

VISION

The SMCM Educational Studies Department seeks to deepen our collective knowledge of, and appreciation for, schools and schooling, the self as teacher, the role of education in creating a more equitable society, and the processes of teaching and learning more broadly conceived outside of the traditional pre-k-12 classroom setting.

MISSION

The M.A.T. program's mission is to create masterful teachers who are reflective practitioners able to facilitate communities of diverse learners. The minor in Educational Studies provides students with the course content and experiences necessary to be able to describe how learners develop and learn, and to analyze and create positive contexts conducive to learning

The Educational Studies Department of SMCM – Conceptual Framework

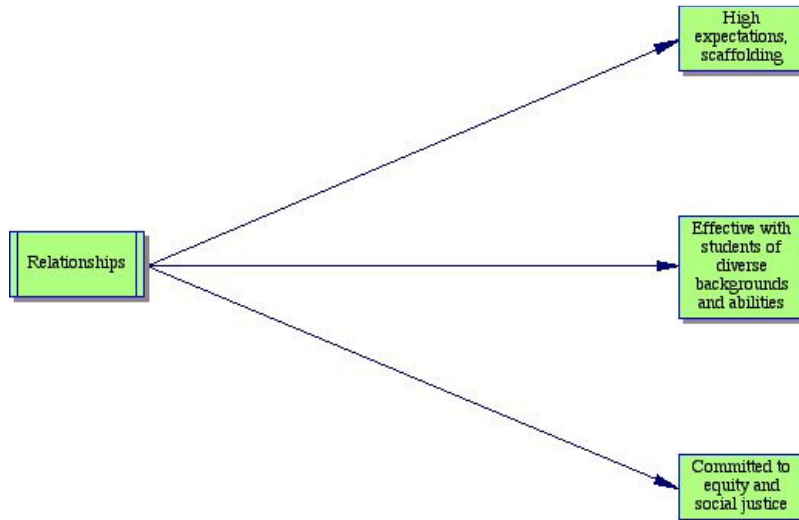
In working to achieve our mission, the Educational Studies Department has identified three tenets that underpin our efforts to education masterful teachers. We believe that the ability to create and sustain **relationships** – with oneself as teacher, with students, colleagues, community members, and the profession – is at the heart of the work of the masterful teacher. In order to continually improve those relationships, skill in **reflection** – and the disposition to reflect on all aspects of teaching and professional demands – is essential. Finally, the ability to use the tools of **research** in determining how best to engaging in all aspects of teaching and as the basis for reflection is crucial to becoming and remaining a masterful teacher who is a reflective practitioner able to facilitate communities of diverse learners.

Relationships

In her study of seven long-term urban teachers with reputations for success in diverse classrooms (most had taught for more than twenty-five years), Sonia Nieto found that they often used the word “love” when talking about their students and their subject matter. We, too, believe that relationships—with students and with content—are central to our endeavors as teacher educators and to our graduates' future success. In Nieto's sample, she found that “These teachers demonstrate love through high expectations and rigorous demands on students and by keeping up with their subject matter through professional activities,” and that “Teachers' caring promotes an essential sense of belonging for students whose backgrounds differ from the mainstream” (Nieto, 2003, 16). Like those veteran teachers, when we emphasize the importance of relationship, we see it as encompassing three major components: 1) high expectations for student success, coupled with the scaffolding to help students meet those expectations; 2) the dispositions, knowledge and skills to work with students of diverse backgrounds and abilities and 3) a commitment to equity and social justice.

In this conception, genuinely caring about others entails seeing the best in them, striving to help them bring that out, and offering them the best in ourselves, and then doing this despite cultural, linguistic, economic and social barriers; and working to break down those barriers. Thus, when we in the SMCM Teacher Education Program start our

thinking based on the importance of relationships, we quickly find ourselves reinforcing focused on the importance of preparing teachers with a robust grounding in pedagogy and content, while also including skills in building relationships and scaffolding achievement for all different kinds of students. Thus we see a successful relationship between teacher and students as necessitating all these components:



This conception of relationship meshes with the philosophy of St. Mary’s College of Maryland. St. Mary’s is a public liberal arts college with an explicit mission to further “the ideals of freedom and inclusiveness.” Values the College publicly celebrates include “diversity in all its forms” and “social responsibility and civic-mindedness.” Our first goal as an institution is to maintain “a high standard of academic excellence;” other goals include “strengthening student/faculty interaction” and “promoting and maintaining a community built on respect” (“St. Mary’s College of Maryland philosophy,” 2009). Thus, foregrounding relationships—and defining a strong educational relationship as one centered on high expectations, inclusiveness and commitment to social justice—makes sense for us as a College. Our own mission in our MAT program is to produce “masterful teachers” whom we define as “reflective practitioners—facilitating achievement in communities of diverse learners,” a mission which is congruent with the College goals and which leads us to value relationship as a central element of our conceptual framework. Finally, we see the element of relationship, as we have defined it here, as being fundamental to the successful mastery of all ten INTASC standards.

At the heart of the mission of our MAT program is a commitment to producing teachers who are effective with the students who are so often neglected in school settings: Black, Latino and American Indian students; poor students; students who are not yet proficient in English; students with special needs; and students from all sorts of backgrounds, including cultural backgrounds quite different from our graduates. We believe that when teachers focus on these students, the classroom gets better for all students, including White students, students without identified disabilities and middle and upper class students. Thus, in fleshing out the three components of our definition of relationships, we turn to research on teachers who have been shown to be adept at serving these kinds of students. We draw from three studies of excellent teachers of children

from typically under-served groups, though there are many: Gloria Ladson-Billings' ethnographic study of nine elementary teachers who were successful with poor, urban African American children (1994, 1995); Sonia Nieto's analysis of essays on "why we teach" from 21 teachers known to be effective with, and passionate about, working with students from diverse and underserved backgrounds (2006); and a study by Rosemary Henze and Tamara Lucas of the practices of four secondary teachers (chosen from over 60 they observed) identified as particularly successful with "language minority" students (1993).

Let us first, however, head the warnings by some of these authors that the characteristics that the teachers in their studies shared are neither easy to emulate nor to measure. Nieto cautions: "I should especially hate to see the ideas I suggest in my paper turn up on a list of 'dispositions of excellent teachers', as if a checklist could determine what it means to be an excellent, caring and committed teacher. The values I propose, such as having solidarity with students or thinking of teaching as a mission, do not lend themselves to facile measurement" (2006, 462). Henze and Lucas warn that "Many of us know people who are good teachers, and we have watched them teach or perhaps even been students in their classrooms. Yet in spite of this knowledge or experience, it has been notoriously difficult to replicate what a good teacher does" (1993, 55). Nonetheless, if we intend—as we do—to produce teachers capable of this strong definition of relationship, then we must know what we mean by its components.

High expectations; scaffolding.

Both Ladson-Billings and Henze and Lucas found that the teachers in their studies emphasized academic success through high expectations, rigorous content and, in the case of English language learners, language development. We want our MAT students to have the highest of expectations for their students; we want them to work enthusiastically to help students close achievement gaps, but we want them to define "achievement gap," as Asa Hilliard does, not as "the gap between Black and white students" but as "the gap between the current performance of African students and levels of excellence" (2003, 138). We expect our students to do this for all students, not just for the students Hilliard calls "African;" however, again, we expect that by focusing on traditionally neglected students, our graduates will be able to raise achievement for all. We expect that they will do this by scaffolding; by determining where their students are, choosing where they want them to be, and designing instruction to help them get there.

We also attend carefully to Nieto's reminder that "Subject matter knowledge is important, of course, but if teachers do not learn how to question it, they end up reproducing conventional wisdom and encouraging students to do the same. Knowing pedagogy is also necessary, but if teachers do not develop meaningful relationships with their students of all backgrounds—no matter what their own backgrounds are—the students simply will not succeed" (2006, 470). Nieto also emphasizes the importance of not just good pedagogy but improvisation. By improvisation, she draws on jazz performance and talks about how the teachers in her study were "prepared for uncertainty, both the joy and the frustration of it;" specifically, they could "see beyond frameworks, rubrics, models and templates, all of which increasingly characterize education today" (2006, 468) and "taking advantage of the moment, even putting aside the planned lesson for the time being" (469). Finally, both Nieto and Henze and Lucas

found the importance of teachers having “solidarity with, and empathy for, their students” (Nieto, 2006, 463). Henze and Lucas conceptualized this as teachers who promoted active student involvement and also student self-esteem, particularly through valuing students’ languages and cultures, offering rigorous classes, and giving students special attention. Thus, the components we look for when we conceptualize high expectations include: content expertise, pedagogy expertise, the ability to scaffold, skill at improvisation, the courage to challenge mainstream knowledge, and solidarity with/empathy for their students.

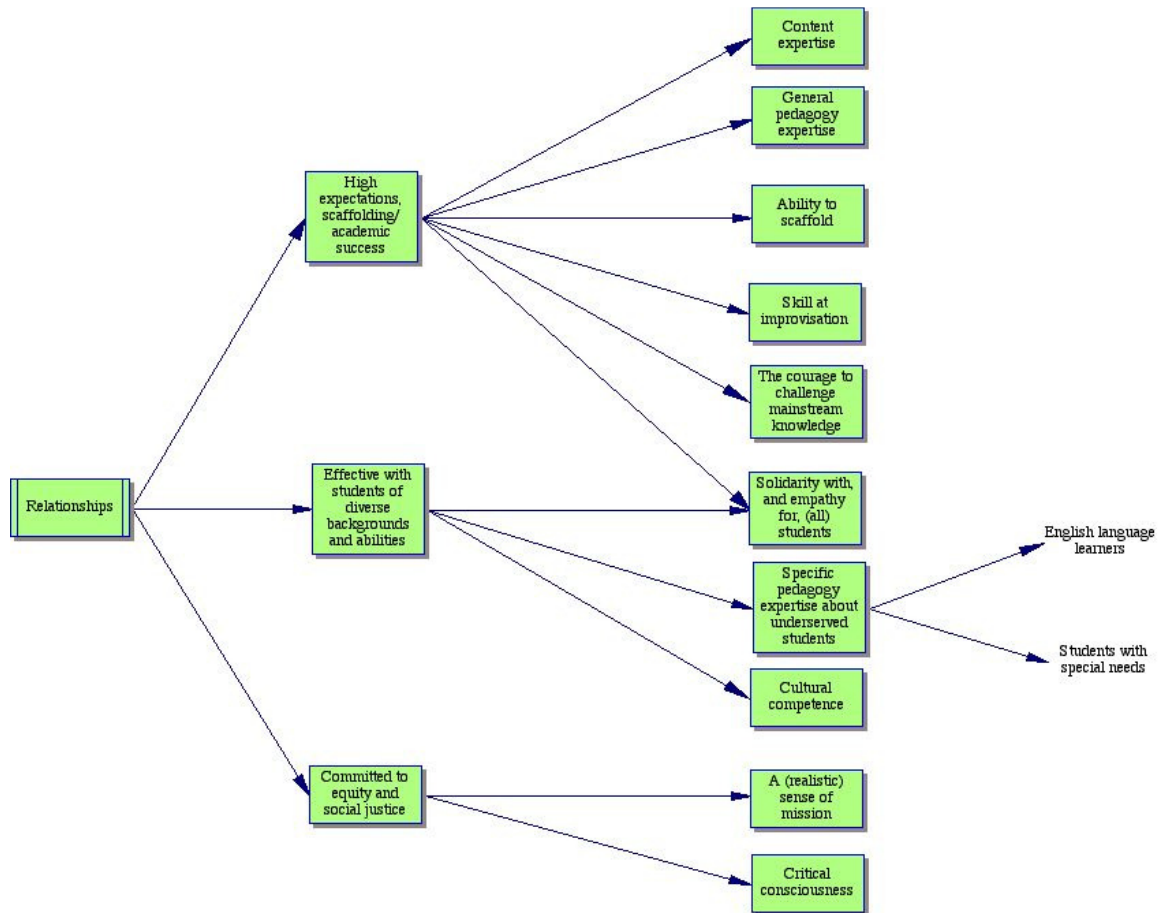
Effectiveness with all kinds of students

Crucial to our mission in Educational Studies is the importance of producing teachers who are effective with all kinds of students. The last characteristic we describe above under high expectations is also the first characteristic which is important this goal: Feeling connected with all their students, that they are not teaching “other people’s children” (Delpit, 2006) but instead people like themselves, and showing that in concrete ways including valuing whatever characteristics may mark those students as “different,” be it cultural differences, language differences, or differences in ability. It goes without saying that our graduates, in addition to having general pedagogy expertise, must also be competent in pedagogies specific to being effective with various underserved populations, including English language learners and students with special needs. However, we also expect that our students demonstrate how good pedagogical practice naturally aligns with the needs of inclusive teaching for students with different first languages and abilities. Finally, we expect our graduates to be, in Ladson-Billings’ term, culturally competent. By cultural competence, she means the ability to “utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” (1995, 161). Ladson-Billings uses examples of teachers who helped students code-switch between their home languages and standard English, and a teacher who brings in students’ family members to serve as experts in an “artist or craftsperson-in-residence” program.

Commitment to equity and social justice

Finally, we ask that our graduates understand how the dynamics of educational injustice which they see in their classrooms are connected to wider trends. We expect our graduates to understand the ways in which educational policy and law have resulted in increasingly segregated schooling, with more money and more experienced teachers being directed to schools which serve White students and middle- and upper-class students (Kozol, 2005; Lee & Orfield, 2007; Education Trust, 2009). We expect our graduates to take their places in the struggle for educational equity, not only in their own classrooms but beyond. Ladson-Billings calls this insight “critical consciousness,” by which she means “students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (1995, 162). We not only expect our graduates to have critical consciousness but to foster it in their own future students. We expect them to have a sense of mission, but a realistic sense, as Nieto found among her teachers, who “see themselves as serving the common good, but they do not describe themselves as saviors, and they lack the self-righteousness that inevitably dooms good intentions” (2006, 463-4).

We add all of these elements to our framework as follows:



Thus, the relationship component of our conceptual framework leads us four program outcomes that synthesize the elements above. However, some of these outcomes cannot be easily or justly assessed. How, for example, does one confidently measure the degree of a student’s critical consciousness, or the realism of their mission? Nonetheless, these are outcomes we seek to cultivate in our students, and to assess as best we are able. Specifically, we look for the following outcomes that capture the “relationship” component of this conceptual framework:

Relationship Outcomes: By the end of the M.A.T., candidates will

Set high expectations for all students and provide the scaffolding of content and experiences necessary for all students to succeed.

Support the learning of students with diverse backgrounds and abilities through effective classroom practices;

Work to ameliorate, in their classroom and other professional practices, both implicit and explicit barriers to social justice and educational equity,

Facilitate development of a critical consciousness in their own students in order to work towards social change more broadly.

We incorporate this focus on pedagogy and equity—incorporated into the idea of relationship—at a variety of levels in our program. First, we emphasize these themes in our own teaching. We as professors take pride in using the pedagogical strategies we teach our students to use, and in keeping ourselves and our students abreast of current research. We demand excellent work from our students and each of us takes particular pride in offering a wealth of resources to help all kinds of students produce that work. We actively support and recruit pre-service teachers from groups which are under-represented among teachers, and we serve as campus resources for professors outside our department who are struggling to reach urban students, poor students, language minority students and students with disabilities. This is how we conceptualize our commitment to building relationships with students: Not merely getting to know them but offering them the best of ourselves and asking the same in return.

Second, we help our students establish this kind of relationship with their own students. Before entry into our MAT program, candidates must show their content strengths through (various assessments), as well as at least an emerging sense of mission, competency in understanding and working effectively with students from diverse backgrounds, children with special needs and English language learners, and an empathy for all kinds of students. In particular, M.A.T. candidates must take a course in working with English language learners across the curriculum, and they have numerous field experiences, at least some of which must take place in Title I schools. They must demonstrate their understanding of the roots of achievement gaps and of strategies for closing those gaps. In the MAT, students immediately begin practicing these outcomes during a summer practicum in working with at-risk students, and then in their year-long internships, while continuing to build their content knowledge, pedagogy, and equity skills.

References – Relationships

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Reflection

In all of our teacher education courses, beginning teachers are provided with structured opportunities to reflect on what they are reading, what they are experiencing in their interactions with their students and future colleagues, in ways that prompt them to think about what they are learning about themselves, teaching, learning, schools as social agencies, and society at large. We base this not only on our own wisdom but on the research base; just as we ask our students to shape their own teaching in consultation with existing knowledge, we do so ourselves. Following Rogers' guidance (1985), we provide future teachers with instructions and opportunities to reflect and interpret the verbal and nonverbal cues exhibited by their students, colleagues, administrators, parents, and community members. Houston and Warner (2000) advise us to provide similar opportunities for our students to identify and reflect on the theoretical principles underlying their decision-making. And we take to heart the findings of Lipson and Wixon (2009) that, to be effective, reflection must become a continuous process of interpreting and building understandings of the interactions among the teacher, the students, and the social learning context. Thus we ask future teachers to examine data about student performance, explore the school improvement plan for the buildings in which they are working, delve into the entire set of school performance information available to them, and then ask themselves why they are doing what they are doing in the way in which they are doing it.

Reflection is a process of self-examination that provides a way to learn from experience. The purpose of reflection is to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of our work and to look at ourselves and our growth as teachers. Reflective thinking challenges participants to honestly examine their own thoughts and actions in light of their beliefs. It encourages examining both thoughts and feelings in a contextual setting while looking at factors that influence decisions and actions, and the response we have as a result of these variables. The relationship element of the conceptual framework is at the core of what we value; however, we believe that without a disposition to reflect and the skills necessary to do so, our future teachers will not be able to push themselves into the critical consciousness of themselves and their relationships with their students, colleagues, and community that they need in order to develop the honest and deep connections necessary to foster learning for all students.

The importance of becoming a reflective practitioner is emphasized throughout the MAT program. There is emphasis on reflection-in-action as well as reflection-on action. Schon (1987) describes the first as thinking what one is doing while doing it, and the second as looking at the event or problem and how it was dealt with afterward.

Reflective practitioners use the knowledge they gain through continual inquiry and analysis to refine instruction (Schon, 1987). The growth of reflective skills should move from a basic description of a situation and reaction to it, to a more analytical and integrated awareness of the broader impact of knowledge of self and how that can impact on future actions (Marchel, 2004). It allows one to make connections beyond the experience, and to consider what difference other alternative strategies might make in the future.

Van Manen (1977) and others have identified levels of reflection:

- *technical rationality*: the teacher considers the technical aspects of instruction and learner achievement and applies instructional techniques to reach an accepted goal;
- *practical action*: teachers merge theoretical principles and practices and examine the relationship between instructional techniques and learning goals; [and, for us, most important,]
- *critical reflection*: teachers integrate concerns about moral ethical, political, and social issues into practical action.

The lowest level focuses on classroom competency and effectiveness relying on personal experience without regard for theory. The second level goes beyond identifying just the experience and included some theory but commonly with personal bias. The third level, critical reflection, views the event with open-mindedness that includes moral and ethical considerations without distortions of personal bias. Practicing reflection over time increased the possibility of moving to a deeper level of reflection, which is our goal for our MAT students.

Dewey's view of reflective thought as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of every belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1933) reminds us that reflection is a vital process that uses our knowledge and beliefs to support the examination of our own practice. Reflection is an interactive process that should be embedded in all of our coursework as well as our practice. Focusing on pedagogical knowledge is important in reflective thinking because it is part of the framework necessary for future teachers to improve in the use of content knowledge and teaching practices in their future classrooms.

Students have the opportunity to reflect on work within their courses, demonstrating their understanding of themselves as learners, and showing their knowledge about educational practices and pedagogy. Students also have the opportunity to carefully think about what has taken place in their own teaching situations, what options were available to them, their own values as professionals and their comfort level in acting on these values, and then identify choices about how they might act to make a difference in the future.

Reflective writing is a tool that is used by students to examine their own practices and to integrate these experiences with the theories of teaching and learning that emerge from coursework as well as the in-school experiences. Reflective writing allows future teachers to see patterns in their own actions, and promotes reflective thinking. Spark-Langer & Colton (1991) identify reflection in a narrative form as an effective tool for future teachers to learn how to analyze what they experience, and encourages their own

awareness and self assessment of their beliefs throughout their coursework and internship experiences.

If we consider reflection important than experiences with reflection need to be embedded in all levels of the MAT, Providing structured reflective practice and adequate time to develop reflective skills in the MAT program will help develop reflective practitioners who will value the process of reflection throughout their teaching careers and use it effectively to improve their own practice within their classrooms.

Reflection Outcomes: By the end of the M.A.T., candidates will

1) Consider moral and ethical perspectives and issues when critically reflecting on schools, teaching, learning, learners, and themselves with open-mindedness as they evolve a realistic sense of mission to serve the common good;

2) Recognize and mitigate the influences of personal bias when engaging in critical reflection and the decision-making process.

3) Reflect on their teaching practice in a formative and recursive manner, synthesizing their content pedagogy knowledge and skills with their practice to continuously improve student learning.

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Research

Our vision is also shaped by our unusual context. We are not a traditional teacher education department. Our Educational Studies Department is embedded in a small, public liberal arts college; we are part of the great tradition of liberal education, of focusing on the human potential that resides in our shared knowledge and ideas. Thus, for us, research—our way of accessing and contributing to those ideas—is a crucial component of what we do and what we want future teachers to do. At least at first blush, our research tenet seems more technically-oriented than our other two. But as we give teachers skills to do research, we're building their capacity for reflection; and as that reflective ability blossoms, they are much more able to build the kinds of relationships with students from all backgrounds, and with colleagues and parents and community members, – which then can take them back to research.

Research begins by helping our prospective teachers understand the context in which their own investigations take place. This struggle for educational equity is not a new one. The first reported court case promoting integration, for instance, was *Roberts v. The City of Boston*, and took place in Massachusetts 1849, over a century before *Brown v. Board of Education*. Diane Ravitch quotes Kenneth Clark, the noted psychologist whose work with children and Black and White baby dolls was cited in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, as saying that the schools available to African American children were structured “in such a way as to compel poor performance from Negro children.” He predicted, in the 1960s, that our system was on a path to become “predominantly a segregated system. . . . It will, in addition, become a school system of low academic standards, providing a second-class education for underclass children” (Ravitch). In 1974, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school districts could not be compelled to integrate across district lines (and thus suburban districts could continue to be predominantly White, urban districts predominantly non-White), Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote in his dissent that “Our Nation, I fear, will be ill-served by the Court's refusal to remedy separate and unequal education, for unless our children begin to learn together, there is little hope that our people will ever learn to live together” (Marshall). “In the short run,” he continues in his conclusion, “it may seem the easier course to allow our great metropolitan areas to be divided up each into two cities—one white, one black—but it is a course, I predict, our people will ultimately regret.” Knowing this history gives them an understanding of their place in a long, long struggle.

Thus, like Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), our conception of research in teacher education is multi-layered, and we have created our program in a way to honor these various facets. First, we acknowledge research as the corpus of knowledge created by those who came before us. This corpus is not just restricted to the considerations of a learning environment, but of the broader community and world. We model for our students how to consult research to develop and maintain expertise in our specific fields and in the broader disciplines in which our fields are placed. This is perhaps best exemplified by our regular integration of theoretical and empirical readings into courses; many of us draw on the formal bodies of research, to supplement more traditional textbooks, to help our students build knowledge in the areas that are only superficially covered in most general textbooks.

We also introduce our students to the rich research base about all aspects of the field of education. Together with our teacher candidates, we examine theory (including both the great classical thinkers and current work); we look at the research on best practices and guide them as they try it out for themselves. We help them see that research is a valuable and valued resource for teachers, one that is not there to “tell you what to do,” but rather inform your decision-making by pushing you to be a critical thinker and careful consumer of information. As researchers ourselves, we share our work with our students, sometimes collaborate with them, and support each student as they turn to the research to answer their own burning questions or figure out new questions when the research does not give a meaningful or logical answer.

We also conceive of research as a process, as the experience of asking thoughtful questions about one’s expertise (or lack thereof) about a particular body of knowledge and seeking their answers through appropriate inquiries. Thus, like Miretzky noted in her interviews with teachers about their thoughts on research (2007; p. 272) we see that research has value because it embodies a “commitment to ongoing learning in service to the profession and to students.” Research, quite simply, is how teachers can convey they are not complacent about their jobs, about what they teach, and about how they serve their students.

The entire course sequence of “Teacher as Researcher” in our M.A.T. program is about helping our students develop the skills associated with being a proficient researcher, one who understands how to design questions, align methods with those questions, execute those methods, interpret the results, weigh their implications, and plan for further inquiry; our program aligns this cycle of inquiry with the more typically teacher-oriented action research traditions. We work to give our students the skills they can use to conduct their own disciplined inquiry into their own teaching. Our goal is to give students the knowledge base to solve intractable problems and the skills to convince themselves and others that they have solved them (or to return to the drawing board). Like Rust (2009), we see that action research has great value as a link between more “traditional” research approaches about education and classroom practice. Action research enables them to position themselves as authorities from both research and practical standpoints, and perhaps as Rust (2009) posits, in a position to inform policy and change at the site.

Further, we devote particular attention to an increasingly important component of the research process: the analysis and interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative data. We teach them skills to enable them to question data and information that is presented to them; we want our candidates to be able to make decisions for themselves about whether data has value, to not simply accept the interpretations that have been offered to them. For our students to make the best decisions possible for their students, they need to be able to analyze the data and their significance for themselves. Perhaps more importantly, our students need to be able to recognize erroneous interpretations of data, which if heeded in a decision-making process, could have negative implications for their students. If our students do not gain that skill, then their potential effectiveness as a classroom teacher could surely be limited.

Though largely self-reported data in nature, a consistent theme in publications about the impact of teacher research on the schooling experience is change. An entire issue of *Teachers College Record* was recently devoted to the research conducted by

teachers, in their own classrooms. In nearly every article published in that particular issue (i.e., Desautel, 2009; Frederick, 2009; Flynn, 2009; Hennessy & Deaney, 2009; Lieberman, 2009; Mesler, 2009; Stecz, 2009; Zindler, 2009), the teacher-researchers pointed to changes in their classroom, as a result of the inquiries they led. From new applications of reflective teaching practices (Desautel, 2009), to considerations of how students view after school activities (Litke, 2009), to patterns of social interactions in a classroom consisting of typically-achieving students and students with special education needs (Zindler, 2009), these teachers sought to see what change might result in students' learning or educational experience by closely investigating a particular element of the classroom they found intriguing. It is that potential to create change that inspires us to inspire students; we recognize that change (in knowledge, in attitude, in policy) cannot occur without deliberation and discussion of whatever has come to be the status quo in that circumstance.

Research Outcomes: Candidates will

Identify how the larger historical and societal contexts, as well as the local and immediate school contexts in which their investigations take place shape the teaching/learning communities they facilitate

Use data (from any available resources, such as, locally, HAC and Performance Matters data and student response systems/other data collection systems) to evaluate student progress and make instructional decisions, and then show progress as a result of the instruction

Choose appropriate research tools for conducting investigations into teaching and learning;

Conduct inquiry in ethical and professional ways, including data interpretation and reporting

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