idea about Terabithia and her understanding of teaching and learning. For the third part of her presentation, she shared poetry relating to the theme of friendship, the friendship being the "subject matter" that Jesse learned. This focus on learning and teaching as a relationship is consistent with the stance Kelly brought to EDU 200 on the first day of class. There are no readily apparent links between this interpretation and her final learning in the course.

Kelly's interpretation of the novel, as represented in her *Bridge* Presentation, cannot apparently be connected to her learning, such as it was, in the course. This may be part of why Kelly did not immediately value the *Bridge* Presentations. Kelly told me that "I don't think they were necessary." She said that the draw backs of the presentations were that "It took a lot of

time and it was kind of pressure." She did not feel she had learned from giving her presentation, and she was only mildly convinced that hearing other people's presentations was valuable. She said that the presentations was another way that Sue showed how to "get other people's viewpoints." But when I asked if she learned from hearing the presentations, Kelly said, "I'm trying to think of an example of what somebody taught me. I don't know. I guess nobody really taught me anything about the book."

Conclusion. Kelly was used to highly structured child development courses that told her exactly what and how to observe and to larger lecture classes more common at her institution. The open ended nature of the *Bridge* Sequence and other class assignments challenged Kelly to make interpretations and draw conclusions for herself. At times she rose to the occasion, other times she struggled to figure out what the instructor wanted and to understand how her classmates might be understanding the assignments.

Kelly did appropriate and transform learning in EDU 200. Some of that learning, her increasing appreciation for group work, for example, and her developing repertoire of ways to foster respectful and caring relationships with children, are echoes of her efforts to interpret the novel. Other things Kelly learned as she worked with the novel, such as her understanding of the kinds of books she might make available to children, are documented only in our interviews and were not represented in her written work. The learning that Kelly did construct was related to her child development background, the

conception of teaching as a caring relationship that she brought with her to EDU 200, and to the interactive, group work focus she took part in the course.

Conclusion

Six disparate cases. As you can see, the six featured students each interpreted the novel uniquely. Some, like Kelly and Renee, worked hard, in the context of a teacher education course, to interpret the novel in terms lessons about teaching, learning, or children. Others, like Gina and Aaron, made a concerted effort to understand their own individual response to the novel. Some interpreted with art, some with stories, some with poetry, some in discussion. Some participated frequently and actively in the sequence, others spoke less often and less freely. All six, however, interpreted the novel and became engaged in the *Bridge* Sequence.

Six disparate cases. Each teacher candidate also constructed unique and individual learning in EDU 200. Some seemed to change their conceptions of teaching or of the child's experience a great deal. Aaron and Steve, in particular, grew to value the child's experience in significant ways. Renee seemed ready to capitalize on her newfound appreciation for subject matter. Elise developed a powerful metaphor for thinking about her future classroom in terms of Terabithia. Others did not come as far. Gina and Kelly, both well steeped in appreciation of the child's experience, used EDU 200 to deepen or make more complex their notions of children as learners, children as students. All six, however, learned about the experience of the child and the role of the teacher in EDU 200.

Six disparate cases, varying in many ways. In chapter 1, I claimed that teacher educators ask their students to read and work with narratives because of their belief in the potential to help us to ascribe significance and meaning to experience. The teacher candidates' work with the novel supports this belief. All six of the featured students worked from and with the novel to transform, to varying degrees, their conceptions of teaching, children, and learning. Renee and Elise built their final reflections around concepts and ideas they explored during the *Bridge* Sequence. The bridge metaphor and the Terabithia as the classroom metaphor helped them to think and talk about their understanding of teaching, and for them the novel served as an explicit example that made academic theories more concrete.

For others, the *Bridge* Sequence was central to their learning, but the role the novel played was less explicit. Steve and Aaron, in particular, made sense of the novel by working to understand the experience of the child, and used their interpretations to help them make sense of other experiences in the course and their ideas about teaching and learning. Interpreting *Bridge to Terabithia* was an important part of the web of experiences that shaped their learning.

Interpreting the novel played an even more subtle role in Gina and Kelly's learning. Gina and Kelly wove together the class experiences in EDU 200, their work with the novel, and their other education coursework and experiences to continue to develop their ideas about teaching as a caring relationship with children and the importance of attending to the child's

experience. Echoes of their work with the novel can be found in their statements about their learning. Reading and interpreting the novel was an important aspect of EDU 200, but the roots of their learning are complex and difficult to locate.

A word on the Final Reflection for documenting the teacher candidates' learning. There is one important caveat to add as I conclude this chapter, which has to do with the strengths and limitations of relying on the Final Reflections as the primary source for documenting the teacher candidates' learning. Although I have used evidence from interviews and from last day of class conversations and posters as evidence of the teacher candidates' learning, my primary source has been the end of class reflections. Remember that the reflections had three parts: a list of valuable resources in EDU 200, a statement about a developing teaching stance, and the naming of two important teacherly qualities. Using the concept of transformation, and the markers I described in chapter 2 such as elaboration, complexity, connections between ideas and ability to move concepts beyond the situation in which they were appropriated, I feel fairly confident that the learning I have summarized here in this chapter is fairly representative of at least some of the teacher candidates' learning in the course.

However, the Final Reflections have a couple of limitations. First, they were located at the end of one course, and as written words, they tell us very little about the teacher candidates' knowledge in action. The teacher candidates used writing to express new found commitments to learning about

the experience of the child or valuing subject matter, but it is impossible to know how and whether those commitments will carry over into their classroom. Second, the assignment itself, as a particular activity framework, limited the topics the teacher candidates could and did write about. In this regard, some of the teacher candidates' learning, in particular, some of their learning that is derived from their work interpreting *Bridge to Terabithia,* may not have been completely represented. Kelly's realization that children can, after all, handle literature that is sad or emotional is an example of an idea she learned about the experience of the child which was not represented in her final reflection.

For example, all three of the featured students that I interviewed told me that the *Bridge* Sequence showed them that a concept can be taught from more than one viewpoint or using more than one teaching strategy, and that, in fact, it is probably wise to teach an idea multiple times using multiple approaches.

Gina, for example, told me that Sue taught the *Bridge* Sequence in order to model "different ways to attack situations." As Gina said, the entire sequence was a way to model approaching subject matter with more than one approach. She listed the ways they worked with the novel:

> We had the personal, like relevance that everybody did, we had the mural, and then viewed lots of techniques to discuss the subject matter and that's a lot of what we are learning about is that there's lots of ways to approach situations.

Steve told me that he imagined one of Sue's purposes for the sequence, particularly the Mural Painting Activity, was to model approaching curriculum from multiple perspectives. Steve said he imagined she asked them to paint the mural "I think to show us a different approach to going over the material instead of just discussing it. Different outlet to get the material covered, I guess".

Kelly repeated these same ideas in our first interview. She told me that Sue asked them to paint the mural in order to show them "different ways than just sitting down and talking about something." Later in the interview, the I asked Kelly why Sue asked them to engage in the entire *Bridge* Sequence, Kelly told me it was to show them "how easy it is to tie other things together, 'cause she was trying to teach us that how to incorporate the many different subjects into just the reading of one book."

I did not write about this concept as I analyzed the six cases for two reasons. The first was that the teacher candidates talked about this concept very briefly, and with none of the detail or elaboration that would allow me to call this concept an example of transformational learning. The second is that the question that elicited these three answers, something to the effect of "Why do you think Sue asked you to participate in the *Bridge* Sequence," was likely to have structured their answers.

The point of this discussion is not so much to illustrate the teacher candidates' learning about planning as much as it is to point out that if this one point was repeated in several interviews, yet never made its way in some

fashion to their final reflections, it is likely that other aspects of the teacher candidates' learning are also not represented in the final reflections. The final reflections enabled the teacher candidates to talk about their learning, but they also limited the range of topics which could be named as learning within the constraints of the reflection directions. In spite of their limitations, the reflections are the best representation I have for understanding the teacher candidates learning, and the connections between that learning and their interpretations of the novel are striking, and they were a forum where teacher candidates had opportunities to tell stories, make connections, use metaphors, and otherwise show that their learning was transformational.

Learning about literature as a tool. The teacher candidates' assumption that Sue taught the sequence in order to model ways to approach subject matter, particularly stories, from more than one view point raises an interesting question. What did the teacher candidates infer from the *Bridge* Sequence about literature based teaching? What are they concluding about the role that literature should play in classrooms?

Advocates of literature based approaches in public school classrooms have long struggled with the exact nature of the role that literature should play. When reading and interpreting literary texts is meant to teach content, of any sort, balances between respecting the text as literature and utilizing the text as a teaching resource are difficult to strike. Louise Rosenblatt (1991) wrote about the importance of balance in literature based classrooms in an article she called "Literature–S.O.S.!" Earlier I talked briefly about differences

between more aesthetic and more efferent reading stances. In this article, Rosenblatt reminds us that when we read for efferent purposes "our predominant interest is in acquiring information that we wish to retain after the reading has ended." When we adopt a more aesthetic stance we read "with attention, of course, to what the words refer to, but *mainly* to what we are experiencing, thinking and feeling *during* the reading" (p. 444). When readers read efferently, they read for a purpose, to learn the lesson the text is teaching. When they read more aesthetically, they attend to the images, emotions, and responses that reading and talking about the text evoke. No reading is entirely efferent or aesthetic, she says, but each reading falls along a continuum, with readers adopting a more efferent or more aesthetic stance depending on purpose and context.

Rosenblatt cautions teachers who bring literature into content area classrooms to carefully articulate and understand the stances they are asking students to adopt. When teachers capitalize on the pleasure and interest afforded by literature to help them teach content, skills, and theories, they may be confusing students about the primary stances appropriate to different purposes for reading. When teachers ask students to take an efferent stance and read literature for skills and subject matter, they may wind up using texts and doing an injustice to the literary experience the text affords. While Rosenblatt was speaking about and to elementary teachers considering literature based approaches in subject matter and language arts classrooms, her cautionary words are appropriate to consider when we examine the role

that literature can and does play in teacher preparation. Rosenblatt encourages teachers to consider the ways that:

> Different purposes lead to different modes of reading and to different criteria of evaluation of the "meanings" evoked. If the emphasis is on verifiable information or practical application, not only does the mode of reading need to be efferent, but also the interpretation of the text needs to involve some public criteria of evaluation. If the purpose is literary, the important thing is that readers relate to the text, and to one another, the different experiences produced during their transactions with it. (p. 447)

The teacher candidates' work afforded that balance between efferent and aesthetic stances. Sue's primary goal for the sequence was to engage the readers, to provide opportunities for a lived-through experience with the text. Many of the components of the *Bridge* Sequence, the Mural Painting Activity, the Presentations, some of the questions posed during the discussion, provided opportunities for teacher candidates to describe and consider those aesthetic responses. Within the context of this primary, aesthetic response to the novel, Sue had a couple of sub-goals that seemed to be working toward the more efferent side of the continuum. The novel was meant to bridge and support connections between the two major themes of the course, the role of the teacher and the experience of the child. She hoped the teacher candidates would consider the process of reading, and she posed questions to support

their thinking about the nature of childhood in the context of the novel. Several teacher candidates took a more efferent stance as they read the novel, as Kelly did when she assumed first they would use the novel to learn about teaching reading, and then paid close attention to the teachers. However, the activities that comprised the interpretation of the novel supported and encouraged Kelly and her peer's more aesthetic transactions with the text.

Sue worked fairly hard to balance bringing an aesthetic stance to reading and interpreting the novel with its potentially educative role in her teacher preparation classroom. Because I was curious about the ways that the teacher candidates made sense of this use of literature to learn about content, I asked the students I interviewed to read another piece of children's literature and to talk with me about bringing that literature into their future classrooms. Gina, Steve, and Kelly all read a book called *In the Attic* by Hiawyn Oram (1984/1995). In the story, a young boy plays for an entire day in an imaginary attic he climbs to using the ladder of his toy fire truck. I asked the teacher candidates to tell me about what they might do with this story in a classroom, and their answers were as different, and as rooted in both their prior experiences and their work with the novel, as their interpretations of *Bridge*.

Steve, for example, told me that if he read this book with children, "I might have students come up with their own attic, I guess, describe that." Asking children to describe their own imaginary attic is reminiscent of the many My Terabithia presentations of the *Bridge* Sequence. As Steve

continued to think out loud about the story, he also drew on prior experiences in classrooms, and concluded that this story might fight nicely into a writing program. Steve said,

> I could see this for using your imagination, with younger kids, for writing stories. We did that when I was in elementary, we had a teacher who was very big on writing stories, I was writing stories all the time, and it was a lot of fun.

Steve imagined eliciting children's personal connections to the story (their own attics) and for encouraging students to be more imaginative in their writing. Gina drew different conclusions about teaching with the story. Gina's interpretation of *Bridge to Terabithia* centered on considering the experiences of the child, and she wrote frequently in her final reflection about ways and reasons teachers should build respectful relationships with children and try to know them well. Gina echoed these same ideas when she told me about how she would use *In the Attic* in her classroom. Gina said that the best thing to do with the book would be to try and figure out how children were understanding it. She said if you read such a book with children you should:

> spend time so you know what they make out of it, what do you think of it, what was your favorite part, tell me about it, you know. They have a whole way of thinking that no one could be, can expect to understand.

To find out how children were understanding the story, Gina thought about open ended and imaginative activities. She thought she would try to come up with activities:

> that aren't necessarily structured activities but will allow them to go into their own world . . . . so you know, pretend play and activities like that and construction, anything that constitutes pretend play or make believe play, you could do anything like that in the classroom.

When she talked about EDU 200 Gina said she worked harder and learned more from the actives that were personal and open-ended, and she imagined designing similar kinds of activities in her future classroom. The stance that Gina brought to EDU 200, one of understanding the child's experience, resurfaced as she shared her views on sharing literature with children. The open ended experiences Gina described are experiences that seem likely to allow children to share their personal and engaged responses to the text.

Kelly, on the other hand, started thinking about the story as a tool for designing units and teaching content even before I posed the question. As she read the novel and responded to it, Kelly referred to an illustration of mice wearing glasses, and said, "They need glasses to see with. Who would ever think, you could do a whole unit on seeing and vision, and how they need to get cheese, the possibilities there . . . ." When I asked what she might do with the story in a classroom, Kelly talked about over a dozen

conversations and lessons the book might spark. Some questions she would ask would allow children to share their personal connections to the story, such as "who has attics in their house and who's been in an attic?" However, most of the conversations she imagined started had to do with connections to content. Kelly said, "You could make a lesson plan on each page," and the lessons plans (all of which were related to various illustrations of imaginary games the boy in the story played) included thinking about mice, watching mice in a cage, talking about different languages children can speak, learning about airplanes, going to the zoo to see a tiger, visiting a real attic and learning about outer space.

When I asked Kelly to tell me how she had learned to generate so many ideas from reading one short story, she told me that it was her prior experience in child development and her lifelong goal to become a teacher that taught her to generate ideas in this way. She said, "My child development classes are very much like this, I've always wanted to become a teacher and even in high school I've had classes where I had to develop lesson plans."

Two of the three teacher candidates drew on experiences outside the EDU 200 classroom to explain the activities they would use in their own classrooms after they read *In the Attic*. Steve talked about a writing teacher, and Gina drew on her learning from child development coursework. The *Bridge* Sequence may have supported their ideas about inviting personal response to literature (all three teacher candidates in some way imagined

asking children to share ways they understood and connected to the story), but the sequence seemed to play a minor role in their thinking about teaching with literature.

The importance of opportunities to talk about and interpret the novel. Reading and interpreting *Bridge to Terabithia* supported the teacher candidates' learning about the role of the teacher and the experience of the child. The teacher candidates made complex connections between the narrative of the novel, their experiences reading and interpreting the novel, the other more academic readings done for class, their own experiences as learners, and their experiences in the field, in order to come to new, and sometimes strikingly significant, understandings of the experience of the child and the role of the teacher. Some of the featured students worked actively to interpret the novel in light of the class, by drawing lessons from the teachers in the novel and the learning that was depicted in the novel. Others worked hard to understand their own reactions to the novel, and then used those reactions to generate theories and dispositions that supported their learning in other EDU 200 experiences. Just as Brunner (1994) suggested, the novel served both to particularize experience, making it personal, and to enlarge experience, making it general.

As I quoted earlier, Brunner suggests that

> It is the generative nature of narrative that gives it potential to generate particular ways of thinking, knowing, even criticizing– to have a memory and to extend or formulate application of that

memory to particular experiences (p. 103).

The teacher candidates in EDU 200, as represented by the six featured students, found this to be the case. To greater and lesser degrees, the teacher candidates used the novel to generate particular ways of understanding teaching children and learning, or to serve as examples of particular ways of thinking about teaching, children, and learning that were presented in class or that they brought with them to the course and expanded over the summer.

However, Brunner claims that it is the "particular nature of narrative" that gives it this potential, that readers make meaning with and from the text. In light of my research, I would modify that claim in a subtle but important way. In each case, from Renee and Elise to Gina and Kelly, when the teacher candidates' learning in the course was shaped by the novel, it was shaped by their interpretations of the novel, in talk, with one another. The discourse that surrounded the reading of the novel, shaped the teacher candidates' learning and helped them to be able to particularize and generalize from the reading of the text.

Another piece of evidence underscores the importance of interpretive talk about the text. You will remember that in chapter 3 I quoted Sue's directions for the final reflection. In those directions, Sue summarized the major points and experiences that she wished the teacher candidates to refer to as they wrote their reflections. For example, she reminded the teacher candidates that in the course "We looked carefully at who our students might be, drawing on our own experiences a well as literature to give us insights

into the world of children." She also said they had grappled with "what it means to build and maintain a learning community" In general these topics that she mentioned, along with several others, were parallel with the learning themes that I outlined as I listed the content of the teacher candidates' learning.

Also in chapter 3, I talked about one sentence in this paragraph from the directions that was not addressed in the final reflections. Sue had written in the directions, "In class, we have grappled with the role gender plays in our own and students' lives." I claimed that the fact that the teacher candidates did not write about gender, in spite of Sue's tacit suggestion by means of this paragraph, was evidence that the themes they did write about were concepts they had learned. Because they did not write about gender, I concluded in that chapter, the teacher candidates were not merely spitting back the kinds of things Sue wanted them to hear, they were actually writing about their learning.

The teacher candidates did not write about gender, even when prompted to do so, because thinking about gender as an aspect of the child's experience was not something they had really taken hold of and transformed. They had participated in the one class period devoted to issues of gender in the classroom, and read articles and written brief responses to those articles (e.g. Pipher, 1994; Bailey, 1993) but they did not transform their understanding of these experiences into aspects of their teaching stance or knowledge, skills, or dispositions good teachers posses.

I believe that this is primarily because the teacher candidates did not use talk to interpret *Bridge to Terabithia* in terms of gender. Certainly gender issues are one theme in the novel. For much of the first portion of the novel, Jesse struggles to allow himself to become friends with Leslie because she is a girl. And Leslie faces many trials at school because she does not conform to the other girls' expectations. But in spite of the fact that the teacher candidates' discussion of gender issues had taken place only one class period before *Bridge* Sequence began, gender was not a lens that the teacher candidates generally brought to their explorations of the novel during the *Bridge* Sequence.

When both groups were asked to name the issues in Jesse's life, gender was briefly listed as one of many issues he faced. Mandy mentioned gender as one of the parts of the novel, other than the death, that children might pay attention to. Other than that, gender was not mentioned during the discussion. Perhaps more significantly, gender did not come up at all in any of the *Bridge* Presentations. It certainly could have. Teacher candidates could have talked about experiences similar to Jesse's or Leslie's dealing with gender stereotypes at school, for example. They could have talked about gender in lots of ways, but they did not.

It is, of course, impossible to use the absence of data to make strong claims about what the teacher candidates were thinking or learning, and I certainly do not mean to imply that gender SHOULD have been one of the things they talked and presented about. I cannot even claim that because the

teacher candidates did not interpret the novel in terms of *Bridge to Terabithia*, they did not learn that content in class. Perhaps they did.

The issue of gender serves as an exception that supports my claim that the teacher candidates transformed their understanding of teaching, children, and learning in light of their spoken interpretations of the novel. The absence of gender in both their discourse during the Sequence and their claims about their learning in class highlights a significant pattern. The ways the teacher candidates interpreted the novel (in terms of issues in Jesse's life, the learning Jesse did in Terabithia, the features of Terabithia, the actions of the teachers portrayed in the book) did support their learning in the course (as they transformed understandings of the importance of attending to and valuing the child's experience, of creating learning communities like Terabithia, and came to appreciate the importance of passion for subject matter, among other things).

Concluding thoughts on the role of the novel. If I look back to the original dissertation question, I find that after all these pages, I have come to a very complex, rather than a simple answer. The dissertation question asked:

> Based on evidence of appropriation and transformation of learning, what did six teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading and interpretation of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

What role did reading and interpreting the novel play? Interpreting the novel played an important role in each featured students' learning. At times, it served as an example, making theories more concrete. At other times, it served to help teacher candidates generate theories, theories about teaching and learning and children they used to make sense of other experiences in and out of class. As a narrative, the novel served as an example from which the teacher candidates could construct understandings of readings and experience. The teacher candidates transformed their interpretations of the novel in light of other experiences in the course and in light of their prior experiences and dispositions toward teaching. They made connections between their interpretations of the novel and the academic pieces they read. They used their understanding of the novel to make sense of their own experiences as learners and in classrooms. The ways the teacher candidates interpreted the novel are reflected, echoed, and extended in their final reflections to greater and lesser degrees. Interpreting *Bridge to Terabithia* helped the teacher candidates to learn about the experience of the child and the role of the teacher in personal, engaged, and meaningful ways that reflected their developing sense of learning as an active construction.

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[i] There are two possible exceptions to this claim. Geraldine was not present for either day of the bridge sequence. She also missed several other days of class due to family emergencies. Her final reflection was less detailed than many of her peers, and her learning in the course did not seem to be as powerful. I also did not have access to Keith's final reflection, and he said very little during the production of his group's poster. Because I have little

evidence of his overall learning in the course, I hesitate to make claims about the role of the novel in his learning.

[ii] According to my field notes, Elise did not participate during the discussion of the Short chapter, although she may have, I was still learning names at that point (the second day of class). She also was not asked to write about this article. We have only her retrospective claims about her understanding of this article for making assumptions about Elise's first reading of Short.

[iii] For the other five cases, I have relied heavily on the teacher candidates' first-day-of-class surveys as evidence of their knowledge and stance as they entered EDU 200. Gina was absent the first day of class, and completed her survey after the course was over.

Chapter 6: Implications

Introduction

The dissertation question asked,

> Based on evidence of appropriation and transformation of learning, what did six teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 learn about learning, understanding the child's experience and the role of the teacher? What role, if any, did their reading and interpretation of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* play in that learning?

I summarized the teacher candidates' learning of eight themes related to the role of the teacher and the experience of the child and described the ways the teacher candidates interpreted the novel. Then, I looked to individual cases to understand the connections between their reading and their learning. The teacher candidates in EDU 200 learned from and with the novel as they sought to make sense of their experiences in teacher education and to construct knowledge about teaching, children, and learning.

What can this research tell us about beginning teachers and teacher preparation? This chapter is arranged as a set of questions that are pertinent to on-going conversations about teacher preparation, and the answers that this research contributes to those questions. The questions include:

- What can this research tell us about the promise of children's literature for the preparation of teachers?

- What can this research tell us about beginning teachers as learners?
- What can this research tell us about helping beginning teachers construct knowledge they need in order to teach well?
- What other things can this research tell us about the practice of teacher preparation in general?
- What are the methodological implications of this research?

What Can This Research Tell Us About The Promise Of Children's Literature For The Preparation Of Teachers?

Advocates of children's literature in teacher preparation hypothesize that when stories for children are folded into teacher preparation coursework, those narratives will shape beginning teachers' learning. As teacher candidates read stories, it is assumed, they will learn from texts by developing theories about children, learning, and schooling, and they will learn with texts, using the particularized experiences represented in books as concrete examples of more abstract theories. In many ways, this research supports that hypothesis, affirming the promise of children's literature as texts for teacher preparation. Working with *Bridge to Terabithia* did support the teacher candidates' construction of transformational understandings of teaching, learning, and the experience of the child. However, the affirmation of that hypothesis has several qualifications, qualifications that are important for any teacher educator considering children's stories as curriculum for their teacher education courses.

Interpreting children's literature can play an important role in the preparation of teachers. Reading and interpreting *Bridge to Terabithia* did play an important role in the teacher candidates' construction of knowledge in EDU 200. Elise read the novel and developed a theory about the nature of classrooms, then connected that theory to her reading of more theoretical articles. Renee used the novel as a concrete example of theory she read in class. The teacher candidates' experiences with the novel did help them to learn about teaching and children. To greater and lesser degrees, the teacher candidates transformed their understanding of the experience of the child and the role of the teacher in light of their experiences interpreting the novel. The ways they talked about the novel, by connecting it to childhood memories, by talking together to construct an understanding of Terabithia as a safe, imaginative, owned learning space; by repeatedly talking and thinking about the characters in the novel; these ways of constructing understanding about *Bridge to Terabithia* also became ways of constructing understanding of articles, field experiences, and their future classrooms. The teacher candidates' interpretations of the novel became important warp threads in a complicated weaving of knowledge. It was an experience inseparable from the others, an experience echoed in their writing and valued in their interviews.

Many advocates of children's literature write about the power of that literature as if the power lay only in the text itself. Lee Galda (1998) for example says, "It is just this potential for transformation, the power that

experiences with stories have to change our lives, to make us see, feel, and live a little differently, that makes literature so wonderful and so dangerous."

In light of the teacher candidates' learning in EDU 200, if I were writing this sentence, I would change just one word. Galda writes that it is experiences "with stories" that have power to change how we see and act. I would say, it is experiences "interpreting stories" that has this power. The ways the teacher candidates talked about the novel became the ways the teacher candidates understood the novel, and, in turn, the ways they made sense with and from the novel in their education coursework.

The teacher candidates in EDU 200 had multiple opportunities to name and explore their response to and understanding of the novel. Sue asked questions and created experiences inviting personal connections and aesthetic response. During the discussion the teacher candidates had opportunities to talk with one another about their reactions to the novel and how they were making sense of it. The Mural Painting Activity invited them to work aesthetically to create a visual representation. The individual presentations asked the teacher candidates to specifically name the ways they had engaged with and understood the novel. These various experiences interpreting the novel allowed the teacher candidates to lay ideas on the table, to examine and refute those ways of making meaning, and to elaborate on those ways of making sense by connecting them more carefully to others' interpretations or to elements of text and self from which they arose. Rosenblatt emphasizes the importance of experiencing and sharing these lived-through, personal

responses to texts when she argued for attention to both efferent and aesthetic experiences with texts in education (1991).

The *Bridge* Discussion and the Presentations also invited particular ways of making meaning from and with the text. When Sue asked the teacher candidates to consider the issues in Jesse's life and compare those to their own childhoods, she pointed to elements of the text that she believed were important in the context of a teacher education classroom. She opened the door for particular ways of thinking about the text. When she suggested that they give presentations about their own Terabithias, she built from their conversations about the novel to suggest a way of presenting connections to the novel (describing "My Terabithia"), and many teacher candidates took her up on that suggestion. As the teacher candidates talked about the novel in theses ways, they became an interpretive community with a shared sense of the meaning of at least one aspect of the novel (Tompkins & McGee, 1993).

The point is that the meanings of the novel, and its significance for the rest of the class, did not magically get somehow inside the students' heads. The teacher candidates made sense of the novel in light of their past experiences, its context in an education course, and in light of the conversations and presentations in which they interpreted it. The ways they worked with and talked about the novel were crucially important to its role in their overall learning. Not all teacher candidates interpreted the novel as richly as their peers, or were as able to connect those interpretations to other course experiences. Kelly, for example, struggled with the open ended and

personal nature of the *Bridge* Sequence. She also found many of the more academic readings to be challenging. Still, the learning she eventually did construct in EDU 200 seemed to be related to the sense she made of the novel, and the ways she heard her peers talk about the book.

The crucial role that talking about and interpreting children's literature played in this course raises a point about the importance of carefully constructed curriculum. Although this dissertation has purposefully not been a study of Sue's teaching, her instructional decisions shaped and guided her students' interpretations of the novel, and, in turn, their learning in the course. As you could probably see in chapter 4, when I discussed Sue's goals for the *Bridge* Sequence, Sue had carefully considered why she was asking her students to read children's literature, what she hoped they would do as they read and interpreted the novel, and what she hoped they would learn. The *Bridge* Sequence did not just happen, Sue planned it, grounding each decision in her understanding of the purposes for the course and her beliefs about beginning teachers as learners.

The power of the teacher candidates' interpretations also points out the importance for teacher educators to create spaces for their students to make sense of texts in aesthetic and personal ways. The multiple opportunities the teacher candidates had to name, describe, justify, and revise their understandings of the novel were crucial to their learning. Teacher educators wishing to incorporate narratives in their teacher preparation classrooms

would be wise to create parallel opportunities for their students to talk and write about the sense they are making of the texts they read.

The particular text was important. In Chapter 1, I wrote that children's books, as a particular subset of narratives, are particularly suited to teacher preparation classrooms because they will engage readers, because they depict children growing and learning in and out of classrooms, and because they are accessible. This seemed to be the case in EDU 200. The teacher candidates worked together to interpret the novel, and they were, at least in part, able to do so because they were working with such rich material. Almost all of the teacher candidates found the novel engaging. Even Steve, who rarely spoke and did not enjoy discussion based courses, thought the novel was engaging and appreciated having an opportunity to read and think about a story. As a narrative knower, he found the text accessible because it was a story.

Bridge to Terabithia had many important features that supported the teacher candidates' engagement. The characters were interesting. The book was accessibly written yet presumably complex enough to hold the attention of these 24 young adults. The book was well written, and a winner of the Newberry Medal. Since Sue aimed primarily to provide an engaged learning experience, these potentially engaging qualities of the novel were essential. In addition, the novel had several features that made it an appropriate choice for this particular teacher education course. The course itself was about learning, the role of the teacher, and the experience of the child.

The novel portrayed situations, characters, and events that could be interpreted in ways which would illuminate some of the concepts that Sue hoped to explore over the semester. In the novel, the characters, particularly Jesse, learn and grow. The experiences of the children are clearly and complexly portrayed. The novel depicted classrooms and families and other settings that both foster and stymie children's learning.

Selecting the right literature for interpretation in teacher education classrooms is not unproblematic. The case of Aaron raises real questions about how you choose literature for a class of students with such disparate backgrounds and experiences as readers. Aaron did not necessarily enjoy reading the novel, he found it predictable and simplistic. The novel became an important strand in his learning, but without those opportunities to explain why he did not identify with the novel and explore his reactions to it, it might not have.

They do not necessarily develop misconceptions about using literature. One of the potential concerns about using children's literature as a tool for teacher preparation is that teacher candidates will infer that literature is meant to be used rather than experienced. It is possible that when teacher candidates read and work to take lessons about teaching from children's books, they will come to see that literature as a thing to be exploited, rather than images and ideas to be engaged in. The teacher candidates in EDU 200 did not seem to make these inferences. When I asked Kelly and Steve and Gina to talk with me about bringing a different piece of literature into

classrooms, they talked first about eliciting and understanding children's reactions to and understanding of that text. They also saw the book as a means of inviting imaginative writing, or a foundation for branching off and considering content and taking part in experiences and field trips, but they attributed those ideas about teaching with literature to other experiences and other classrooms, and not their experiences in EDU 200. This is perhaps because personal response and interpretation were the central experiences by which the teacher candidates explored *Bridge to Terabithia*. They themselves learned as they took an aesthetic stance interpreting the novel, they seemed to understand that children will as well.

Rosenblatt (1991) calls for a balancing of efferent and aesthetic stances in elementary school classrooms. This study points out the importance of that word, balance. Children's literature does seem to hold promise for helping beginning teachers to transform their understanding of learning and of the role of the teacher. *Bridge to Terabithia,* and presumably other works written for children as well, seem to be texts that can be used to help beginning teachers learn to teach. However, the importance of the teacher candidates' interpretations, their repeated opportunities to make personal, aesthetic sense of the novel, make a powerful case to treat literature as literature, even in the context of a teacher education course. Allowing students to respond in personal ways, to share their interpretations, justifying those with stories, questions, memories and other meaningful connections, was a crucial aspect of the teacher candidates learning.

Using literature as a tool can negate the very power of the texts *as pieces of literature.* When Sue read an earlier version of this implications chapter, she said that in her mind I had raised, "interesting questions about whether and how 'used' and 'experienced' are mutually exclusive and if that's always the case." She pointed out that

> It seems to me that the value of literature in a teacher education course depends on the instructor's perspective. Had I simply asked the students to read for the sake of a literary experience, perhaps they may have resented the lack of connection between course content and the exercise.

Sue's comments quite eloquently argue for carefully constructed curriculum. Teacher educators must know why they are selecting children's literature from all the many and varied kinds of teacher preparation curriculum available. They should have a sense of the learning they hope children's literature will support, and have carefully thought about the experiences interpreting the texts that will support that learning.

Sue's comments also remind us that aesthetic and efferent approaches to literature need not be mutually exclusive of one another. To the degree that it worked, the *Bridge* Sequence was successful because it created opportunities to construct and share both personal and teaching-related interpretations of the novel, and because the teacher candidates themselves, in the context of personal, aesthetic interpretations of the novel, drew their

own connections between teaching, learning, children, and *Bridge to Terabithia*.

What Can This Research Tell Us About Beginning Teachers As Learners?

The dissertation has been about the potentially powerful role that reading and interpreting children's literature can play in teacher preparation. This work has also been about tracing and document teacher candidates' learning, and, as such, can help us to consider preservice teachers as learners. Beginning teachers socially construct knowledge in their education courses, using talk and writing to make sense of experiences, basing their understanding and their interpretations of education courses on prior knowledge and experience, and they work actively to make coherent sense of the experiences that teacher educators ask them to engage in. The next two sections will examine each of these points.

Teacher candidates socially construct knowledge in teacher education courses. In chapter 3 I summarized the ways the teacher candidates in EDU 200 learned about the constructed nature of knowledge. Several wrote about ways they were beginning to understand that children make sense of classroom experiences in light of prior knowledge. Aaron, for example, wrote that he was beginning to see that "students are extremely smart and experienced human beings." Just as Aaron's young students are smart and experienced learners who build from what they know and can do, so too are teacher candidates.

The teacher candidates made sense of their experiences in the EDU 200 classroom in light of their past experiences in and out of classrooms, their other education coursework, their memories of childhood, their conceptions of teaching, and their understanding of the role of the teacher. Elise brought her knowledge of literature to the interpretation of the novel, used metaphor to understand the significance of Terabithia, and transformed that metaphor into a powerful way to think about classrooms. Steve brought narrative ways of knowing, read and talked about stories, told stories of his own, and constructed a new appreciation for the child's experience. Gina brought her experiences in her child development coursework and view of teaching as a relationship with children, and made sense of class experiences in ways that supported and extended her existing knowledge. Each of the teacher candidates appropriated and transformed knowledge of teaching based on their prior knowledge and experience.

Not only did the teacher candidates make sense of their experiences in the course in light of prior knowledge and experience, they also socially constructed knowledge as they talked repeatedly about children, teaching, and the novel in the context of the course. The Vygostky space highlights the social origins of learning, emphasizing the ways that new ways of thinking arise first in the social realm, as individuals talk with one another. Louise Rosenblatt emphasizes the social nature of interpretation, saying that readers extend the meaning of texts as they try to name their interpretations in social contexts and hear others talk about elements of text and self that evoke

different interpretations. Social constructivist learning theories and transactional theories of reading both emphasize the ways meaning construction is a social, and not an individual, process.

The teacher candidates' learning illustrates these theories. After the teacher candidates read the novel, they talked about it. Together, they constructed ways to think about Terabithia in the context of the course, and they talked together about ways the novel might be significant for understanding teaching and children. The things they talked about, childhood and issues in Jesse's life, the features of Terabithia, these became their interpretations of the novel, and, in turn, important elements in their overall learning, as represented in the Final Reflections.

This work illustrates the ways that the teacher candidates appropriated ways of thinking from a variety of social settings (readings, discussions, field experiences, the novel) and then transformed those by weaving them into a complex web of ideas, finding connections between various concepts, and by using some experiences to serve as concrete examples of others. One important aspect of this research is the crucial role that social interactions played in the teacher candidates' transformation of learning. In chapter 2, I wrote a great deal about dialogue, and the ways my assumptions about dialogue changed. I had begun the research expecting dialogue that sounded and felt a particular way, but close analysis of the teacher candidates' writing and discourse revealed that the teacher candidates were engaging with one

another and learning in ways not necessarily reflected in the number of interruptions or other surface features of the talk.

Learning arose and was transformed in social interactions, and these social interactions had particular features. Barnes (1993) writes about features of talk such as a quest for common meaning and a spiral nature, where concepts are raised, abandoned and reclaimed. Dillon (1995) describes two important features of discussions, including freedom of address (or the trusting sense that all members of a community can participate equally and respectfully in conversations) and a search for meaning (or, in other words, a mutual quest to name and describe the personal meaningfulness and understandings of concepts that are being explored, the willingness to share and examine and revise those meanings.) These features, quest for meaning, trusting participation, reclaiming of topics after they have been abandoned, these features were present in the teacher candidates' talk, and they supported the construction of the interpretations of the novel that were so influential in the teacher candidates' learning. These features of the talk were enabled by the particular learning community in EDU 200, a point I will discuss in more detail later.

Barnes and Dillon were both talking about the features of discussions that make them educative situations. I would add that these features were important aspects of all of the learning activities in EDU 200, and not just the discussions. The presentations and the written work also supported the

teacher candidates' learning, in part because these activities shared the features that Barnes and Dillon attribute to educative discussions.

We can see this in the teacher candidates' Final Reflections. The teacher candidates used the Final Reflections and other pieces in a spiral way, that is they used their writing to visit and revisit ideas. Renee, for example built from the bridge metaphor in several ways, and wrote about her understanding of Dewey and Hawkins and Fried several times, each time with more connection and complexity. Dillon's notion of freedom of address implies a level of trust and risk taking that the teacher candidates seemed to feel in their writing. They were willing to take risks in their writing, and trusted Sue to read their work respectfully, even though it was also being written for a grade. Steve, for example, was willing to tell stories in an assignment that said nothing about using personal anecdotes and that called instead for answers to paradigmatic questions (What is your learning stance? What qualities would you add to the list of knowledge skills and dispositions? etc.) By telling these narratives, Steve revealed his transformational understanding of the importance of the child's experience. And if, as Wells (In press) argues, writing is both a means of presenting knowledge and constructing knowledge, Steve and his classmates' sense of "freedom of address" in their writing played an important role in their transformation of learning.

Another quality of educative talk is a search for meaning. This search for meaning was certainly present in the teacher candidates' written work.

Just as the teacher candidates used conversations to name and revise their understanding of the novel, they used their written work to name and describe their understanding of the events in class overall. The Final Reflections, with their particular directions, gave the teacher candidates chances to ask themselves and organize ways of thinking about what the events in class meant to them as future teachers, articulate the important features of the text, and to connect the new ways of thinking acquired in class to prior experiences and existing knowledge. These features hold true for the presentations as well. The presentations and the written work shared the same dialogic features that Barnes and Dillon attribute to conversations, including a quest for meaning, a freedom of address, and a spiral nature.

This work makes a case for the importance of written work that is carefully designed, work which allows for construction and presentation of personal meanings, and for which instructors communicate that they will be respectful, trusting readers who share jointly in the quest for meaning that writing allows.

Beginning teachers actively work to make sense of their experiences . According to this research, teacher candidates not only construct new knowledge by connecting and transforming it with prior knowledge in social contexts, they work actively to make coherent sense of the experiences in which they engage.

The teacher candidates generally worked to make coherent sense of their experiences in class by searching actively for connections between

different readings and activities, and by actively connecting the experiences in class to experiences outside of class. Renee, for example, read the novel and a piece of theory on the same day, and used each to understand and talk about the other. Most of the teacher candidates brought in personal stories and anecdotes to help them interpret *Bridge to Terabithia*. The teacher candidates worked actively to find connections between their various readings and experiences. They did this in part because of Sue's careful crafting of curriculum, so that important concepts were explored by multiple readings and experiences. But it was not just Sue's teaching decisions that led to the connections. The teacher candidates themselves worked actively to make the course a coherent whole.

One of the places this can bee seen is the *Bridge* Presentations. Kelly, for example, paid close attention to the teachers in the novel because she was reading it in a teacher education course. She worked to figure out a reason for reading *Bridge to Terabithia* in EDU 200. Several other teacher candidates used their presentations to explain, without Sue's prompting, just what the novel taught them about teaching and learning. These teacher candidates actively sought to understand Sue's purposes for the sequence, even though she specifically told them that she did not want to share her purpose until the end of the sequence so that they would be engaged and treat the novel primarily as a piece of literature.

The teacher candidates' active quest to have meaningful experiences in EDU 200 illustrates another aspect of social constructivist theories of learning.

These theories emphasize the ways that learners *actively* transform new ways of thinking appropriated in social situations by connecting them to prior experiences and ways of knowing. Transformation takes place when learners actively seek to understand. When they search for and name connections between various ideas and between ideas and experiences. In other words, the cases of Sue's students as learners effectively point out one of the major concepts Sue hoped her students would come to know: that learners learn when they are engaged.

What Can This Research Tell Us About Helping Preservice Teachers Construct Knowledge They Need In Order To Teach Well?

In chapter 1, I laid out five territories of knowing that are important parts of teacher preparation programs. These included:

- Knowledge of content
- Pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge
- Knowledge of learners
- Knowledge of learning
- Knowledge of the role of the teacher

Each of these knowledge bases can be crucially important for a teachers' success. As a course, EDU 200 was neither about content nor about pedagogy. Instead, it was a course about learning, children, and the role of the teacher. As such, the cases presented from the EDU 200 classroom can help us to think about helping beginning teachers' revised their epistemologies and come to see the experience of the child and the role of the teacher in new ways.

Knowledge of learning. Prawat (1992) argues that changing beginning teachers' conceptions of knowing and learning is a difficult task, in part because they come to teacher preparation holding a banking model of teaching as telling and learning as receiving, and in part because changing epistemologies causes beginning teachers to rethink much of what they know about children, their own educations, and teaching.

This research shows us that bringing about changes in epistemologies is possible, at least within the context of one teacher education course. Aaron and Steve, in particular, wrote about large changes in their understanding of the role of the teacher, and came to see that children are active learners who build from prior experience. Chapter 3 showed the ways many of the teacher candidates justified their stances and their Final Reflections because of their understanding of children as active learners who make sense of new learning in light of past experience and because of the ways they valued social transactions in EDU 200.

The many features of EDU 200 supported the teacher candidates' revisions of their epistemologies. The novel itself, portraying Terabithia and Jesse's growth in and out of school, grounded their learning and served as an example. The teacher candidates' spoken interpretations of the novel, for which they sought actively to make connections between course experiences, memories, and prior knowledge, played a crucial role in their learning. The carefully chosen academic readings connected to and capitalized on the plot of the novel to support their learning. The dialogic nature of the discourse and

all the other activities in EDU 200 supported the teacher candidates work to rethink their understanding of learning. Each of these argues for points I have already made: careful construction of teacher education curriculum, creating an atmosphere that includes both freedom of address and a search for meaning, bringing narratives and children's literature into teacher preparation.

There is another point to be made. The teacher candidates in EDU 200 did not learn about learning because Sue explored, talked about, and paradigmatically taught them learning theories. Even though the course was titled "Learning and Learners in Context," Sue rarely asked the teacher candidates to read, write, or talk about "learning" as the object of study. Instead, she organized the course around two other knowledge bases, knowledge of the learner and knowledge of the role of the teacher.

Knowledge of learners. The teacher candidates carefully and repeatedly explored the child's experience. They thought about themselves as learners. They conducted a field study and wrote about a particular child from a classroom study. The read and interpreted *Bridge to Terabithia*.

In chapter 1, I wrote about the ways that helping teacher educators to learn about their students has been a difficult aspect of teacher preparation. Habermas (cited in Zeichner, 1993) talks about the ways that teacher education experiences, and, in particular, field experiences, tend to reify negative stereotypes of children and families, and claimed that teacher

educators need to continue to seek ways to support the development of positive, curious attitudes toward children.

In EDU 200, Sue did this by asking the teacher candidates to read and interpret *Bridge to Terabithia*. When teacher candidates take part in field experiences, teacher educators are hard pressed to help their students reflect on and interpret the events they witness in public schools classrooms. This is because field experiences tend to take on such prominence in teacher candidates minds as the "real thing" and not some pale imitation in a textbook about teaching. This is also because it is very difficult for teacher educators with dozens of students to know about their teacher candidates' field experiences with enough detail to help them reflect on those experiences.

The teacher candidates in EDU 200 did take part in a field experience. Sue worked as hard as she could to model respectful and curious attitudes toward children. For example, she worked to teach them to conduct a "Descriptive Review" of a child (Carini, 1991) and to help them to work to understand, as well as value and respect, the experiences of their students. The reading of the novel played an important role in helping the teacher candidates to see the experiences of children in particular ways. The novel served as a joint experience exploring and interpreting the case of one (fictional) child, Jesse. Together, under Sue's careful guidance, the teacher candidates talked and thought about the issues in Jesse's life. In part, this exploration helped them to complicate their understandings of childhood,

and to think about the ways that children's lives shape their actions in the classroom. Because it was a piece of literature, treated in aesthetic and personal ways, the teacher candidates interpreted the novel by seeking connections between their lives and Jesse's (telling stories of childhood, looking fro ways to identify with the character). As they did so, they developed skills and attitudes (Aaron in particular) for knowing about the experience of the child.

This learning about learners the teacher candidates constructed is inextricably interconnected to their changing epistemologies. As the teacher candidates considered the experience of the child, they also came to understand learning in new ways. The qualities of Terabithia became the qualities they attributed and planned for their future classrooms, and these qualities tacitly implied an understanding of learning as an active, social construction.

Reading and interpreting children's literature can help teacher candidates develop a respectful curious, positive stance toward knowing children. The development of that stance can support changes in epistemologies, as teacher candidates come to see that the ways of knowing and experiences that children bring to classrooms are not just drawbacks or behavioral issues, they are the tools with which students make meaning and can learn.

Knowledge of the role of the teacher. The second half of the course focused on the role of the teacher. Just as knowing about learners and

knowing about learning are interconnected, so to are there inseparable connections between epistemologies and conceptions of the role of the teacher. In chapter 1, I wrote about the importance of helping beginning teachers move beyond an inwardly focused orientation. When knowledge is something teachers deliver to children, the role of the teacher is fairly clear cut. Teachers tell while children listen. When knowledge is seen as an active social construction, the teachers' role becomes much more complicated. In EDU 200, the teacher candidates developed many ideas about the role of the teacher, such as valuing and caring passionately about subject matter, and creating connections between children and subject matter (bridges or a balance). Again, exploring these roles of the teacher, and thinking carefully about just what it is teachers do, supported revisions in the teacher candidates' epistemologies.

In part, these revisions came about as the teacher candidates used talk to interpret the novel (especially when the teacher candidates worked to make sense of the novel in the context of an education course) and as they wove their interpretation of the novel and other more paradigmatic course readings together to think about teaching (as in the case of Renee). This learning also came about as the teacher candidates took part in a variety of experiences less related to the novel, such as exploring classroom management and conducting a peer teaching lesson.

This points out once again that a thing that is hard to teach in education courses, that is, epistemologies, might best be approached

indirectly, as teacher candidates explore things about which they feel immediate concern, the particular things that teachers must "do" in classrooms. It also argues for those features of EDU 200 that have been important all along, such as the careful construction of curriculum, the central role that narratives can play, the importance of the dialogic features of the course.

What Other Things Can This Research Tell Us About The Practice Of Teacher Preparation In General?

The learning community is important. I have already talked about the importance of the EDU 200 learning community in indirect ways, as I explored the dialogic nature of the class and the social construction of knowledge in EDU 200. This research points out the importance of, and the difficulty in qualitatively describing , the learning community in EDU 200.

In their final reflections and in our interviews, the teacher candidates repeatedly talked about the value of their interactions with their classmates for trying out their thinking, for hearing multiple interpretations, and for challenging and testing each others' ideas. The atmosphere in EDU 200 supported the transformation of learning. The teacher candidates valued the accepting, supportive learning environment which made them feel safe enough to try out their own ideas, in talk. As Steve said, "I felt comfortable to say things in our class that I would not have felt comfortable saying in my other EDU classes." The teacher candidates also recognized the value of hearing and being able to appropriate ways of thinking from their classmates.

As Kelly wrote, they were able to come together as colleagues and "introduce new knowledgeable ideas." Many of the teacher candidates also recognized the value of not only trying out and hearing multiple ideas, they also recognized that one way they themselves learned was by engaging in the processes of dialogue. As Aaron wrote, "We weren't afraid to challenge accepted philosophies of teaching, or to challenge our own preconceived notions of what makes a good teacher."

The learning community made possible their interpretations of the novel, their willingness to share personal stories. It enabled the connections the teacher candidates drew between various readings and experiences. It played an important role in their learning. Kathy Short (1991) points out the importance of the learning community in children's classrooms. The learning community can play an important role in teacher education classrooms as well.

One of the implications of this research, for me, is that a strong, supportive learning community might not look or feel a particular way. In chapter 2, I wrote about the ways that my own assumptions about the sound and feel of dialogue and engagement made it difficult for me, as a researcher, to recognize those features in the teacher candidates' talk. By the same token, I did not understand or value the learning community in the ways the members of the class, in particular the teacher candidates, did. Just as their talk was more engaged than I first thought it to be, the learning community itself was more rich and valuable than I might have imagined. The teacher

candidates were often silent before class and during breaks. They did not necessarily seem to be friends. At times, there was open conflict between a few students in the course. And yet Sue and her students constructed a learning community that supported their learning, and in which trust, acceptance, risk taking, and personal connections were valued.

This raises the point that the learning community is not a set of surface features that are necessarily easy to recognize it. It points out the ways that it is difficult to understand just how teacher candidates are making sense of the experiences in which we ask them to engage. The interviews and the final reflections provided important opportunities to understand what and how the course meant to the students.

Recurrence is important. The teacher candidates in EDU 200 explored ideas multiple times, in multiple contexts over the semester. Some of that repetition and recurrence was by nature. That is, the teacher candidates returned over and over to ideas which struck them, ideas which puzzled them, to ways of thinking they brought with them to the course. Teacher candidates bring particular ways of understanding and making sense, and those ways of meaning-making shape their transactions with experiences which might not, to an instructor, seem related. Renee, for example, wondered from the beginning how to challenge children, and used *Bridge to Terabithia* to help her explore her understanding of the importance of content. Aaron did not immediately identify with the novel, worked

repeatedly to make sense of his reaction to the book, and then engaged in similar process in his work in the field.

Some of that recurrence had do with the nature of transformation. Transformation takes place when teacher candidates make connections between several experiences, when they weave complex webs of ideas, when they bring ways of thinking learned in one context to bear on another. Transformation implies recurrence, implies the revisiting of ideas.

Some of that recurrence was by design. The teacher candidates read several works that focused on similar themes. Dewey, Elbow, and Hawkins all explored similar issues. The teacher candidates took part in experiences that continued to explain those same issues. The field experience, the peer teaching, the particular ways they talked about and worked with the readings all allowed them to revisit the content of the course multiple times and in multiple ways. The novel itself did not stand alone, but echoed, reinforced, and elaborated on concepts presented in other avenues in the course. The activities and readings built on one another and were connected to each other in a complex web that echoed, and enabled, the complex webs of ideas the teacher candidates transformed. Again, this argues for careful articulation and design of teacher education curriculum that attends to both the content to be learned and the nature of beginning teachers as learners.

Teacher educators often grapple with issues of depth and breadth, struggling to help teacher candidates think and learn everything they need to know in order to teach well. When teacher candidates need to know about

teaching and schooling and learning and children and subject matter and pedagogy, it may become difficult to slow down the curriculum long enough for teachers to grapple with issues in multiple ways. It may be challenging for teacher educators to return over and over to concepts in narratives, in the field, in sets of readings, in talk, and in writing. And yet if teachers' knowledge bases and in particular their epistemologies are both important and difficult to change, as Prawat (1992) would have us understand, this revisiting and reexamining of ideas in multiple contexts and situations seems crucial.

The findings of this research should encourage teacher educators to create opportunities for teacher candidates to explore issues in deep, recurring, interconnected ways. By creating spaces for recurrence in their classrooms, teacher educators can support the construction of knowledge. They can do this by searching for texts and experiences that build on one another and by exploring concepts in multiple ways, as Sue did with her readings and her assignments, and they can also do this by creating open spaces where teacher candidates can articulate and explore their own ways of making meaning.

Recurrence seems like a simple idea, but it is by no means simple to bring about in a teacher preparation classroom, and not just because there is so much to teach. Teacher candidates are often resistant to exploring related or similar concepts in multiple contexts. Teacher candidates that I have worked with often claim they are tired of hearing the same things about

diversity or "child-centered" curriculum over and over again. It may be difficult to overtly return to concepts that have already been presented in teacher education coursework.

Children's literature can play an important role in this. The teacher candidates read a novel in EDU 200, but all kinds of children's literature, from picture books to longer works, can serve as concrete examples of issues and themes and concepts that are explored more explicitly in teacher education coursework. Because these literary works are (or can be) treated differently than academic theories, because they are engaging, because they feel like texts teachers will one day read with students, teacher candidates may be more likely to view these texts as important and relevant parts of class and not just more of the same.

What Are The Methodological Implications Of This Research?

Articulated definitions of appropriation and transformation. Social constructivist theories provide a powerful framework for thinking about planning and teaching, and they provide a lens for documenting and describing the process of learning. However, social constructivist theorists have not specified ways that researchers and teachers can recognize and document learning as it is constructed. The process of appropriation and transformation are inherently private, and so researchers have access only to those transformed understandings that learners choose to make public in talk and in writing. Some theorists write about educative talk (e.g. Barnes, 1993; Dillon, 1995), and the ways that dialogue might serve as a marker for the

construction of knowledge. These theorists conclude that discourse of a spiral nature, in which topics are abandoned and reclaimed, and discourse which leads at efforts toward consensus are likely to be educative examples of talk. But talk is not the only place learners make knowledge public, and both spiral talk and efforts at consensus are fairly nebulous constructs to bring to an examination of any sort of data.

For this dissertation, I have worked to define the markers of both appropriation and transformation. I said that data sources would indicate the appropriation of ways of thinking when concepts, phrases and ideas were repeated and when those concepts and ideas were used appropriately in contexts similar to the ones in which they arose. Data sources would indicate transformation when there were indications of complexity and connections among various ideas, when ideas were made elaborate with substantial amounts of explicit and specific detail, when there were echoes of ideas in novel contexts, and when concepts and ideas were discussed in contexts far removed from the situations in which they first arose.

Although this one course has provided a limited window onto the permanence and power of the teacher candidates' transformational learning over time, I have been able to use the concepts of appropriation and transformation to recognize and describe learning. These definitions of markers of appropriation and transformation may provide other researchers with lenses to use as they explore the socially constructed nature of learning in other classrooms and settings.

Conclusion

In chapter 1, I wrote that understanding a bit more about the practice of teacher education, in particular the practice of asking beginning teachers to read and interpret children's literature, was important because teacher education has not typically been a strong intervention. Teacher educators have not had much success changing teaching practices (Britzman, 1991; Sykes, 1984). In part this is because beginning teachers' beliefs and epistemologies are notoriously difficult to change (Prawat, 1992; Weinstein, 1989), and in part because beginning teachers often find the curriculum of teacher preparation to be useless and irrelevant (Lortie, 1975). Lanier and Little (1986) describe many teacher preparation programs as , " . . . largely arbitrary, technical, fragmented, and without depth" (p. 554).

The teacher candidates in Sue Kennedy's section of EDU 200 did not find this particular course to be arbitrary, technical, useless, irrelevant, or without depth. At least, not according to what they wrote for Sue and told me in interviews, and not according to the ways the talked with one another throughout the course. In different ways and to varying degrees, the teacher candidates deepened their knowledge of the role of the teacher and the experience of the child as they took part in multiple, interrelated experiences designed to explore those two issues and the connections between them. As they explored these issues, their conceptions of learning changed. In particular, reading and talking about Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* supported the connections they made between these pieces, helped

them to link academic readings and field experiences to their own entering and developing understandings of teaching and learning, and served as a substantial and important strand of deep and flexible understanding they constructed during the course.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Summary of *Bridge to Terabithia*

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Summary Of *Bridge To Terabithia*

By Katherine Paterson

Jesse is in fourth grade living in poverty in a rural community in Maryland with his mother, father and four sisters. Jess is a loner and an outsider; he loves to draw in a community where boys race and play ball. He is afraid of things most kids his age are not. He longs for a relationship with a father he cannot understand. He attends school where he is inspired by his jeans-wearing, folk-song-singing, student-appreciating music teacher, Ms. Edmunds, and where he lives in fear of his strict, ditto- assigning, unsympathetic, classroom teacher, Monster-Mouth Meyers. His only hope is to distinguish himself in the daily races the middle grade boys console themselves with when the older boys commandeer the playground equipment and dry parts of the playground.

Then Leslie moves in next door. Leslie's parents, an academic and a novel-writer, have moved to the country to reorganize their priorities. When Jess sticks up for her, Leslie (a girl!) wins the races on the first day of school. The races disband, they're no fun if a girl always wins, but it doesn't matter. Jesse and Leslie have become friends.

Together, Leslie and Jesse create a magical kingdom, Terabithia, in the woods near their home. To get there, they swing across a stream using a rope someone has abandoned. In Terabithia, Leslie and Jesse are queen and king.

Together, they give thanks in the sacred Grove of Pines. Leslie shares the world of literature with Jesse, giving him books to read like the Chronicles of Narnia, telling him stories of Hamlet and Moby Dick. Like Jess, Leslie is an outsider, her odd clothes, her stories, her lack of a TV separate her from the rest.

Together, Jess and Leslie outsmart and then come to understand and sympathize with, the school bully, Janice Avery. Jesse gives Leslie a dog, Prince Terrien, for Christmas, the perfect gift, the giving of which creates a feeling of pride, and of Christmas, Jesse has not experienced before. In return, Leslie gives Jesse things she knows he will love, paints, paper and brushes. Leslie attends church with Jess' family on Easter and sees the beauty and magic in a ceremony Jess "has to believe in" but finds boring. Jess even befriends Leslie's father, Bill, when his skills at working with his hands allow him to help remodel Leslie's living room into a golden work of art. Together Jesse and Leslie cope with Maybelle, Jesse's pestering little sister.

Spring brings a period of intense rain, and the stream fills with water, frightening Jesse. He can't swim. One day, early, Ms. Edmunds calls, inviting Jesse to go with her to the art museum in Washington DC. Jesse can't wait to share his day with Leslie, but when he returns, he learns that Leslie is dead, killed when she fell swinging over the stream into Terabithia. Jess denies it at first, then is devastated.

But Leslie has taught him well how to appreciate life, how to embrace the world. His father supports him, Monster-Mouth Meyers turns out to be

pretty sympathetic, and Jesse realizes he is not alone. As he searches for ways to give back to the world what Leslie has given him, he builds a wooden bridge to Terabithia, and brings Maybelle, with love, into the kingdom.

APPENDIX B

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions Good Teachers Should Possess

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Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions Good Teachers Should Possess

(generated on the first day of class)

Knowledge	Skills	Dispositions
subject matter related subject matters students ways to teach the s.m.	sharing knowledge "guiding" explaining good listener story telling using soothing voice firing students up how to "do" the s.m. managing group work pushing students comfort zone creativity make class comfortable	helpful available respectful of students treat students as individuals willingness to explore tangents enthusiastic calm not arrogant made class comfortable encourage students to make mistakes share self as teacher patient creative encourage kids to learn together appreciates subject matter interested in student's life relates well to students supports students is a continual learner

APPENDIX C:

The Featured Students' *Bridge* Presentations

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The Featured Students' *Bridge* Presentations

Aaron's Presentation

I think I was significantly less struck by this book than most people were, that's a good and a bad thing, I mean, I got something out of it but it wasn't what most of you guys got out of it. So, last night, I tried writing some poems, and I ended up with a finished product, but my finished products are never finished products, I always go back to 'em, um, //(flipping through his journal) let's see, and there might be another one, too, because now that I think about it it has to do with the story,// OK, I think I'll read that too, but first, this one is called "Sonnet for Youth," I wrote it last night, one of my few attempts at a sonnet, they are really hard at least for me, I can't rhyme so well. So, here we go:

When I look back at my younger years
I must shield my eyes from the light,
For my sunniest days knew no death or fear
Nor torment in my darkest nights.
So when I hear of something so tragic
I'm left with nothing to say,
For my childhood seemed to be filled with magic
Few potholes along the way
I know our lives couldn't be the same

Our paths may not intersect

I'm not saying I wish I had more of the pain

I just wish everyone else had less

Though death may have not been a part of my life,

I've nonetheless had my own share of strife

That's kind of about, it was hard for me to identify with the death aspect of, ah, Bridge to Terabithia, cause I know nothing about it, it hasn't been apart of my life, you know, so. Here's something that I wrote a long time I ago, that I just realized goes along with this, about finding someone like how Jess finally found somebody to share his secrets with, in, in Leslie, and how we all have our secrets and it's really hard to find someone, or a couple of people, depending, OK. This one's called "Not a Small Thing," I wrote this, I guess, two months ago. OK.

I guess we all have our secrets,

some big, some bigger.

Like that one, about that time,

that your father-figure touched you in the place,

that no one has since

for better or for worse

And the strange pleasure you take, in reading about the misfortunes of others

Better them than you, right?

Maybe it's the one about your fear

your fear of someone finding out

that in one of your most vulnerable periods, of course

That some cheesy ballad on the radio

made you cry.

Don't forget about the one

about how you still drive by her house (his or her house, actually)

what if she was home (he/she was home)

Or is it the twitch you've developed

at the mere thought of taking your own life

Is it a fear, or lack thereof that causes this twitch?

Whatever it is, it gets harder and harder

to figure out who to put your faith in.

Not a small thing to trust someone with the most private thoughts and

events that have overtaken you.

But that's no reason to let your secrets tug at your soul,

or devour your insides.

Some things are yours, exclusively

but when your hopes dreams and fears

begin to be begged to be released

You must find a way to not let yourself be consumed by your own

secrets.

Let them go, carefully.

Taste the freedom that only trust in others,

and more importantly yourself, can bring.

(Applause. Stands and walks back to his seat.)

Elise's Presentation

I'm gonna bring it in a different direction. Ah, instead of talking about what was my own Terabithia, I centered around the idea that we talked about with the book that Terabithia being ah, the classroom, so, this is a collage, OK, bear with me, but uh, OK, excuse the cheesy "create the community," OK, but I think that's the role of the teacher is to create the community in which the student can learn, and can have the environment where students can take the risks, ah, the safe classroom is the place where students can learn and grow.

I wrote that:

> Jess and Leslie have created a classroom of one's own. As teachers we strive to create the Terabithia where students feel safe, willing to take risks, and learn. The Terabithia classroom is filled with imagination, literature, fun, art, and stimulation. Tera- this is cheesy–Terabithia is the classroom that I will create.

Which is kind of taking the idea that everybody else brought along, all the things that we focused on in childhood, and moving that into our own classrooms.

Gina's Presentation

When I first started thinking bout this assignment I kind of started thinking along the lines everyone else did, and that's like what is my Terabithia, and I started thinking about relationships and all that kind of stuff, and I have no experience with death so that wasn't something I could really relate to. And I started thinking about my friends and there are so many people that had an effect on my life as far as my friends go but that's kind of a hard topic for me to talk about it because I couldn't pick one person that was more important to me than any other, so I kind of skipped over that topic. And I started thinking about my Terabithia, and what that means to me, and I thought of music and I thought of drawing and all those kinds of things that kind of take me away and let me be myself and kind of clear my mind, but none of those things really came out of me in this book, so I started thinking about that, and I started thinking a bout my actual reaction to this book. And I really didn't have a strong one, and, um, I had read the book before, when I was younger, and so I just kind of started thinking about that, and I wrote something um, and it's kind of my reaction to the book, and it's kind of more of an academic look at how I reacted to it, and what that has to do with me, so I wrote something so, I'll read it, OK.

I've been trying to think of some way to reflect and relate the story to my own life, and questioning how I should do it. In what way should I present this, and what exactly am I going to relate it to? I read the book and reacted to it as I do anything sad, and cried. There was not, however, a strong

attraction to the story and its characters. I had not placed myself in the story and seen connections to my own life.

As I continued to think about both my reactions to the story and how I could possibly relate the characters and experiences to my own, I began to think that perhaps the reaction I needed was the one of the 10 year old that had read it years ago, and not the 21 year old reading it for the second time. It was either in 4th or 5th grade that I first came across the magical world or Terabithia. I'm not really sure which. The book was presented to the entire class to read and discuss and answer all important ditto questions that were presented. I read the book, and remember no real reaction to the story. I did not cry, I did not react to the [inaudible] presented within its pages. In fact I distinctly remember not enjoying the story, and being uninterested page after page.

Looking back today, and 11 years later, I wonder why I disliked the story to such a degree as that, so I tried to remember other stories. There are few memories of reading, in fact that's when I realized that there are few memories of readings I had done and even fewer that I had remembered enjoying, you see my reading history was an interesting one. Between first and third grade I was moved between three different elementary schools and four teachers, each time entering a classroom in which I was at a different reading level than a majority of the class and therefor conveniently pushed aside. With all the moves and changes I had not gained the reading skills I

needed to be successful, in third grade I was tracked into a low reading group where I remained throughout elementary school.

I remember that I was required to read both in school and out of school throughout these years I remember my mother sitting by my side occasionally while I read. I do not have fond memories, however, with the exception of about three books I read during this time. For the most part there are no memories. It seemed that everything I had read was uninteresting and too challenging to enjoy. As I continued through my elementary school years I decided that I needed to read. I only read when it was required.

_I'm not exactly sure what happened to change the mind of that determined and stubborn child that needed to read, but clearly it was something. By my seventh grade year I was reading books that I would later be required to read in High School, and yes, I was enjoying them When I finished one I would find another. Reading became like watching a movie for me, I began to see what I was reading, and I could envision the characters faces and their lives. A book was no longer the one dimensional page filled with words. It had real meaning.

Today I love to read, and I did to an extent enjoy Bridge to Terabithia. Perhaps what I did not enjoy about this novel was simply that it was associated with a time that reading was challenging and a requirement that I dreaded. Perhaps I never really liked the book and the story which surrounded it. Either way, this books symbolizes a very important part of my

educational past. It will always be interesting to me that reading was, at one time, was the worst and became and remains one of my strongest skills.

Kelly's Presentation

I'm going to talk bout my childhood. Like, a lot of people, and when I thought of my childhood, I thought of my parents, well, OK I'll just give you the whole family story. My grandparents and my uncle owned this piece of land, at Round Lake, of you know where that is, and they sold it to their three daughters, which is my mother, and it's right on Round Lake and it's a huge piece of land and it has a huge dirt pile, I mean, this dirt pile is as big as a house, and there's a tree, that was a huge tree that had fallen, from erosion, and plus we were trying to take down the dirt hill so we could have more land, and the tree fell the roots left this humongous hole, and I was very young, along with my cousins and sisters and so we made that our, like our little house, and I can remember we would go out there in the summer, and we were just like trying to make it look like a house, and digging steps and chairs and I can't remember what we did, I can remember always being in there, though, and sitting in these um, like mud chairs, just chairs that were made from digging the dirt out. And on top of the hill there's trees and all this wildlife, not wildlife like animals–plants. And we would pick flowers and trees and just discover them. Renee, you were talking about how you would discover, and leaves and stuff like that we would find things that would be like, "there were Indians here and they left the," and I just remember that was my special place, and I can relate to having a special place where it was in the middle of nature, I can relate to having special place, and

you don't want anybody, well not anybody, but adults, you don't want adults to find out, so /// .

And then my roommate has this picture, and I just think it was kind of cool, cause it kind of reminded me, it's a little bit more, but it has their little, what you want to call it, their house, like they had in Terabithia, but I saw it and I was like, "Oh, that totally reminded me of the book," because of how they described it and there's that one picture, so I wanted to bring that in, and also, I have two poems that I want to read, OK,

–

I'm always here to understand you
I'm always here to laugh with you
I'm always here to cry with you
I'm always here to talk with you
I'm always here to think with you
And I'm always here to plan with you
Even though we might not always be together
Please know that I'm always here to love you

And that was written by an unknown author, and I just thought that it was something that if Jess was older or even if Leslie was a little older, they would be able to express this to each other but since they were younger they probably didn't understand how all these things that they felt were their friendship-they were like, very very close friends and anything that people

today, if you were going to give that poem to someone, you know how they feel about each other. And then there's this other one that I want to read:

> The pain we feel when someone
> leaves our lives is in direct proportion
> to they joy they bring while a part of our life.

And I thought that was really cool because when Leslie was around she brought Jess you know, all the joy in the world, and then after she left she was still there, she was still part of him, and will always be in the bridge that he created that was part of her as much as it was part of him. So, I just thought I'd share it with you.

Renee's Presentation

I too, am going to talk about my personal Terabithia and I had oh, some pictures at home, but I didn't get a chance to go home and find them, and also I called my mom last night cause I remembered, well, the point is I was going to bring something in to read to you and it wasn't where it was supposed to be, so I don't know where it was but, when I was young, and we sort of talked about this when we talked about our childhoods but this just book really made me think of in their Terabithia that I had my own little place like that, and it was out in the woods, too, well, sort of, it was, we lived, well in the suburbs, and it was sort of in the country but not really in the country. We had lots of neighbors. But um between our house and the houses behind us on the other street there was just a small field, and it was just weeds grown up it wasn't anything you know beautiful or anything, and there was just a low area, where the water would fill in and sort of like a little swamp, and the water, it wasn't deep, maybe it would be a foot deep, at the most, but we had the most fun, tromping out in that place, it seemed so big to me when I was small, and even though when I've gone back now, I just can't believe how small the place is and it's just this little spare lot in between all these houses, you can probably see it from all the houses around but when I was young I just felt like I was out in the wilderness there, and I used to go there a lot when I was little and when I got older I discovered this adjacent spot that I'd never noticed before, it was behind our neighbor's yard so I was like can we go in there you know, is it their property, but I went out there one day, it

just makes me, I just thought it was funny that um, like with James' thing too when he was talking about March and just the weather we had Saturday, how in Terabithia it was like the spring, summer, and it was always sunny, springy, and that's how I remember it too, on warm sunny days I went out to this place and I was just tromping around out there exploring, and I thought that I had discovered this whole new world that no one else new about and I'd never seen anyone out there before so I was sure that I was the only one that knew about it And I was real real close to my, to my two neighbors, and they were both three years younger than me, and one was a boy and one was a girl and after I'd been out there for a while I decided to bring them out there with me and we just had elaborate play schemes where we were stuck on this tropical island somewhere and because there was a swamp it gave the illusion that we really were on an island, and we were marine biologists or something who just happened to get stuck there so we were collecting specimens, you know, doing all this research out there and then when a plane would come to save us we'd be the smart ones cause we'd found all this new, you know, new stuff. And um, we made houses out there, there were like three, there were like three little hills, and they couldn't have been more than like, this tall, but they were these big mounds of dirt, I have no idea how they got out there, maybe they were left over from the houses they built or something, but we made those our houses, and we put like sticks all around them and made these little forts. And Um, I had this little wildlife treasury of those animal cards, I don't know if you have ever seen those, it

tells about the animals and it has the picture, and I loved that so I took it out there with me and any time we'd find an animal I'd look it up. You know, and find out what it was. We thought that we had discovered, for sure, these new little creatures, I don't know what they were probably some kind of fly larvae or something probably, but they were these little, so little tiny aquatic animals, but they laid on their backs and they had all these rows of legs and they would move their legs like this and they would swim, and um, so we just named them back swimmers and we thought that we found this new thing and that was just a big, big thing to me. But we just spent a lot of time out there and it came to be our favorite spot and if anyone else like children were riding bikes on the road that was adjacent to it we'd get all up in arms because they couldn't come in there that was our secret space.

Um, I remember when we had to move away, I just remember going out there and just really being sad that I had to leave that place, and it's funny cause I really could relate to Leslie and how they were so dramatic about their, you know play and everything was so dramatic and ours was kind of like that too, and I can remember writing stuff like how can I leave this place of my solace" and all this stuff and I so clearly remember writing you know that crazy cursive writing of a child, all this stuff right before we moved away, and I thought that it was in my little wild life treasury, and I found out it is not, so I don't know I was going to read it to you guys but I don't know where it went.

And I was just thinking about how does this relate to, well yeah I had a secret place too, but what, like what's the point, and um I was just thinking a lot about how I was struck my Ms. Edmunds in the book and how she was just that one teacher that, that really made a difference and I started to think about everything more in the context of that passionate teaching article that we were reading, and it wasn't, like I think, I know for me, I felt very loved and supported in my endeavors as a child but, and I don't think that that place while it was a fun place for me to go to go and it was neat to have a place to escape, I think the same is true for Jess, even though it was a fun place for him to play, It wasn't really the place, that made such an impact on him, it was the people, it was the support he got from Leslie and the creativity and he got that from Ms. Edmunds, too, and so um, It really just challenged me to start thinking more about you know, that I want to be that kind of friend, that I want to be that kind of teacher, that's passionate, like that, to provide that for children, and I was thinking about that Study Guide that Pat gave us you know what particular content areas can you apply this to, in your teaching, what can you be passionate about, and that was something I really wanted to start thinking about. So, (shrugs, ends)

Steve's Presentation

I wasn't able to go home this weekend, so I wasn't able to bring in all the stuff I wanted to bring today, so we are just going to have to use our imaginations and pretend I have it, so. Just pretend that I have a hockey stick, and there's a old beat up tennis ball on the floor and over there will be my garage door back home, with a beat up old hockey net by it. When I was little, I would always go outside and practice playing hockey and shoot every day so I could become really good, and I was reminded of that when I was reading the book and Jess would go out running every day so he could work on being the best runner that there was and that was just like me, I always wanted to be the best hockey player, so I'd go out there and I'd just keep shooting and shooting. After a while it would get kind of boring cause I'd keep shooting at the different points of the net and it wouldn't be much fun, so to make it more fun I would turn the driveway into my own little Terabithia, and suddenly it would be Joe Louis Arena and I'd be on a line with Steve Yzerman in game seven of the Stanley Cup Finals and I'd come in on my break away and shoot and score and win the game, and I'd jump up and down and you know, have the Stanley Cup and everything, and it didn't matter that I was just standing in my driveway looking like an idiot jumping up and down. You know, I was at Joe Louis Arena.

And even with my neighbor, my old neighbor, he would come over, he was just a mean old man, and he'd come over and he'd watch me he'd just go (changes voice) "Hey, Gretzky, aren't ya in the NHL yet" and he'd just

laugh at me and walk away, but I'd just ignore him cause I was in Joe Louis Arena, I wasn't at home, but there'd still be a little piece of me that would wonder if my slap shot was good enough to shoot it over at him and hit him in the head. That was just for a second, I don't, so. (Steve's voice trails off as he walks back to his seat.)