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Teacher Portfolios
Lessons in Resistance, Readiness, and Reflection

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I HAVE TAUGHT ENGLISH "METHODS" COURSES FOR OVER A DECADE NOW: the courses that are intended to help students learn enough about the teaching of English so they can walk into a middle or high school classroom populated with *live* students and not panic at the sight. As a former public school teacher who herself took such a course, I know both what that course did for me and—as important—what it didn't. What my English methods course equipped me to do was to teach suburban white students, mostly males, preparing to attend Harvard. This preparation proved only minimally useful, of course, when, two years later, I found myself teaching eighth graders in Clear Spring, Maryland, a community whose members hadn't heard of Harvard and whose members weren't impressed when they did. In brief, for the teaching I actually found myself doing, I wasn't—how shall we put this?—very well *prepared.*

To be fair, I'm not sure that we can prepare students to teach in all contexts. I understand this. On the other hand, precisely because of my own experience, I believe that we can help students to think about a diversity of contexts and a diversity of students, and I was delighted when, in 1987, I was asked if I'd like to teach the class where I might try. I went about preparing to teach this course as I prepare for most: choosing texts and creating assignments, but with an eye toward what I thought might specifically work for these students-who-were-becoming-teachers. In particular, I made two choices that I considered crucial: I selected professional readings rather than textbooks (for example, Golub's 1988

collection on collaborative learning), and I asked the students to compose a paper entitled "My Ideal Classroom." The readings were intended to introduce students to the kind of texts that they would use as classroom teachers, in part to help them learn to navigate those texts *before* they were classroom teachers.

The paper on the ideal classroom was intended to help students think about themselves as teachers in a specific context, to idealize that context so that they would create their own picture of what was possible, a picture that would guide them as they began to teach and that would serve as a touchstone as they continued teaching. Both choices thus worked toward helping students think about how classroom practice might work, but also they worked toward helping them effect a kind of transition from university preparation to classroom practice.

A Gap: Theory and Practice

In theory, loosely defined, I still think these choices sound useful. Lord knows, I was well-intentioned enough. But you can see what's coming: the students didn't see the course as I did. Quite the contrary. Regardless of where I taught the course, at Purdue from 1987 to 1990 or at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte from 1991 to 1994, the students for whom it was so carefully designed pretty much universally found it unsatisfactory: confusing, disorienting, too advanced, too much, and decidedly not helpful. During this time, of course, I experienced various reactions. Disappointed, I tinkered with some of the text selections. Sympathetic, I changed the authorship of the curriculum unit from single to collaborative, if students chose, so that they could work in teams to create the unit. Annoyed, I moved to include more kinds of assessments and to provide them more often. In brief, although I tried to be responsive to the complaints, they continued. As Pogo might say, I had met resistance and met it hard. As of the fall of 1994, I was reluctantly concluding that, again as Pogo might say, I was the problem, and that I should simply give up teaching this course. I wasn't quite bitterly disappointed.

In the spring of 1994, I encountered my colleague Bob Yagelski at a conference; we talked particularly about the methods course, and I discovered that his experience matched mine: resistance. In early summer, I talked to Beth Burch, then at Alabama; her experience matched ours. In late summer, I talked to Sarah Robbins at Kennesaw State; her story in the methods course was also plotted through resistance. I began to

understand that I was not alone. What we all had seemed to experience, at least partially, was what Ann Gere and her colleagues talked about recently in *College English*: a sense on the students' part that what they needed to know was how to teach decoding skills *correctly*, how to be an authoritative and knowledgeable teacher who told her students what to do, and how to manage the classroom efficiently. We, on the other hand, seemed to want our prospective colleagues to work in a collaborative way to *discover* ways of communicating with their students.

I decided to give the course one last try: I redesigned it. In so doing, I made five major decisions:

First, I changed the books we used. Rather than use Golub's text on collaborative learning and Anson's on response to writing, I chose a basic English-teacher-education text, the Gere et al. *Language and Reflection*, (1995) a text that is designed for methods students. I allowed ample time to work with it: eight weeks of the sixteen-week term. I also chose two others, however: John Mayher's *Uncommon Sense* (1990), to give the students just a bit of theory and an introduction to a professional text; and my own edited volume on portfolios (Yancey 1992b), so that they could see teachers redesigning their curriculum and conducting teacher-research.

Second, I reduced the amount of reading and the number of assignments. Previously, we had read five texts; now we were down to three. I dropped the Ideal Classroom paper. I made the curriculum unit collaborative. I kept the midterm, but allowed students to rewrite unsatisfactory answers to it (for learning and for credit) when they included it in their portfolio.

Third, I put the students on a closed listserv discussion group and asked them every other week to respond to a prompt I had posted there. The prompts asked students to do different kinds of tasks: to summarize and respond to a reading; to critique a recommended practice; to choose a quote from the reading that seemed particularly valuable and talk about why; to find something that a colleague had said and react to that. I also invited a former student teacher of mine, Scott Diehl, to participate on the list. Scott has taught in various contexts, from alternative schools to the local high school in State College, Pennsylvania, so he understands diverse environments and students, and as someone who had his own struggles with me as his university supervisor, understands how the students might (still) feel.

Fourth, I changed the portfolio model. Previously, I used a model based on the American Association of Higher Education's (AAHE) model. It includes four components: preparation of teaching, teaching, assessment

of student work, and professional development. I expected the students would follow this pattern and produce something they might take to a job interview: I expected *professional.* Now I designed a new, more student-centered model with three component parts: concepts, application of concepts, and development. In this portfolio, the expectation was that I would see the teacher they thought they might want to become, and that to do that they might arrange the exhibits anyway they liked, and that they might develop a theme for the portfolio. I expected *thoughtful and/but tentative and analytical.*

Fifth, I emphasized reflection, seeing it not so much as something that came at the end of the portfolio process, as is so often the case (Conway 1994), but as something that threaded throughout the course, in multiple forms and for multiple intents. I asked students to write me biweekly *reflective letters* in which they commented on anything that seemed germane; I asked them to write *goal statements* at the beginning of the class and to revisit those goals periodically; I asked them to write what I called *Learning Summaries,* in which they commented on their learning and how it was progressing; I asked them throughout the term to choose portfolio exhibits and write one page *rationales* for those exhibits; and I asked students to write a culminating *reflective essay* for their teacher portfolio.

The Students' Portfolios

Laura's Portfolio
I want to use Laura's portfolio to demonstrate how well these changes worked, just so you know (that I know too) the master narrative here. And even so, this claim is disingenuous: a strong student, Laura will do well regardless of context. I understand this; it's only fair that you should too.

Like all the portfolios from this class, Laura's is not a writing portfolio but a teaching portfolio, and as such, it is a different genre of portfolio. While writing is certainly the primary medium, teaching is the focus of the portfolio, a teaching that for the purposes of the portfolio and the course we have analyzed into three component parts: *knowledge, application of knowledge,* and *development as a prospective teacher.* Students may use these categories to organize their exhibits, or they may develop another pattern or schema. Laura has created her own of six parts. Entitled "To Be a Teacher," the portfolio includes:

  I. Beginnings and Realizations
  II. Progressions

III.Collaborative Efforts
IV.Applications of Knowledge
V. Realizations
VI.Reflection

Laura's portfolio isn't terribly fat; this is the third portfolio she's created, and she understands the value of selection. She includes diverse materials, however: reflective letters; some rationales for portfolio exhibits she chose throughout the term; her midterm; an abstract of the curriculum unit; a paper on a field experience independent study she took concurrently with this class; some emails, including one to the Purdue Online Writing Lab; and her reflective essay. Her midterm shows knowledge, her curriculum unit shows application, and her letters and emails show development. Her portfolio will earn a good grade, that's clear.

What's as important, to me as to Laura, is the articulation of the learning underlying the knowledge, the application, the development—and *the person best suited to articulate this is Laura. Better than anyone, she knows about her own learning.* This seems so obvious, but it is perhaps the most unacknowledged idea in learning I have ever encountered. One of Laura's exhibits is telling in this way: a portfolio rationale for her first exhibit, it documents *what she learned.*

> After searching desperately for something to include in my portfolio, I've finally found something! I've decided to use the first sneaker-net activity done in the class: . . . [which asked students to tell why English should be taught]. I want to include this piece because it reveals that I have good intentions about *wanting* to teach English, although it proves that I'm really off-base in determining *why* it should be taught.

That Laura was *desperate* tells me at least as much about my request as it does about Laura. Even for Laura, who had composed other portfolios, this task—choosing a single exhibit according to her own criteria and then showing how it met those—was strange and risky. Still, Laura brings to the task two qualities that go into good teaching: first, she is able to *assess her own readiness* accurately and unflinchingly; and second, she *understands the process* by which we develop readiness, as we also see later in that same rationale:

> My response in the sneaker-net activity seems to be an early sketch of things I want to accomplish as an English teacher. Although the reasoning seems logical,

my argument is flawed. My reasons for wanting to teach English assume that all students will become enamored of the "wonderful world" of English when I "reveal" it to them. In a sense, I'm assuming that all students will magically fall in love with literature the same way I did. Now, my previous reasons for wanting to teach English almost seem unrealistic and illogical.

I believe that "assumption" is the greatest mistake new teachers make. I realize (not even halfway through the semester), that it is crucial to recognize individual differences in students and their individual preferences for English, as well. For this reason, I want to include the activity as the *first* piece in my portfolio. I feel that it is extremely important to show progress in the portfolio—moving from the illogical to the logical.

It may be, of course, that Laura's progress will not move altogether from illogical to logical, but she does see both process and progress. She also locates herself as a member of a larger class, the class not of students but of *new teachers*, and she makes this identification, as she says, prior to the completion of the term. Her theorizing about new teachers takes place without our even discussing the idea of theorizing. Although a student, Laura is practicing as a teacher: locating herself among teachers, discerning patterns, and theorizing about those patterns.

A second exhibit in Laura's portfolio is a multivocal paper focused on her field experience; it alternates between 1) descriptive discourse chunks that describe what happened as she attempted to help Courtney, a tenth grader, write well enough to pass the state writing test and 2) reflective chunks that attempt to *make sense of* the experience. What did Laura learn? Among other things that teaching

> is a great learning experience. It enables you to learn so much about yourself although those aren't the things you *want* to learn . . . Somehow in my adult stupidity, I forgot that she [Courtney] had feelings—that she actually wrote something she liked—and that I was tearing her creation apart every time we met for a tutoring session. Giving her the opportunity to own her own work enabled her to feel more comfortable changing it with suggestions *instead of orders*.

Laura concludes the paper by asking for a course called "Real Life," where she would learn

> how to be quick on my feet, how to catch curve balls, how to survive in a classroom with kids who could care less about you, how to plan (no, I really haven't mastered that yet), how to follow the most boring state curriculum imaginable without losing the attention of the students, how to still feel confident at the end of the day, and how not to give up.

(After twenty years of teaching, I'm still looking for this course.)

Finally, I come to Laura's reflective essay. At three pages and large font, it is spare rather than saturated. What I learn from it:

- that at the beginning of the term, Laura was "preoccupied with trying to fit the mold of the standard teacher to be";
- that trying to do what you are "*supposed*" to do isn't always the right thing to do and that teaching "is *not* easy, *not* painless, and *not* without the occasional discouraging moment";
- that the "Uncommon Sense methods of instruction" made sense when they were put to use in a real classroom;
- that Laura finally got to *use* what she was learning and that this was the first time this had occurred to her in her college experience;
- and that she feels ready to student teach.

What I also learn has to do with the relationship between what I have come to think of as two curricula: the *delivered* curriculum and the *experienced* curriculum. The delivered curriculum here is my curriculum of English 4170: philosophies of teaching English as represented in the Gere text (for example, artifact, expressive, developmental/cognitive, and social constructionist); ways to teach reading and writing; the role of formative and summative assessment in teaching and learning; and what uncommon sense is and how it works. I look for documentation that the students have learned this curriculum when I evaluate the portfolio. I look for evidence of concepts acquired, applications created, and development managed. The task here is to see if the students "got" the curriculum I "delivered;" the irony here is (of course) unmistakable. *I* might very well be the reason they haven't "got" it, but we show this gap with *their* grade.

At the same time, as I read Laura's portfolio, I am very aware that she is experiencing her own curriculum, based on who she is, on what kind of teacher she wants to be, on what she perceives her needs to be, and on what she experiences throughout the semester *in my class* and *out of it*. In Laura's case, "out of it" is the key to "in it": the field experience brings into play *real application* with *real students*, one of whom has a very real and altogether unpleasant timed state writing test to pass. Accordingly, Laura's experienced curriculum is a good match with the delivered curriculum. What does this mean? I think what I've discovered here is that there are always these two curricula[1]: the delivered (the teachers', the institutions') and the experienced (the student's version of that delivered curriculum),

and that when courses work well, they provide a point of intersection between the two.[2] In Laura's case, because she took the independent study, she found that point of intersection both accessible and large. What can we do, I think, to increase the likelihood that such an intersection is always available? is always large? How can we know when it's not, and what can we do about it so as to change it?

Kenny's Portfolio
Kenny's portfolio is fat—or hefty, at least. He's also divided his into sections, his modeled on a child's learning to walk. Thus we find:

> I. Introduction
> II. Baby Steps
> III.Searching
> IV.Somewhere Between Searching and Applying
> V. Applying
> VI.Beginning to Walk on My Own

Kenny's portfolio is comprised of eighteen exhibits, some of them like Laura's—the midterm, an abstract of the curriculum unit, emails—and some of them unique to Kenny. For instance, he includes an interview with Lisa Philips, a special education teacher, to show one of the most important things he learned: that teaching calls for a special kind of commitment.

> As someone interested in teaching, I believed there must be nothing to it. Get up each morning, teach some kids, and then go home for dinner with the family, but I was shown during my "Baby Step" entries that there is a certain commitment that you must be willing to make to become an effective instructor. I am using an interview from another class that helped to open my eyes to what a committed, caring teacher can be.

Again, I think, the student learns by explicitly connecting what happens outside my class with what goes on inside. The portfolio, as constructed here, not only asks for that connection, it requires it. Put another way, the portfolio asks that the student bring together the "component parts" of experience, put them into dialogue and dialectic with each other, and make sense of them through the rhetorical situation of the portfolio.

By far the largest exhibit in Kenny's portfolio is his Why Should English Be Taught paper, and the set of drafts and notes and peer responses and transmittal forms—companion pieces that contextualize the formal papers—that accompany it. He's framed his paper as a speech "given at a

high school PTA meeting" in his home town, the place where he wants to teach. It's taken him four drafts and thirty-some pages to get to the final draft; by his own account, this collection taught him about the nature of writing and about himself as a writer. Asked to talk about the paper as terrific, Kenny says,

> I feel this is a terrific paper because I took the time to edit and redraft several times which is not something that I usually do when writing. Along with personal editing, I sought help from outside sources and tried to answer their questions and listen to their advice. The fact that I was not willing to "go it alone" should help to make this a terrific paper.

I see the same theme of writer development reiterated in Kenny's reflective introduction to the portfolio: "The email assignment from March 8 is a testimony to my conversion from a single-draft writer to the multiple-draft writer that I need to be." For Kenny, *the methods course was a writing course*. This wasn't quite my intent, I think, although it's true that English teachers need to be writers and readers. This was what Kenny needed from the course, however; this was a part of his experienced curriculum.

Kenny also includes what I have called a Learning Summary, (which I take to be) an opportunity for students to think about what they are discovering in class; to think about that in relationship to their earlier expectations for the course (which itself presents one way to think about development); given this relationship, to think about what should come next for them as individual students; and to consider what strategies will help the students reach those newer destinations. We conduct this reflection through four questions, each one asked only after its predecessor is completed:

1. What have you learned so far in this class?
2. Is this what you expected to learn?
3. What else do you need to learn?
4. How will you go about learning it?

Kenny believes that he has learned a lot, and he sees how the class members as a community have fostered that learning.

> In this class I have learned that writing, the ability to write, and written comprehension are essential elements in the English classroom. Methods of instruction (i.e., language as development, language as social construct, etc.) are

concepts that I have become more familiar with in this class. These are things that I never really gave much thought to in the past, but I now realize how important they are in determining your own teaching method. The fact that teaching is not one or the other but is a meshing of ideas from them all is also something that I have learned so far in this class. I have also been introduced to the difficulties of grading. Finally, I have learned that the ideals and views of the prospective English teachers in this class are somewhat similar as well as different.

Kenny is learning the delivered curriculum—the concepts and the beginning application evident here—even as he is implicitly disappointed in it. He had apparently hoped for a simpler, more direct answer to the question of how to teach English: "I thought that the focus of the class might be more centered around the 'standard' methods of teaching English. I also thought (or perhaps, hoped) that we would be shown a 'right' way to teach English." Still, Kenny sees what he needs to learn: "how to mesh the methods that we are discussing to best fit my personality and abilities." I think what I am watching here may be a loss of innocence that—necessarily?—accompanies good teacher preparation. I hadn't thought of teacher preparation in this way before, but then again, I hadn't really asked the students for their perceptions in this way. If we don't ask, we (teachers) won't learn. As important, what we ask matters: it can't just be, did you (student) get what I (teacher) am supposed to deliver? It has to be more and other than that: it has to be, what are you (student) learning (in this class)? And at the same time, I think, as I read Kenny's portfolio, what I am also watching is a growth in authority: now that Kenny understands what is possible, he can make choices that suit his *personality* and *abilities*. In the portfolio reflection, he notes how important the Learning Summary was: "This entry shows that I recognized what I needed to improve and that I had to make an effort if I wanted to improve."

Kenny's portfolio introduction narrates his story of the class. In it he highlights why he chooses to use the metaphor of a child learning to walk as a way of talking about what he's learned: "I decided to use walking as a metaphor for my portfolio because it seems to me that once you find yourself walking as a child, you then become ultimately responsible for the ways that you get to where you are going." Where Kenny is going is to work with others, and bringing those others—his prospective students— into this equation was also part of what he learned. He includes an email, for instance, that "shows a willingness to forget my needs and wants so that I may concentrate on the student." He includes the curriculum unit and abstract and the worksheets used to create both because they exemplify

"how a unit can be taught with regards to the student's world and not only what Norton's *Anthology* can spew forth." He is beginning to see himself as a *teacher of students*.

> I also placed an email assignment from April 4 and the sneaker-net responses to the quote I chose from *Uncommon Sense*. In both I see the teacher I want to be. In my email discussion I came to the realization that I could not do to my students what was done to me because, honestly, I have forgotten much due to poor presentation. Then, through Tim's response on sneaker-net I was shocked to find him looking for new and better applications like myself. To close out "Applying" I have placed my edit and redrafts of the essay. I had taken advice from this class and applied it in a process that was tedious and against my grain, but I knew that I had to take measures to improve just as I will be asked to do each time Johnny does not "get it" in class discussions.

I see Kenny synthesizing what he has learned: he sees the recursive processes of writing that felt so uncomfortable and foreign as the *same recursive processes* he will need in the classroom. An impressive connection; it's not one that I've made *until he shows it to me*. More generally, I think I discern the pattern of Kenny's development: he moves from student-who-has-naive-constructs-of-teacher, to a more reality-based-prospective-teacher construct—focused on what kind of teacher he will be given his own assessment of his personality—to prospective-teacher-of-students. This development too can be recursive.

Kim's Portfolio

Kim's portfolio, like Laura's, is slender, but I am not surprised: most of Kim's work this term has tended to the slender. Like Kenny's portfolio, Kim's is themed: "From Heart to Mind to Hand." I read her portfolio reflection, but its brevity does not bode well:

> In February, I wrote what I wanted my portfolio to show, ". . . the evolution of myself as a writer and future teacher." My portfolio definitely does this. How? As you flip through the pages of my work, you see evidence of my improved abilities, as well as a change in my attitude. What I mean is, my first works show me as a student that needs revision and a more concrete opinion of myself as a writer, a learner, and a teacher of English.
> After reflecting upon my own work, along with the system of opinions I have collected in this class, I can conclude several things:
>
> 1) I, as a student, *need* revision

2) I, as a student, am living proof that writing to learn must precede writing to perform

3) I, as a teacher, will integrate and put great value on this process of writing

My portfolio shows my work move into the direction of writing to perform. Although there is not one piece of writing in the entire portfolio that could not use another revision, there are some that I would not change at all. I am speaking mainly of the in-class writings that show my views on a particular subject as they come straight from my head . . . some of these views changed over the course of the semester, and this can be seen throughout my portfolio, but they always moved in the same direction. This is evidence that I, as well as my work, changed . . . changed for the better, I think.

From Heart, to Mind, to Hand. I feel that, as a teacher, I can help students follow a similar path, where performance will come in time, just as mine has, and still is.

Reluctantly (*is this it?*), I see the portfolio reflection as telling me another story, the story of a real mismatch between the delivered curriculum and the experienced curriculum. Like Kenny, Kim finds in the methods course a writing course that she thinks she needs; that, I think, is all to the good. But unlike Kenny, Kim does not move beyond that need of hers as a student, does not see that other students—her prospective students— might experience the same need, does not express any relationship between the processes of her learning and her prospective teaching, does not even predicate students except in the most generic sense. Kim, I think, shows me the identity of student well. Where is the identity of prospective teacher?

I go to the first writing Kim provides, an introduction to her composed on the first day of class. She tells me that she is just "getting started on my English concentration," and that her second concentration, in science, is nearly completed; presumably she is prepared to teach science, and presumably she has thought in terms of science students and their needs. She loves to read, she says, mentioning the Bible, Shakespeare and Hurston as texts. Her main goal in class: "to become more computer literate and be able to use it as a tool and helping aid." Should I have seen something wrong here, right from the start?

I go to a portfolio rationale; here Kim explains that she will include in her portfolio the paper "Why English Should Be Taught," commenting that:

What I wrote was fairly simple, but crude. My ideas were somewhat shallow. . . .
    There are a couple of reasons why I chose this essay. First, because I am a work in progress, it shows the evolution of my thoughts . . . that is to say,

through our class discussions and through the readings, my thoughts on the subject of English changed. I think they matured a little and even expanded. My essay shows this progress. Also, it is an example of me, as a student, writing to learn, which must come before writing to perform. This is definitely seen in this first essay due to all the editing errors, and the poor flow of the paper.

Interesting: the paper is focused on why English should be taught, is thus quite clearly content-specific, is thus asking her to *take on the role of teacher.* Yet Kim's perspective on it is single-minded: on it as her student text. More disconcerting, it's not a strong reflective analysis, relying as it does on floating signifiers like *editing* and *flow.* Also interesting: at the top of the rationale in the right hand corner, I had earlier penned in response to it:

OK—this is great for you as student; what about you as teacher?
No comment; no addition; no change.

I look to Kim's Learning Summary. In the first section, focused on "What Have I Learned," Kim seems to have learned (my) delivered curriculum.

From the text, I have learned about several approaches to teaching English, such as the developmental and Language as Artifact approaches. In class, through group work, I learned how those approaches might be applied in the actual classroom. On a broader level, I have learned that there is much more to teaching English than just reading and writing, such as being able to fairly grade the student's work. I have always thought, and especially now, that attaching a mere letter grade to a student's work is not always a fair assessment of his or her capabilities. English can take on so many broad topics and can be so subjective at times that it becomes necessary to give room for creativity. Then the question becomes how creative is too creative? These are the things I am learning a lot about in this class.

On the one hand, this *sounds* like someone who is working within the parameters of the delivered curriculum, especially when Kim talks about specific approaches to teaching and the issues that inform grading. On the other hand, when Kim says *especially now*, my guess is that her concern with grading is motivated more by student than teacher identity: she had expressed considerable dismay about the C she earned on her essay.

In the second question of the Learning Summary, she says, yes, what she is learning is what she expected to learn. As to what she needs to learn now: "This is a hard one. I'm pretty comfortable working with literature as far as reading it from different perspectives and then analyzing it. Ah, I've got it. I need to know more about grading written papers. This is what I would

love to avoid because I have a hard time writing a good paper, myself." Again, Kim as student.

And what strategies will Kim employ to learn about grading? "Well, I'm still a student, so I plan on learning it from my instructor." The delivered curriculum—how to become a teacher—has somehow almost disappeared completely; it has been rewritten for Kim by her need to learn to write, as expressed in the experienced curriculum.

The problem here, I think as I review this portfolio, is complex. Most obvious and first, portfolios will not work magic: if a student is not ready, the portfolio cannot change that. I'm not even certain that it can accelerate readiness. Second, my assessment is that Kim is not ready to think of herself as a prospective teacher, which is what she has pretty consistently told me all along. Third, she expresses a kind of resistance to the idea of being a prospective teacher: *I am a student*, she says, not a prospective teacher. Fourth, now that I think I see this pattern—a student who cannot, is not ready to, add the identity of the teacher to that of the student, who does not see them as two sides of the same coin, really—what do I do about it? More generally, what does this pattern suggest? If we were to frame the course as a journey from student-to-teacher, would we see typical patterns of development in the course? If so, are these patterns typically more like Laura's, that is, moving from wanting to be the "standard good teacher" to redefining the good teacher? Or are the patterns more like Kenny's, whose view of teaching was increasingly complicated and situated over time? Are there multiple typical patterns? And are there likewise characteristic patterns for students who, like Kim, aren't ready for the delivered curriculum?

Kim's portfolio has probably taught me more than it has taught her. In showcasing her experienced curriculum, it has shown me how far short of the delivered curriculum we have both fallen. It has helped me understand more theoretically what is involved in *becoming a teacher* and the *accretion of identities* that it requires. And it has helped me understand more pedagogically the developmental patterns I might look for the next time I teach this course.

What I've Learned: My Own Reflection

This chapter resembles a portfolio: I've chosen a collection of materials from the course and from the students with which I can tell my story of the course, and I've tried to do so in a way that honors their intents, and in a reflective way that shows how I've interpreted these selections and what

I've learned from them. It's important, however, that we remember that this story is mine. Even though I've included the voices of the students, I've appropriated them to show my theme, not theirs. Constructed from the same materials, their stories about this course—Laura's and Kenny's and Kim's—might be very different indeed.

But still, I have learned here, and I'd like to talk a little about what it is that I think I've learned and about how that learning happened. What I am supposed to say—we all know this—is that the portfolio made it happen. To a certain extent, that's a legitimate claim. The portfolio is a key part of the redesign of the course, and more than any other component of the course, it motivated the reflection that became the way of being of the course. And it is a doubled experience since it is through combining my reflection with the reflections of the students that I have come to understand the key concepts here:

- delivered curriculum
- experienced curriculum
- intersection of the two curricula as the most productive site for learning
- student-to-teacher identity issues

The key concepts, however, aren't all that I've learned. In thinking about them and how I've learned about them, I understand what helped produce them: flexible, valid portfolios that are vehicles for reflective ways of understanding our intellectual work. More specifically, let me offer some corollary observations.

Portfolio design is a central issue in any program, and certainly in teacher education programs. What we choose to allow in our model of portfolio will not only affect the students (although that's true, of course), but it will also shape in crucial ways what we see and thus how we understand our own curriculum. I said earlier that the portfolio as I have constructed it accomplishes certain goals. Both Sandra Murphy and Susan Callahan have made this point elsewhere: the portfolio in and of itself accomplishes only what the teacher or an institution makes possible in terms of the kinds of freedom permitted to students. In my case, I was particularly interested in the reflective aspect of the portfolio, and I was also interested in the connections that students made between what we were doing in the methods class and other experiences—both academic and otherwise—that *they saw as related.* Issuing this invitation to include whatever they perceived

to be relevant—from a curriculum unit completed for another class to a paper for an independent study to an interview with a practicing teacher—proved especially valuable, both for the ways that students could construct themselves and accordingly for what it allowed me to see. Simply put, such an invitation asks them to construct a whole from the fragmentation we call education.

Portfolio design (or construction), which we see in the constraints we place on the portfolio, may seem like a minor point, but I don't think so. Originally, I had constructed the teacher portfolio for the methods students as a professional vehicle, thinking that such a design would help students most. It did not. And even when I used this professional model of portfolio, I intuited at least some of the limits of (my own) narrow construction of portfolio. In the fall of 1992, for instance, I gave a talk at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) on this teacher portfolio, arguing that if we thought of it as a professional text, we would lose the chance to learn from the portfolio what it can teach us: that the only way that it can teach us is by not being too rigid, too fixed, too (in this case) professional in its construction; that allowing freedom in it provided one way for students' voices to be heard, and that to learn about and from the portfolio, we probably needed such freedom and such voices. Even so, it took student resistance to *make me ready* to give up the professional portfolio, ready to understand that this move in portfolio design wasn't an abandonment but an enhancement. Like Laura, I too was trapped by my sense of what I was *supposed* to do.

In sum, I think I have learned from this reflection on this methods portfolio, and I think I was able to do so because I've designed the portfolio as inclusive of student experience—as much oriented to experienced curriculum as to delivered curriculum. And I have then understood this distinction between curricula in the bargain. One of the key changes here involved exactly that: moving to a portfolio that was in character more student-oriented than professionally-oriented.

Just as the *validity* of the portfolio model is, in part, a function of its relationship to the curriculum, such validity is also enhanced by its power to teach the teacher. One of the more recent understandings in assessment has to do with validity, the concept that what you measure in fact is what you intend to measure. Portfolios are so popular in part because they seem to be more valid measures of what it is that we are trying to get at. Researchers like Roberta Camp and Pamela Moss have taken validity one step further, arguing that when we consider how valid a measure is, we have to take a

look at the effect of the measure on the students. If the effect of the measure on the students' learning is harmful or disconnected, they say, then the validity of the measure is *decreased*. Since portfolios, as discussed here, are intimately connected with a student's learning, their validity is enhanced. There is a corollary to this idea of effect as a factor in assessment, however, that I'd like to suggest. I agree: the connection from assessment to learning needs to be made, and it needs to be felicitous. But it is also true that when an assessment functions well, *it teaches the evaluator as much as the student*. That is what this portfolio did for me, and thus it is a more valid instrument; I understand not only how my students performed, but *why*.

Community is a subtle theme threaded here as well. Kenny mentions that he learned from the practicing teacher and from his colleague in class. Laura mentions that she learned from Courtney, the student, how to teach. Kim doesn't mention people from whom she is learning: what might this signify?

Students seeking to become teachers don't shift *identities*: they begin to develop a new one, the teacher identity. I've used a language here suggesting that the trip to teacher is from student, but I think that this is decidedly not what I think. This is Kenny's trip as he describes it, yes. But I don't think this was Laura's trip, nor do I think trip is quite the metaphor. I don't think there is a shift, which is what the metaphor trip seems to be about; rather, I think the methods course is to help students develop an additional identity, that of teacher, and to keep the identity of student, in fact to see that a teacher is, first and foremost, a student. It's *both/and.*

I've subtitled this chapter "Lessons in Resistance, Readiness and Reflection," trying to suggest this text provides lessons for all of us who are students. And I take that to be all of us. Originally, student resistance helped me develop a readiness to change. That readiness increased when, through talking with others who teach this course, I understood that my experience wasn't unique but almost prototypical: I too relied on community. In terms of the portfolio, my readiness to change increased as well when I gave the talk on portfolios at NCTE. In contrasting a classroom writing portfolio with my earlier version of the teacher portfolio, I saw for myself how the freedom of the one helped us see things that the fixed character of the other would preclude. And then because of continuing resistance, I changed the course, threading the reflection of portfolio throughout—in Goal Statements, in Learning Summaries, in Transmittal Forms, in Portfolio Rationales, and finally in reflective essays. And as Laura's and Kenny's portfolios suggest, I met with less resistance with the redesigned course. It's not totally gone, of

course, as Kim makes clear, but at least I can theorize now about what it might represent: a stage in a developmental model. And even for students who complete this developmental model, resistance can be an important part of it as another student in this class, Scotti, tells me in her last reflective letter:

> I think you are the type of person who can appreciate honesty, so here goes . . . This class has been the most demanding class that I have ever taken at the university. At the first of the semester (and at several points during the semester), I truthfully thought that I hated this class. And I don't mean that I simply disliked it; I mean that I HATED it! I would bitch and moan about all the stuff that we had to do in here, but somehow I managed to come to class and to do everything that I was supposed to do. . . .
>
> Something about this class that really made it difficult was that it made me *think*. It made me think in ways that I have never thought before. No longer was someone holding my hand and saying, "OK, one day when you are a real teacher, what are you going to do?"
>
> Instead, you have been there demanding, "OK, you *are* a teacher, so what are you going to do?" I must admit to you that this SCARED me to death! I was terrified of you and of this class for probably half the semester because I had to think for myself, and that was something that I had not done in a long time. The coolest part about this, though, is that once I got comfortable thinking for myself, it started spilling over into my other classes as well.

Given my current understanding of resistance, and its relationship to readiness and to reflection, I've shifted focus: what, I'm asking, are the sources of this kind of resistance? How do they play out in various developmental models? When is it productive, and when not? What do I mean by productive?

These are the lessons in resistance, readiness, and reflection that, I think, are worth coming to know.[3]

Notes

1.   In fact, I think there are three curricula. As Jennie Nelson's recent *CCC* article suggests (Nelson 1995), students bring with them what she calls their lived curriculum, their understandings of how school works and knowledge is demonstrated. So a complete theory would need to show how these three intersect; I take this to be beyond the scope of this paper. But we do see evidence of the lived curriculum even in Laura's short excerpts: her notion of the "standard teacher to be" seems to be one she brought with her as a product of years of schooling, as is her idea that students would love literature as did she; this curriculum is then in dialectic with the delivered curriculum and the experienced curriculum of the course. Bringing them together in some coherent way may be what it is that we ask of students in any course.

2.   We might more accurately call the delivered curricula the articulated or the designed curricula since the point of a portfolio, like any assessment, is to ascertain whether or not the curriculum has in fact been *delivered*. I like keeping the term delivered, however, because of the irony it suggests.
3.   Thanks to Bud Weiser, Bob Yagelski, and Sarah Robbins for their help in understanding resistance.