“ALWAYS IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING”:
INQUIRING NARRATIVELY INTO PROVIDING PURPOSEFUL SUPPORT
TOWARDS CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

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By
Brenda Lynn Baisley
Regina, Saskatchewan
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Brenda Lynn Baisley, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, “Always in the process of Becoming”: Inquiring Narratively Into Providing Purposeful Support Towards Critical Social Justice Education, in an oral examination held on July 7, 2014. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: *Dr. Anne Murray Orr, St. Francis Xavier University
Supervisor: Dr. Valerie Mulholland, Curriculum & Instruction
Committee Member: Dr. Paul Hart, Curriculum & Instruction
Committee Member: Dr. Janice Huber, Curriculum & Instruction
Chair of Defense: Dr. Darlene Juschka, Department of Women’s & Gender Studies

*via SKYPE
Abstract

Even as teacher education programs raise issues of social justice with pre-service teachers, the opportunities for them to practice their skills happen within the existing school structure—a structure that resists change. Many cooperating teachers who mentor pre-service teachers during their internship hold common-sense and taken-for-granted assumptions about what it means to be a “good” teacher that can interfere with the practice of critical social justice pedagogy.

This narrative inquiry begins with an autobiographical exploration of my origins as a social justice educator and then examines the relationship between me, a cooperating teacher, and an intern as I strive to provide her with purposeful support, using social justice as a touchstone by which to consistently reflect. Throughout our semester together, we each maintained journals, communicated electronically, and met regularly for focused conversations reflecting on our experiences and research that could inform our practice. Using these field texts, I was able to capture, narratively, our experience as well as the relational nature of critical social justice work.

While the intention of this work is not to be prescriptive or to provide answers to other educators, it does demonstrate that critical social justice education is not a static destination at which I will arrive once I am sufficiently knowledgeable, but rather a continual process in which I will always be engaged.
Acknowledgement

I will begin by thanking my supervisor and mentor, Dr. Valerie Mulholland. Her confidence in my ability to tell this story in the way that it needed to be told gave me the courage to cope with uncertainty. Because she trusted me, I trusted myself, and trusted the story as it emerged.

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Dedication

I would not have been able to engage in this process without the support of my family, and for that, I dedicate this thesis to them.

My husband, Chris Beingessner, has gone beyond any reasonable expectation of support without question. He has maintained and improved our home, found ways to occupy our children and create vast quantities of time and space for my work, offered academic advice, and encouraged me through times of doubt. I am keenly aware of and eternally grateful for his sacrifices.

I cannot count the moments that I have missed with my daughter, Norah, and my son, Nolan, during this process, but even for ones so young, they have been understanding and resilient. I hope that when they are old enough to understand what this sacrifice of time allowed me to accomplish, they will also be proud.
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Prologue: The Story that Never Was

Things were falling into place for me as a graduate student—the whole process seemed to be guided along by one serendipitous moment after another. Having selected narrative inquiry as my methodology and received ethics approval for my thesis research, I knew I wouldn’t have a problem narrowing my focus. I knew which story I wanted and needed to tell—the story of my evolution as a social justice educator. I could already read the exposition: some childhood story demonstrating my empathy, perhaps in contrast to the conservative, meritocratic culture of my home. It would foreshadow the tensions I would later experience with the grand narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 35). Perhaps I could add dimension to my character, by retelling an anecdote from high school that revealed my privileged position and attempts to maintain my empathetic perspective in spite of being situated in a position of white privilege (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). The awkward attempts to espouse equality without troubling my position of power would clearly demonstrate that I was simultaneously victim of the various dominant discourses that shaped my identity and active participant in domination. I would proceed to an epiphany by referencing “ah-ha!” moments sure to be found in reflections from university classes, and capture my unbridled enthusiasm for social justice education heading into my internship and my first year of teaching. Then, using snapshots from that time, I could demonstrate how my motivation as a social justice educator was eroded, almost systematically, by the grand narrative of education as an apolitical industrial machine and the lack of support from like-minded colleagues and administrators. I would conclude with a present day renewal of my commitment to the cause, segueing seamlessly into the purpose of my research.
But that story is not there for the telling because, in spite of my own assumption that these events unfolded that way, the act of unearthing my roots and actually studying my growth as a social justice educator has told a different story—a much messier, less certain puzzle of a story marked with unsettling revelations and mysteries that might never be solved. After all, “experience, … is always more than we can know and represent in a single statement, paragraph, or book” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39).

Before proceeding I must acknowledge the partiality of this collection of stories, that “every representation, … no matter how faithful to that which it tries to depict, involves selective emphasis of our experience” (p. 39). I am aware of how much has been omitted. Sometimes these omissions were due to restrictions of space and time, others, because there are internal and external forces at work that I may not be able to name keeping them silent, and still others because of the insufficiency of my memory and the absence of mementos, records, or witnesses to the years that time eroded from my mind.

I “always” knew I wanted to be a teacher. That is a familiar story, isn’t it? Mine came with the cute little anecdote about my Kindergarten yearbook in which our teacher recorded our responses to a variety of questions sure to capture the naiveté of six-year-olds and no doubt, elicit laughter from our parents. Whenever I told this story, I never simply cut to the chase. I took time describing seemingly irrelevant questions and answers (my own and those of my classmates in purposeful juxtaposition) in order to crystalize my character for my audiences:

*They asked, “If you had $100, what would you buy?” One student said he would buy a plane, a truck, and a boat. Another student said he would buy a lot of candy, but he would only eat one piece a day and brush his teeth right after (his*
dad was a dentist). The son of the goalie of our city’s NHL team said he would buy goalie pads. I said I would buy groceries and flowers for my mom.

I wanted people to know that I was precocious—that maturity and responsibility were in my DNA. I wanted people to know that I was a good girl on her way to becoming a “good woman” (Noddings, 1989, p. 203)—one who had maternal instincts (p. 63):

Then they asked what we wanted to be when we grew up. One kid said he wanted to be an astronaut. Lots of girls wanted to be ballerinas and many boys wanted to play professional sports. My reply? I said I wasn’t sure yet, but I knew I wanted to work with children because I worked well with them.

This is a verbatim script of what I would say. I told that story many times, as a pre-teen wanting to reassure the parents of the children I babysat, as a high school student when asked about my future career, and as a university student as I reflected on what brought me to the profession.

I don’t know when it was exactly, that I happened upon that kindergarten yearbook. It was not a surprise to find—I had leafed through it so many times as a child that everything about it was familiar—my golden, summertime complexion, my long, dark hair, and my trademark smile on the cover, the type font, and even the expressions on my classmates’ faces in their pictures could have been accurately recalled with a closing of my eyes. But as I turned to my personal page, the one with the questions, a feeling of disorientation came over me. There was no question about what I wanted to be when I grew up. Instead, there was the question, “If you could be any age, what age would you be and why?” My answer was, “12—so that I could be a babysitter because I like being around kids.”
While the meaning was not so far off, I was still troubled. When had I changed the story? Had the alteration been purposeful or inadvertent? Why did I feel so strongly that I was quoting words that had never been uttered or written? I felt like an accidental fraud. My face burned and I closed the book. Since then, each time I tell the story (it seems I cannot help it), I have to make a conscious decision of which story to tell—the “real” story or the one that feels most truthful.

This experience caused me to be trepidatious about relying on my memory alone. Uncertainty is not a comfortable place for me even though I have come to the ontological realization that there is no such thing as certainty. I still have to actively resist the seductive pull of positivism and, ironically, this is why I was comforted in knowing that when investigating my own story I had many documents to which to return, triggering my memories and keeping me in-tune with what was significant to me as I lived these experiences.
Chapter 1: The Story I Will Tell

In March of 2012, inspired by an introduction to qualitative research, my partner’s own recently completed narrative inquiry, the social justice minded content of my requisite Curriculum and Instruction course, and the offhanded remark of a colleague, my research puzzle revealed itself to me. In my initial drafts of my recruitment letter, this is the story I told:

As an Education student in university, I made the naïve assumption that most educators pursued this career in order to work toward social justice. After all, the echoes of wanting to “make a difference” were everywhere. What I didn’t realize was that “making a difference” is not necessarily synonymous with social justice in everyone’s mind.

My own internship was very indicative of the teacher education process characterized by Dr. Kevin Kumashiro in Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning Toward Social Justice (2004):

Some teacher educators seem to believe that learning to teach toward Social Justice requires that they first learn the “basics,” such as how to manage a classroom and how to teach their disciplines, and afterward, incorporate or add anti-oppressive methods. Such a view presupposes that the basics of teaching are somehow neutral practices unimplicated in the dynamics of oppression and ignores research that reveals ways in which teaching practices are always and already implicated in oppression. Learning the basics of teaching does not precede learning about oppression in teaching, and therefore, teacher research that does not
interrupt oppression already in play may reinforce the very practices that are problematic. (pp. 11-12)

It seems not much has changed. This year, a colleague who had acted as a cooperating teacher in the fall complained that her intern “knew a lot about social justice but knew nothing about teaching.” This caused me to question: What do we expect interning teachers to “know” about teaching and learning? How do theories of social justice education conflict with those expectations? How equipped are interning teachers to engage in social justice education? How equipped are cooperating teachers to support them in a developmental path that must, by nature, reject dominant assumptions about teaching and learning?

This line of questioning inevitably led me to wonder: How equipped was I, someone who identified as a critical social justice educator, to support someone else in his or her journey? I decided to find out. I would ask a pre-service teacher with a passion for social justice education to volunteer to complete his or her sixteen week internship in my classroom, promising, as a cooperating teacher, to provide him or her purposeful support tailored to the pursuit of a more socially just practice. This is how I would come to meet Lacey, the intern who volunteered to participate in this research, and build the relationship that has impacted my practice in such profound ways.

After receiving ethics approval for my research, my faculty advisor arranged for me to present my research puzzle to a group of third year education students, the pool from which the research participant would volunteer. I ended up sharing the above anecdote verbally. I was nervous, riddled by insecurity that no one would be interested in participating, that looking ahead to, predictably, the most difficult semester of their
professional degrees, they would choose to just do things as they had always been done rather than risk the uncertainty of something new. But as I told that story as the rationale for my research, in the moments I dared to allow myself to actually see my audience and not simply perform by rote, I was met by multiple pairs of eyes, set on me in shared understanding. Something I said resonated enough that eight volunteers put their names forward.

Referencing Kevin Kumashiro’s *Against Common Sense* (2004) was as important to me as sharing my own story. When I was in my final semester of my degree, Dr. Kumashiro came to the university to deliver a keynote address. Prior to the address, I purchased the text and read it, cover to cover, in addition to my other studies. I was conscious of the fact that I wanted this autodidactic act to characterize me and my future practice. I was a “good” student who went above and beyond in order to honour and inform my budding philosophies of education. The enthusiasm of the faculty was palpable—the professors buzzing in anticipation of his arrival. I had a precocious desire to share in that and to connect with the academics in this way. I wanted my professors to know that I understood the significance of this occasion and was going to be a “good” teacher.

*Against Common Sense* has adorned the bookshelves in each of my classrooms since then as a reminder to me and a signpost to others of whom I am, or desire to be, as an educator. However, amidst the day-to-day planning, grading, pursuit of the interests and goals set out for me by my schools and my division, and administrative responsibilities, I had not found (nor made) the time to return to the text and consider whether or not my practice was aligning with my adopted theory. Since my final semester
in 2005, the text had not been re-opened. That is, not until the winter of 2012 when the second edition was one of the required texts in my second graduate class, my requisite Curriculum and Instruction course. Seeing the title on the syllabus made me feel as if I had an advantage over my classmates. I was wrong.

Not since my undergraduate Education Foundations class that focused on anti-oppressive education, which literally left me sleepless and distraught over my “newly realized” privilege, had I been so troubled. Through the readings of my graduate course, I began to believe my previous seven years in the classroom had been a misguided failure in social justice education. Kumashiro’s work was vaguely familiar, like the hazy recollection of fragments of a dream. My final assignment for that course noted my discomfort:

*Instead of being enjoyable, the first few pages landed like a lead weight in my gut. How could these words that I had vowed to live by feel so foreign, so unfamiliar? Had I really drifted that far from my original course? I was upset with myself and had to be careful that I did not aim my resentment outward and get defensive.*

I sensed that I had lost my way. Also salient in this experience was my reading of a chapter from Zeus Leonardo’s *Critical Pedagogy and Race* (2005). His characterization of the “active role of whites” (p. 38) in “white racial domination” (p. 37) penetrated deeper than I knew possible. His criticisms of Peggy McIntosh (1988), whose article “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” had previously served as a defining badge on my Girl Guide’s sash of social justice understandings left me reeling with guilt at ever having considered myself a social justice educator. I reflected:
Her article had convinced me, long ago, that I was an unwilling cog in a machine. Leonardo threw a wrench in that when he pointed out that I had done nothing to “choke off the flow of institutional privileges” (2005, p. 37) that I enjoyed. How could I be a cog in a machine and have agency? I needed a new metaphor. But no matter how hard I searched, no new comparison that encompassed what Leonardo had to say comforted me. There was no euphemizing my way out of it. I was no longer an unwitting accomplice in oppression; I was an active, willing participant.

I believe that this was where and when the linear, simplistic story I imagined earlier originated—ironically, I can see now this cover story’s function as a reflexive defense:

When teachers move out of their classrooms… they often live and tell cover stories, stories in which they portray themselves as experts…. Cover stories enable teachers whose teacher stories are marginalized by whatever the current story… is to continue to practice and to sustain their teacher stories. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25).

The story that featured me as an unwitting victim of my own privilege could be told with enough confession to achieve an aura of verisimilitude, while still preserving my identity as one with noble intentions who had been derailed by a system that I did not create and wanted to help dismantle.

While I stated plainly, factually, in my recruitment draft (and again in my presentation) that my internship had reflected what Kumashiro described, I had not actually done much work to recall the ways in which it did. It was so, simply because, like my kindergarten story, I had told it so many times before. It was not until this
Curriculum and Instruction course that I had the time or the impetus to do that work. It was not until I began doing the work that I realized that my story might be more complex than the one that I was so accustomed to telling, the one that I used to define my character, justify my motivations, and guide my future pursuits.

I was at home, alone for the day (a rare occurrence in my present context as a full time teacher and mother of a preschooler and a toddler). I traipsed down the basement stairs and scanned the stacks of totes for the label “Brenda: Permanent Storage.” After sifting through two, I found what I was looking for: my old journals and a shoebox labeled “Paper Memories.”

I hauled the tote up the stairs, opened the lid, and carefully emptied the contents. Item by item, paper by paper, I meticulously combed the memorabilia for narrative treasures. I turned the pages in a school scribbler that I had used as a journal, scanning the entries. If I had been concerned with issues of social justice in my youth, it was not a big enough concern to make the pages (although were a feminist wanting to use my journal as documentation of dominant discourses of stereotypical gender performance and heteronormative behaviours, she would have hit gold). I reached what I believed to be the end of the entries, but thumbing through the remaining pages, I discovered another section. The notes on the pages quickly revealed that this was the journal I had taken with me to a Peer Support retreat in the fall of the eleventh grade. These retreats armed students with information on issues that are too often unaddressed in schools so that they could both understand themselves and their adolescent struggles better and to share what they had learned with their peers. Notes on addiction, communication, and mental illness filled the pages. I was a diligent student even when I was not being graded. There were
two journal entries that were distinct from the other pages. When I began to read them, I was transported back to the small, sparse, sterile room I occupied during my stay at the retreat and the glow of the lamp that had illuminated the paper just enough for me to write late at night when sleep was difficult. While I had vivid memories of writing the entries and the activities of those three days, the words of one entry took me completely by surprise:

_I am so hyped about this whole thing. I wish it were for much longer already. If only there were a world like this, where everyone was equal, not only in theory, but in reality as well. Where all views were welcome and no one discriminated against. I have learned so much and so much that I believe has been backed up. There are no perfect lives and that’s one of the best things ’cause no one’s alone. I am in awe of what this place does for you. I feel welcome and comfortable. I am on an emotional rollercoaster but yet, it’s all bringing me to terms with myself. Everything inside (myself) that I thought was bad, evil, and wrong is okay here. Everyone here is just like me but we’re all different. It’s like we’re a perfect not-perfect race. Our imperfections are what bring us closer. I am happy about who I am, hell, I’m proud. Not pride that makes me better, but pride that makes it okay to be me._

_Everyone here is so deep, as I think everyone is, but everyone here is taking the chance to be. Everything we’ve ever wanted to say but couldn’t we can say now. It’s a wonderful overwhelmingness._
Sometimes I forget just how fortunate I am. It seems kind of cold when I think about it, that my fortune and the realization of my fortune come from other people’s misfortune. You know, my life may have its lows, but God, I am so lucky.

How is it that 17 years ago I had such a clear grasp of the consequences of “norm” and had no problem articulating my white dominance, when just a few months ago, these same ideas seemed completely foreign and shocking? Where had those understandings gone? Try as I might, I could not conjure any familiarity with the words on the page. It was like reading someone else’s journal.

That said, from those pages, I caught a glimpse of my origins as a social justice educator and narrative inquirer. I sat, quiet and alone, I tried to recall what it was about that experience that was so disarming and so “perfect.” How were the leaders of the retreat able to create such a (albeit temporary) utopia of self-acceptance and harmony?

Then, I remembered that each night ended with and each morning began with Sharing Time. Stories. Someone was asking to hear and genuinely interested in our stories. Through these stories, we became connected and human to one another, rather than the stereotypes we had previously imagined. I felt valued by others and therefore came to value myself. In this way, I have come to see social justice education as inextricable from narrative inquiry. As D. Jean Clandinin and Jerry Rosiek (2007) conclude,

Beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorizing of individuals’ experience but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted…. Narrative inquirers study an individual’s experience in the world and, through the study,
seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others. (p. 42)

If as social justice educators we want to make the world more just, we cannot simply rely on the theoretical ponderings of academics about power structures and dominant discourses, we have to seek and attend to the individual stories of the oppressed and the oppressors, labels that, in different contexts can be shared by the same individual. Oppression and inequity are far too complex, too human to be understood or “solved” through generalized theories of power, though they may be helpful, so long as our “ontological commitment” remains “to the lived experience of the individual” (Schaefer, 2010, p. 17). If not, we run the risk of imposing our interpretations—which more often than not are rooted in dominant ways of knowing—onto others and compounding the oppression.

After some initial processing, I powered up my computer and took the familiar path to my Internship folder. Scanning the list of documents, among lesson and unit plans, I found two “General Reflections.” Reading them over, I noticed that I had been preoccupied with my “withitness,” “procedures,” the speed at which I planned, my students’ perceptions of me, and “pacing.” Just as in my high school journals I had been more concerned with playing to my gender role than with social justice, in the first reflection, I was clearly pre-occupied with portraying my own cover story of a “good intern” on her way to becoming “good teacher” as defined by the technical rational paradigm which was the dominant school of thought at the time. While my lesson plans demonstrate that I was toying with critical thinking and topics of social justice, such as in my lessons on the deconstruction of gender roles in mainstream media, I never made it
past what James Banks (2009) refers to as the “Additive Approach” to Social Justice Education (p. 149) or what Ozlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo (2012) call “positioning social justice education as something ‘extra’” (p. 141). Social justice was a topic to be studied, not a practice to be lived.

In my second reflection from one week into my three week block of full time teaching, I made brief mention of “at-risk” students.

*There’s a few “at risks” that Mike [one of my cooperating teachers] has taken the proper steps to get help for. Seeing these students both motivates and discourages me. I want to work with students like that and make a positive difference, but at the same time, I have so little time with these specific students. All I can do is help them to have a positive school experience and hope that it motivates them. I want to build them up in the time that I have rather than tear them down.*

There is no indication that I was actively aware of my dominance and my tone is one of lip-service. I seem to have given up before I even began. I did not have time to “work with” these students (what would I have done with the time if I did have it?), and so all I could do was smile and be nice to them. There did not appear to be any critical awareness of why these students were “at risk” in the first place or how the educational system had contributed to their positions. It would seem to me that I was doing my best to defend my identity as someone who “cares” while at the same time alleviating myself of any responsibility to do anything about the issues I was witnessing. In this way, I was engaged in what Nel Noddings refers to in her exploration of care ethics as “virtue caring” (Noddings, 2012), rather than a “caring relation” (Noddings, 2012). It was about me and my “virtuous acts” (p. 53), not about the relationship in which I was engaged and
meeting the needs of the students. I was “caring about,” the students, and while this is an important first step, as Nodding (2001) notes, “caring about is only effective if it eventuates in caring for” (p.37). I did not even take the time to share what it was about specific students that had me label them as “at risk,” dehumanizing and re-victimizing them in the process. Not a single student story made it into my journal.

But there is a student story I remember. The evidence of it can be found on my Final Internship Placement Profile. The only category that I can recall my specific grade in is “Respect for All Students.” This mark has haunted me all my years as a teacher. On a scale of Poor to Outstanding, I received the mark of “Good,” not “Very Good” or “Outstanding,” in this area. As someone who prided herself on her rapport with students, and someone who prided herself equally on good grades, this was troubling to me. Although, probably more troubling to me at the time was the fact that this was one area where my performance of “good teacher” fell short and I was frightened to be exposed as a fraud. Ironically, a rating of “good” would never be good enough. In explaining her assessment, my cooperating teacher referenced Amy. Amy was a 19-year-old girl who found her way into my grade 12 English class part way through the semester. She rarely attended and when she did, her work was incomplete or, as I perceived it, rushed and superficial. While in the beginning, I tried to be understanding and “accommodating,” I eventually began to feel as if I was being taken advantage of. I remember the feeling that she was always lying to me and I took it personally. When I dealt with her, I did not hide my skepticism of her stories and I always made it clear that her absences were an inconvenience to me. When my cooperating teacher asked me about our interactions and how I had supported her, I was equally dismissive. I am not sure what it was that led me
to give myself permission to behave this way—perhaps it was her age—but I never gave our interactions a second thought, that is, until my final evaluation. By that time, Amy was long gone, a fact that had initially given me a sense of relief that I would no longer be burdened by her. That my cooperating teacher had seen my behaviour and reflected it back to me in my grade was mortifying at first. Later, it was just disappointing. Maybe I was not the person I thought I was.

Returning to my university documents, I wondered what instruction I had received about Anti-Oppressive ways to educate. In my internship, had I been ignoring or unable to implement skills I had been taught? Or was my attention fixated exactly where it had been drawn by my classes in education? Looking through my notes and reflections from my Education Professional Studies Classes, I compiled a list of topics that were covered, and I began to see that Kumashiro’s characterization of teacher education classes was accurate:

- **Types of Instruction**
  - Direct
  - Constructivist

- **PD Cycle**

- **Preparing Instructional Objectives**

- **Describing Student Performance**

- **Activities vs. Objectives**

- **Set & Closure**

- **Management of Student Behaviour**
proactive, high expectations, routines, rules, accountability, focus on offense, not offender, consistency, firmness with sensitivity, positive reinforcement, sense of humour, fairness

- The Effective Teacher
  - rules, consequences, rewards, “The effective teacher manages the classroom; the ineffective teacher disciplines it.”

Besides the reference to “fairness,” there were nothing related to anti-oppressive methods or even any criticism of existing practices. Instruction seemed to be treated as mutually exclusive from issues of social justice and the lives of students in general—a neutral practice. Of course, I must consider the fact that the details I chose to include in my notes were not only a reflection of what was emphasized, but also a reflection of my own understanding of what it meant to be a “good” teacher and a “good” student. As I scanned the files from other classes, I did notice that social justice issues worked their way into almost any assignment on which I had a choice of topic, which would indicate that it was something I felt I could and should explore during my time at the university.

In my requisite Education Administration class, I chose gender-segregated education as a topic for a paper. Arguing against it, my conclusion noted:

The process of change is no longer just about acquiring knowledge of the Other in order to change personal prejudices, but rather it requires critical analysis of dominant power structures in which we all participate. It is upfront and uncomfortable. It requires a change in one of the strongest structures we encounter—perception—and it threatens the existing power structure (in the case of anti-sexism, the patriarchy). The biggest obstacle in implementing this
approach is resistance from teachers and administrators. In order to address that resistance, extensive professional development in this area needs to be offered. Perhaps one of the first “choice” options Regina Public or Catholic School Divisions could offer would be one in partnership with the Center for Anti-Oppressive Education at the university—one that voluntarily adopted the philosophies of anti-sexism. Maybe then we would be closer to an actual solution to the problem of systemic sexism and a way of making “each level of schooling friendlier for each gender” (Kommer, 2002, p. 89).

I was comforted to see that the “me” I remembered—the one who wore her politics in slogans on her t-shirts, attended protests and rallies, and did not go through a day without a good rant or two about oppressive structures, did exist. Reflections from several other classes support this: I was interested in using Drama to promote empathy, and in trying “new methods” to reach students who had not been previously reached. The problem was that my philosophizing remained theoretical and therefore, incredibly generalized. There did not seem to be a bridge between the teacher I was able to imagine myself as within the walls of the university and who I was when I actually entered the classroom. Was this not the purpose internship was supposed to serve? What had I been practicing to be if not the teacher I had envisioned?

After returning from internship, however, my Foundations class that focused explicitly on Anti-Oppressive education attempted to close the gap. My autobiography at the end of the course clearly demonstrates a deepening understanding of the issues at play:
Through this process, I have had to unlearn my self-proclaimed “superhero’s complex” and recognize that I am implicated in all of this and not some neutral bystander. My empowerment has come from the disempowerment of others. My success was contingent upon the adoption of the characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity and whiteness and I still embody those today; as long as I continue to wield them, I will continue to see success, but at what cost? If I want to make a difference, I need to continually interrogate who I am and why. I need to be critical of my own language, thoughts, and actions and work to change them when I see a problem. I may not be able to change the fact that I am a white middleclass woman, but what I can do is change what that means—to me and to the rest of the world.

Unfortunately, the questions I found in a reflection from that same class indicated where I was still struggling to understand what an education focused on social justice might look and feel like.

When teaching about racism in my own future classroom, how do I broach the subject in a way that will not immediately raise backs and trigger defensive behaviour in dominant culture students? What questions can I ask and information can I give that will help students arrive at their own conclusions rather than expecting them to adopt my own? How do I teach about racism without “othering” when I have never been a victim of it? Where is the balance between recognizing how our differences affect our experiences and honouring those differences while recognizing that different treatment will continue to
propagate the divide? Is there a way to create a classroom environment where differences are the norm?

Clearly, my understanding of good teachers being the “keepers of knowledge” is present in the idea that my job was to “teach about racism.” Sadly, when brainstorming questions at the start of the aforementioned Curriculum and Instruction graduate course, seven years later, these same kinds of questions still remained. This time, however, my years of experience afforded me the confidence to move past the paralysis of uncertainty and into action affirmed by a new understanding of my role: facilitator of inquiry.

*Often during our initial readings, my inner monologue was littered with “Yes, but…” s usually pitting my lived experience against the theory: “Well, that’s true in theory, but in a REAL classroom…” Fortunately, I knew the signs of being possessed by the demon dominant discourse and did my best to exorcise it each time it spun its ugly head. Like relearning any skill dusty with disuse, I stumbled a few times before getting the hang of it again. Soon, the language and the critical questions came back to me. The definitions and explorations of social justice provided in the various chapters of Social Justice Pedagogy Across the Curriculum: The Practice of Freedom (Chapman & Hobbel, 2010) helped me to refine my own understandings of the issue and articulate so much of what I believed but did not have words to express. Our readings stoked the embers and it was not long before I was raising issues of social justice in my life outside our classroom. It wasn’t about answers; it was about questions.*

It was at this time that I decided to focus my research on providing purposeful support to an intern with a shared interest in social justice education. I was not sure of what it
would look like and I came to see that uncertainty as a positive thing. I decided to respond to the story that unfolded in the best way that I could hoping that in the end, I would have helped this intern, Lacey, build her own bridge from theory to practice, and more fully equipped her for her journey to become the educator she desires to be. I also hoped it would also help me to build a bridge of my own.
Chapter 2: Narrative Translation

I first read the novel *Unless*, by Carol Shields (2002) in 2007. It is the story of Reta Winters, an author and translator, whose “eldest daughter Norah suddenly runs from the family and ends up mute and begging on a Toronto street corner” (Shields, 2002, synopsis). The only clue to her motivation is the sign hanging around her neck that reads “goodness” (synopsis). At the time of my first reading, I identified strongly with Norah’s character. And while this novel was not my only inspiration, two years later my husband and I named our daughter just that. This novel and its insights never entered consciously into my research process until I began drafting my thesis. Its attempt to “tackle the mystery” (synopsis) of “goodness” resonated with my own quest. As I reread the text, my experiences as a cooperating teacher who had invited the opportunity of guiding a pre-service teacher in her own quest to become a social justice educator, a simultaneous pursuit and troubling of “goodness,” I began to identify with Reta. I was trying to help someone process something that I was still grappling with myself. This aligns with Thomas Barone and Elliot Eisner’s (1997) assertion that arts based educational research “moves to broaden and deepen ongoing conversation about educational … practice by calling attention to seemingly common-sensical, taken-for-granted notions” (p. 96). For these reasons, *Unless* will serve as a reference throughout my research.

What I will set out to do here is a translation of our experiences. Sensory perception, proximity and distance of time and the imprecision of language, heard and spoken, read and written make it impossible for my writing to be anything other than interpretation. Reta Winters is a translator of poetry. Like Reta, I am “a little uneasy claiming [this] as my own writing” (Shields, 2002, p.3), but I am also reassured by the
insights that “translation … is a creative act. Writing and translating are convivial … not oppositional, and not at all hierarchical” (Shields, 2002, p. 3). I will attempt to retell the story that was “written” over the course of my research by referencing field texts, and D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly (2000) highlight the unavoidable nature of translation and its impact in narrative inquiry:

Because field texts are our way of talking about what passes for data in narrative inquiry and because data tend to carry with them the idea of objective representation of research experience, it is important to note how imbued field texts are with interpretation. … To understand what narrative inquirers do as they write field texts, it is important to be aware not only that selectivity takes place but also that foregrounding one or another aspect may make other aspects less visible or even invisible. (p. 93)

But because “certainty is not a goal” (p. 9) in what I am attempting to do, I am able to, as Bateson (1994) suggests, deny the “rhetoric of merely, the rhetoric that treats as trivial whatever is recognized as a product of interacting human minds” and “accept the ambiguity and allow for learning along the way” (p. 235).
Theoretical Framework, Methodology, and Methods

I worked within the narrative paradigm. Because of the focus on critical social justice education, critical theory necessarily informed the study. As previously stated, offering support through a similar theoretical framework is important. In order to do this, I first had to articulate my own positioning. Broadly,

Critical theory deals with practice and perspective, understanding and control, and the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. Its ultimate value commitment is human emancipation. Its intentions are to expose contractions in culture to explain how curriculum perpetuates the socioeconomic class structures and patterns of exploitations and subjugation present in society at large, and to strive passionately and compassionately for a new social order of egalitarianism in schools and society. (Gay, 1995, p. 26)

More specifically, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) define critical social justice as:

A critical approach to social justice that refers to specific theoretical perspectives that recognize that society is stratified (i.e., divided and unequal) in significant and far reaching ways along social group lines that include race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Critical social justice recognizes inequality as deeply embedded in the fabric of society (i.e., structural) and actively seeks to change this. (p. xviii)

Through this definition, I am obliged to:

- Recognize that relations of unequal social power are constantly being enacted at both the micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels.
- Understand our own positions within these relations of unequal power.
• Think critically about knowledge.

• Act on all of the above in the service of a more socially just society. (p. xix)

Recognition, understanding, and consideration of inequality are all important steps toward critical social justice, but each of these definitions require that we “strive,” “seek,” and “act” with an intention to “transform the school system” (Ndimande, 2010, p. 93). As teachers, we are a part of a system that can “exacerbate racial and social inequalities” (p. 96) unless we see that students are treated as “subjects rather than objects in their education” (p.99). As a critical social justice educator, I see my role being an agent for change, change that allows students to move from passive receivers of education to actively engaged participants within our classroom, our school, our city, and our world.

As with any framework, we do not want to “become trapped in the theoretical cul-de-sac of overdeterminism” (Anderson, 1989, p.251). In light of this, I have come to see social justice education as inextricable from narrative inquiry. If social justice educators want to make the world more just, we cannot simply rest in the theoretical spaces. We have to seek and attend to the individual stories of the oppressed and the oppressors, labels that, in different contexts can be shared by the same individual and “add more layers of complexity” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 42). Oppression and inequity are far too complicated, too human to be understood simply through generalized theories of power: “experience is both personal and social…. People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Furthermore, as Dilma Maria de Mello (2007) states, “conceptualizing experience narratively [is] a
powerful way to provoke reflection and transformation” (p. 204). What is it to be a critical social justice educator if not to provoke transformation? Therefore, viewing experience through a critical lens is apt, so long as I am “honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42) and my intention is not to force that experience into predetermined frameworks.

Narrative will help me to avoid “the ‘masculinist voice’ of abstraction and ‘universalization’ … presented by critical pedagogues who assume the ‘correct’ position of ‘the one who knows’” (Alanis, 2006, p. 175) and heed the warnings of “poststructural feminists [who] point to the necessity of attention to local specificity and historical context in the arsenal of analytical tools” (p. 176). The requisite autobiographical exploration of this methodology will also prevent the “relation between teacher/student [that] becomes voyeuristic when the voice of the pedagogue himself goes unexamined” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 312).

Narrative inquiry is both “personal and social” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2010, p. 2) and I do not intend my research to “prescribe general applications or uses but rather [create a text] that… [offers] readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications” (p. 42). As DiAngelo and Sensoy (2010) note, when it comes to anti-oppressive approaches, “there are no easy answers” (p. 98) and I would never presume that my research would yield “a set of quick-fix classroom strategies” (p. 98) but rather present one story of “the practice of critical analysis” (p. 98).
To more clearly define narrative inquiry, D. Jean Clandinin and Janice Huber (2010) state:

Narrative inquiry… is the study of experience understood narratively. It is a way of thinking about, and studying, experience. Narrative inquirers think narratively about experience throughout inquiry. Narrative inquiry follows a recursive, reflexive process of moving from field (with starting points in telling or living of stories) to field texts (data) to interim and final research texts. Commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place create a conceptual framework within which different kinds of field texts and different analyses can be used. Narrative inquiry highlights ethical matters as well as shapes new theoretical understandings of people’s experiences. (p. 1)

The methods of narrative inquiry involve accessing multiple data sources to construct or, in some cases, co-construct a narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). “The two narratives of participant and researcher become, in part, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5) and as such the data consist of both our own personal reflections on events as well as our shared interactions throughout the semester. Specifically, I maintained a private journal in which to document my perceptions of our daily interactions with one another and with students, as well as to process my hopes and fears, and capture my frustrations and successes. As is the expectation of all interns, Lacey kept a reflective journal to document her own learning and experiences. While it was neither an expectation of the university nor me, Lacey allowed me access to this journal during her internship, which was a secure online blog accessible only by password. This helped me respond with more
immediacy to her needs and stressors throughout the semester. I also created an archive of our email interactions, which resulted in some very rich dialogues, spanning both theory and practice. Finally, I recorded three of our pre and post conferences—specific times set aside for both of us to review lesson plans prior to actual instruction and, afterward, to critically reflect on how lessons transpired. So as not to burden or exploit Lacey, each of these sources of data were within the expectations of all pre-service teachers and did not constitute any additional work for her. If at any time she wished to discontinue her participation in the project, Lacey had the option to withdraw consent without my knowledge and without fear of it negatively impacting her internship. In this case, my research would have proceeded as a self-study, and interrogated the process solely from a cooperating teacher’s perspective. Due to the relatively small size of our professional community, I was unable to guarantee her anonymity, however all names other than my own, including Lacey’s, our colleagues, our students, and anyone else who is mentioned in our field texts have been changed in order to aim for some measure of confidentiality.

My goal was to pursue an “exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individual’s experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006, p. 42). These narratives began to take shape after I created one document that moved from one field text to the next, in chronological order. The juxtaposition of my journal and hers, shared emails or conversations and private thoughts, illuminated recurring ideas worthy of further pursuit. These themes, either serendipitously or entirely predictably aligned with the descriptors of the University of Regina’s Internship Placement Profile (IPP)—the evaluation tool that guided four formal
discussions of Lacey’s progress as a pre-service teacher. These descriptors can be found in text boxes at the beginning of each section of chapters four through six. They are intended reciprocally—to frame the narratives that they precede, but also to be reinterpreted in light of the narratives.
Chapter 3: The Landscape

Who I am and where I am positioned on the landscape of this school has changed in both drastic and subtle ways and my relationship with Flagstone Collegiate would be considered rare in many circles—from student (1995-1999) to intern (2004) to teacher (2007-present), from beginning teacher hired “temporarily” to more experienced teacher with a permanent contract, and from a professional with few other obligations to a professional and parent. What follows is my attempt to capture my present position on the landscape and chronicle my journey there. I hope that it will also help to illustrate “the ways in which [my] experience shapes [my] interest in, and ways of constructing, particular research and teaching interests” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 6).

Where I Stand

It is lunch time. I sit at my desk with my daily uniform of a lunch—a protein shake and an apple—beside my open laptop. Prior to having children of my own and embarking on my thesis, I used to eat in the staffroom. My colleagues would often comment envyingly about the homemade soups or elaborate leftovers that filled my lunch bag. Since becoming a mom and a graduate student, I’m lucky if I make it to the staffroom to check my mailbox at any point in the day. Every other week, my classroom serves as an official “Homework Room” where ninth grade students can voluntarily come for help with school work or be volunteered to attend by teachers hoping to get them to complete unfinished assignments. As a member of Flagstone Collegiate’s grade nine team, I am on a rotation of Homework Room supervisors. On weeks when my room is not designated for homework help, many of my grade nine students will still use my room as a lunch room. The actual lunch room is a dungeon of a place located in the
school’s basement, with low ceilings, dim lighting, sloping floors, and asbestos wrapped pipes. My classroom is bright and spacious with windows that look out into our school’s courtyard. I stay to supervise students even though I am not punching the paid-supervision clock. Clearly they feel comfortable here and transitioning grade nine students into the building is the primary mandate of my current position. How could I turn them away? Besides, having an excuse to be at my desk and get a few more minutes of work done during my lunch “break” might help me get home before supper.

Tanya is up at the white board. Alison has her back to me, attentive to the story that Tanya is drawing. I realize that Tanya is attempting to create a map of our midsized prairie city, using only landmarks. Alison, who is likely chauffeured to every destination, is completely lost but trying to gain her bearings. I approach the two of them, inquisitive. Tanya explains that she is drawing a map of all of the places she has lived, much to the astonishment of Alison, who has always lived in the same place. Tanya and I engage a bit in a discussion about her living situation.

“Well, see right now I’m living with Joe and his wife and kids,” she begins by circling the first house she had drawn.

“Oh. And who is Joe?” I try not to betray any concern in my voice.

“He’s a friend of my mom’s. He let me come live with him because I was always over there looking for food anyway. I just have to babysit his kids and I get to stay there for free.”

“How does your mom feel about you living there?”

“Whatever. I’m not sure she even really notices I’m gone.”
Her face and posture convey both sadness and defensive angst as she describes her relationship with her mother, who she characterizes as, at worst, absent and at best permissive, a sibling for whom she feels an undue amount of responsibility and subsequent guilt for “abandoning,” and her search for a “home” with boundaries and structure. According to her, Joe’s house has boundaries and structure in abundance and she’s not sure which she thinks is worse. When the girls ask about where I have lived, I begin to write addresses and dates on the board. It is a list I have never compiled and even I am surprised by the results: nineteen addresses in 32 years. It is at this moment that I realize that I have spent exponentially more time in this school than I have at any of my family’s “homes.”

**How I Arrived Here**

I first walked through the doors at Flagstone Collegiate in 1995. I was a grade nine student, excited about the athletic and leadership opportunities that the school presented me. My parents, however, were less than thrilled about my choice. The school is situated in the core of our city—a neighbourhood that had not yet been deemed desirable enough for gentrification. In a city where it takes 20 minutes or less to drive from any one location to another and no restrictions on schools students may attend, Flagstone draws students from every neighbourhood and social stratum. Echoes of its origin as a technical school in the 1930s continue to reverberate in people’s insistence that it is not very “academic.” Among my peers and their parents, it was reputed to be a violent place and its special programming for pregnant girls and young mothers, no matter how segregated, created fear that teen pregnancy might somehow be catching. My home was just a ten minute drive and a world away—a gated community with an
enviable postal code and some of the most extravagant houses our city had to offer. Both of my older brothers had attended a larger, less economically and racially diverse, more modern looking school with a strong academic reputation. In spite of its negative reputation, though, I saw something different when I looked at Flagstone. The old brick façade and labyrinth-like halls had character and, as we were told in the recruiting presentation that had come to our elementary school, a strong sense of tradition. I welcomed the racial and economic diversity that had been lacking from my pseudo-suburban elementary school. I resisted my parents’ attempts to shelter me and the peer pressure to attend a more “elite” school. I wanted to know and understand the “real” world. It was a “brave” choice, and with two older brothers who continually reminded me that my age and my sex made me anything but, it was a choice I made to prove something.

Reflecting on that choice, I still believe it was the right one even though my reasoning was complicated. During those years, my eyes were opened to so much that I would not have otherwise seen. Flagstone provided me a fertile setting for the origin story of my identity as a social justice educator.

I applied to the Faculty of Education of our local university in my senior year of high school. I initially planned to be a middle-years teacher, just like my favourite teacher had been. However, after receiving my acceptance letter, I began to question whether I still actually wanted to be a teacher or if this foregone conclusion deserved a critical review. My reflection led me to decline my acceptance. Instead, I joined the workforce and moved out of my family’s home. During those two years working various retail and administrative jobs, I began dating the man who is now my husband. At the time our
relationship began, he was in his fourth year of his Education degree, just starting his internship. Each evening, as we swapped stories about our days, I was able to realize that a life of working for the sake of working would never be fulfilling enough for me and that I wanted what he had: the opportunity to work with young people and have a positive influence in their lives. I reapplied to the faculty, this time as a Secondary English Language Arts major, with a Drama minor.

As independent as I had always wanted to be—avoiding association with my own brothers by going to a different high school—I had to accept that, within the faculty, connections were quickly drawn between me and my boyfriend (whom I was married to by the third year of my degree). We might live in a city, but the one or two degrees of separation between those of us who grew up here make it an ever eternal small town. The perks of having someone with similar passions and who had been down this road not long before outweighed the independence I had lost. It did not take long for me to know that the university was a place where I belonged.

I returned to Flagstone and to my grade twelve English classroom for my sixteen week internship in the final year of my degree. Even though six years had passed, many of the same teachers were still on staff and many of the same traditions were still hanging on. It felt like home and this coming to understand a familiar space in a new way was, I imagine, as comforting a context for which an intern could hope.

After completing my degree, that comfort was promptly disrupted as my husband and I accepted teaching positions at an international school in Cambodia. I had never traveled outside of North America and the majority of our extended family lived within an hour’s drive, meaning my little world was about to get a lot bigger. The school was
small, with only 275 students from kindergarten to grade twelve. I was the only English teacher in the high school and there was no official curriculum of which to speak. What was there was a lot of literature that told a fairly clear story of what had been taught before. Class-sets of hardcover “classics” lined the bookshelves. Every author was white. All but three were male. Every single one was long dead. Each grade was assigned readers that guided students step-by-step through the elements of fiction, literary devices, and poetic forms. The Teacher’s Guide came complete with “correct” answers to all of the end-of-unit questions. Grade eleven was designated American Literature. Grade twelve, British. The students were quick to inform me of how smart their previous teacher was, as well as of their hypothesis that a new teacher like me could not possibly know as much as he did. Here I was, faced with students whose passports spanned most every continent and even their own measure of my competence would be how well I was able to colonize them through literature. And so began my fight.

At the beginning of class, I gave sticky notes to half my students and told them to write their names on their desks. Then, I invited them into the hallway where I inform them that I will allow them to purchase a second desk for five dollars (that I will pay to the current occupant of the desk) as long as they play along with what I do during the rest of class. They all eagerly agreed, sensing that I am up to no good and that they are on my side. After seizing possession of the rest of the desks, my eight, deskless students are forced to set up camp at the back of the room on some spare chairs. From that point on, I ignored the eight displaced students, which was difficult considering I had chosen the eight most vocal as my targets. I only ran air-conditioning for the front half of the class and only asked
the opinions of those students in desks. To my dismay, the displaced individuals were only slightly annoyed by all of this. Wayne, the Social Studies teacher insisted that this was due to "flow" the alternative to fight or flight when it comes to dealing with change. These students were simply adapting to the new situation and accepting my authority. Damnit! So after discussing my predicament with Wayne over break, I upped the ante. I got my purse out to pay them the five dollars they had been promised, only to discover I had no money. They then asked if they could have their desks back, and I said no, because they now belonged to someone else.

"Why do they need two desks?!!"

"I so knew you weren't going to pay us."

"Can I just have my desk back?"

I got very antagonistic in my retorts, telling them to suck it up and quit whining when I wasn't cutting them off completely with my lesson.

Once they were mad enough, I had their leader, Hank, read a section in our texts about the Delaware tribe and the eighteen treaties they signed, all of which were broken. I then informed them that of the over 400 treaties signed in the US, every single one of them has been broken in some way or another (a fact gathered from Wayne). I told them to think about how angry they were over five bucks and a desk and then imagine it was their home and their children's futures that had been stolen. I related it to the French in Cambodia and the British, Spanish, and French in the rest of the Americas. Hank suggested that “might is right” and that had other people been as civilized, organized, and advanced as
colonial powers, they would have been able to defend themselves. Survival of the fittest. Not exactly the lesson I was going for.

My attempts to “enlighten” my students were met by resistance that, at this point in my career seems entirely predictable, especially in light of my “guns blazing.” My second week there, an American student stood up called me a Socialist (with a capital S) mid-lesson. It sounded like the dirtiest word that ever came out of his mouth. My lessons were invitations for him and others to share anecdotes about lazy, drunk, poor “illegals” who abuse social assistance and just sue someone every time they need some money. The missionary parents had meetings to try to figure out what they were going to do about me and the fact that my silent reading library included novels that opposed their morals. It took weeks of sleepless nights and constant anxiety to figure out that without a relationship, without trust or respect, I was not going to teach these kids anything. My first kick at the social justice can missed fantastically, replacing my post-under graduate hubris with new teacher hesitance.

While my classroom remained some kind of colonial bubble, almost impervious to the larger socio-political context, my time spent in Cambodia was the kind of experiential enlightenment I needed. Inequality does not get more visible than it was there—trailer loads of young women riding through city traffic to get to their garment factory jobs, little girls playing in the streets outside of brothels on “slow” nights, begging children reporting back to their “masters” with the day’s earnings, contaminated water flowing through every pipe, signs warning of landmines lining the dirt roads in the provinces, government officials climbing into their luxury vehicles… While my dominant position in Canadian society had allowed me to explore inequality as a largely
theoretical issue, with brief glimpses into the lives of “others” who were “affected” by it, there was no hiding it here. Being of a minority for the first time in my life (make no mistake, it was an incredibly privileged minority), I became intensely aware of my race and its cachet as police officers pulled us over looking for bribes and taxi drivers charged us three or four times the local rate. It was hard not to feel helpless. It was impossible to delude myself into thinking that I was doing or could ever do enough to make up for the privilege accrued in my life and that I had worked to protect. Social justice education seemed much more urgent an endeavor.

In 2006, our second year, we had to decide by December whether we would stay a third year or go “home” in June. It was a difficult choice. We had made many friends and were finally in a position where we felt somewhat competent navigating life in Phnom Penh. Another year of savings was tempting, but not enough to keep us there. Just a month after making the decision to leave, I vividly remember sitting at the computer and reading an article published by a Canadian national news magazine that characterized a neighbourhood in our home city as the worst in the country. It detailed the poverty, violence, and substance abuse in graphic ways and while it angered me to read such a one-dimensional depiction of this place and the people who lived there, it also helped me to reframe my conception of Canada and the work that needed to be done here. There was no excuse for anyone to be living in such conditions in a country that annually boasts its ranking on the list of best countries in which to live. Things needed to change and I knew that education would be at the heart of that change.

That spring, after reapplying to the city’s only public school division, I was genuinely and pleasantly surprised to receive a job offer at Flagstone. It made my
reintegration to Canada so much easier. The old saying that it is not what you know, but who you know rang true in this case and I was still connected to enough people with influence in the building that I was able to get the job without any more than a superficial two question interview over a poor phone connection. It was as if no time had passed, as I returned “home” to the same classroom from my internship and my senior year as a student, only now my name was on the door. Even though many of the old traditions were gone because so many of our staff members had transferred or retired at the same time, it still felt like home. The new people and the new traditions were what were out of place. There was never any question that I belonged—a privilege that I am aware is not experienced by every student or teacher who comes into this building.

Today, the school’s reputation still stands with those hailing from my old neighbourhood. For many of Flagstone’s students, its “sacred story”—stories through which “our sense of self and world is created” (Crites, 1971, p. 295)—is one of the perpetual underdog: fiercely proud of what we accomplish, but rarely storied as a legitimate place of learning by other students, teachers, and community members who have little or no experience with our building. Just as I did all those years ago, many of my middle and upper-middle class students describe the way they must defend their choice of school, trying to shake the unfair labels, and attempting to get outsiders to see the merits, rather than the limitations, of diversity. Ironically, many students who come from lower socio-economic status (SES) neighbourhoods have chosen Flagstone because it is not as “rough” as other schools. The same school that is perceived as a danger to over-privileged students is a step-up for those who are marginalized. Both of these stories likely originated for the same reason.
Flagstone is as close as a student in our city can come to a desegregated school and an ideal location for social justice education. Diverse is certainly the first adjective that comes to my mind when I am asked about the school. We offer specialized support programs for a wide range of student needs. The school’s English as an Additional Language program draws students from many communities in our city and countries from around the world. I previously mentioned our pregnant and parenting teen program that serves students from all over the division and strives to provide these young women and their children with all the resources they need to be healthy and successful. The Aboriginal Advocacy program seeks to draw awareness to and action around the issues faced by our First Nations and Métis students. We offer a variety of technical and shops classes alongside Advanced Placement classes (for the attainment of university credit) in a variety of subjects. As a staff, we are always seeking ways to re-engage students who are struggling to succeed. Here, inequity is not something to be studied from a safe distance in the abstract. It is certainly not something that can be ignored. It is present in every classroom and every hallway every period of the day.
Chapter 4: A Place to Imagine

After conducting the research throughout my semester spent with Lacey, the pre-service teacher who was assigned to me by the University, I spent considerable time mining data from our journals and the transcripts of our conversations. Recognizing that inquiry is an act within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then become a part of future experience…. If experience is continuous, then the initial parameters we set up for our inquiries are themselves a form of relation that can and should be questioned in the course of ongoing research. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 41)

While there were innumerable ways to select and organize, foreground or dismiss the details found amid the hundreds of pages of raw data (and I tried many), I finally decided to organize our stories using the descriptors of the Internship Placement Profile (IPP)—an assessment tool provided by the university in the Internship Field Manual (2013) to monitor the progress of interns and, ultimately, to evaluate them at the end of their sixteen week internship. Four times throughout the semester, we reviewed this document, and its descriptors served as the framework for assessing Lacey’s professional goals. The IPP looks very similar today to what it did eight years ago when I interned, but a close reading reveals the addition and revision of several criteria designed to trouble the idea of teaching and learning as politically neutral practices. One descriptor specifically, “Knowledge of Social/Historical Contexts of Injustice” asks that an intern “consistently and thoroughly integrates the historical and social context of injustice/inequity (e.g. sexism, racism, colonialism & ableism)” (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 133). This marks an important shift in the culture at the University of Regina. In the fall
of 2005—just following my spring convocation—new students to the faculty entered a “renewed teacher education program” (Cappello, 2013) that worked to address a number of “Overarching Themes,” one of which was Anti-Oppressive Education:

anti-oppressive education is at the heart of the changes and direction offered through a renewed Core Studies. "'Oppression' refers to a social dynamic in which certain ways of being in this world—including certain ways of identifying or being identified—are normalized or privileged while other ways are disadvantaged or marginalized. Forms of oppression include racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ableism, colonialism, and other 'isms.' Anti-oppressive education aims to challenge multiple forms of oppression.”—Dr. Kevin Kumashiro (Center for Anti-oppressive Education)

This conscious shift from the technical rational approach in which I was educated in my professional studies classes to this relational approach is indicative of an attempt to actualize anti-oppressive practices in more authentic, transformative ways. In many ways, I expected that as a student from this renewed program, Lacey would be better prepared than I was to realize critical social justice education as a way of knowing and teaching rather than simply as a topic to be taught. In addition, renewal named indigenization of teacher education as equally necessary to these pursuits:

Indigenous Content and Perspectives - This theme can be understood within the context of the positioning of Indigenous content and perspectives within all Saskatchewan curricula, a Provincial mandate to do comprehensive treaty education, and the cries nationally for residential school education. Core Studies offers students insights into why they must teach with attention to these realities
and how they might consider taking up this content / ways of knowing. (Cappello, 2013)

As arguably the most contentious issue of oppression in our province, this acknowledgement of treaty and residential school education, as well as indigenous ways of knowing as integral to all teaching and learning takes a firm, contextualized anti-oppressive stance in what used to pass as an objective, apolitical field.

Just as this shift at the university sought to integrate these themes throughout pre-service teachers’ education, we sought to integrate them throughout her time in the field. Though I think the intention of the “Knowledge of Social/Historical Contexts of Injustice” descriptor is clear—that social justice perspectives be integrated throughout the intern’s practice, it would be conceivable for a cooperating teacher content with the status quo to skim over the criterion about and to grade each of the other areas as mutually exclusive from it. For educators who embrace the principles of critical social justice education, though, this descriptor brought a heightened awareness of social justice issues to every part of the IPP. As a cooperating teacher who was trying to grow and improve in her own practice, I also found myself applying the various criteria to my own practice each time we reflected. Through this reflection, I came to recognize, in context and in relation to one another, our students, and our school landscapes, both the limitations and possibilities of this document. Because of the intention and influence of this document, I have organized my research and our stories around the descriptors we found most challenging and most revealing about our progress as individuals, as a part of a team, and as a part of a larger system.
It is important to note that in this narrative I have used the descriptors to organize both of our experiences, and not as a tool of measurement. While I was obliged to evaluate Lacey at the completion of her internship, these stories are not an attempt to do that. They are an attempt to story an otherwise story-less space:

We take for granted that people, at any point in time, are in a process of personal change and that from an educational point of view, it is important to be able to narrate the person in terms of the process…. We assume that the curriculum, the formulation of objectives and the measurement of achievement will bear these narrative histories in mind. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 30)

This choice was not made lightly nor without consideration of the tensions it created—tensions of power, temporality, and reductionism. And while any structure imposed upon a narrative is inherently limiting, “the attitude in a narrative perspective is one of doing ‘one’s best’ under the circumstance, knowing all the while that other possibilities, other interpretations, other ways of explaining things are possible” (p. 31). These stories illuminate much more than just descriptor under which they have been organized, but this organization allows these categories to be troubled and explored as landscapes of interpretive possibility. In addition, I was able to avoid the temptation to construct a predictable plotline—one in which an intern arrives, inexperienced and naively hopeful, makes mistakes foreshadowed by the all-knowing cooperating teacher, and after modeling herself after her mentor, leaves better prepared for her own practice.

These descriptors are not only used by the university to determine if an intern has passed his/her internship, but also by potential employers to help determine the quality of a candidate—an objective standard against which to be measured. Here, however, I hope
to demonstrate the subjective and the relational that are inherent within them, within the experience of internship and teacher practice. If ever a teacher felt comfort in these descriptors—that they were a solid place on which to stand in their evaluation of an intern’s practice or measure of their own—our experiences documented here should alleviate them of that. Instead, I hope that if discomfort arises, if their taken-for-granted notions of “good” teaching are troubled, that these stories can give them a “place to imagine” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2010, p. 42) something messier, less certain, and less limiting. A place to imagine something expansive.

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<tr>
<th><strong>Encourages &amp; Supports</strong></th>
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<td>Encourages individuals to do their best. Fosters development of a positive self-concept. Fosters development of positive attitudes toward others &amp; the school. Sets challenging, but achievable goals. Shows confidence that students can achieve goals. (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 134)</td>
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Even as teacher education programs raise issues of social justice with pre-service teachers, the opportunities for them to practice their skills happen within the existing school structure—one that is inherently oppressive in its practices (Kumashiro, 2004, p.1). Cooperating teachers who may have had little exposure to this paradigm “co-construct and inform student identity” (Miller & Norris, 2007, p. 157) and can be the greatest catalyst in conformity to the profession. As Kumashiro suggests, the pervasive belief that teacher education students must “first learn the ‘basics’” (pp.11-12) and then James Banks’s (2009) “additive” approach to issues of social justice at best ignores and at worst actively denies the inherent oppression of our existing system. As a cooperating
teacher, I greatly fear my role in assimilating a pre-service teacher into a system of dominance—one I struggle to resist myself.

As I am sure many cooperating teachers would admit, I was completely unaware of existing research about supporting pre-service teachers in their learning. Fortunately, prior to our experience, my advisor supplied me with a variety of texts written about supporting beginning teachers. This unique pairing for sixteen weeks is not always an easy relationship and while every cooperating teacher and every intern hopes to find a kindred spirit, that is not always the case. In Tensions and Triumphs, in the Early Years of Teaching: Real-world Findings and Advice For Supporting New Teachers, Susi Long, et al. (2006) affirm, that supportive colleagues are “particularly important” (p. 120) in the early stages of a teacher’s development. They continue by identifying that “consideration given to theoretical orientation” (p. 143) is a significant factor in the success of a mentorship relationship. Thomas M. McCann, Larry R. Johannessen, and Bernard Ricca (2005) echo this sentiment in Supporting Beginning English Teachers: Research and Implications for Teacher Induction. By using social justice as a touchstone by which to consistently reflect, engaging in a critical analysis of the curriculum, the content, our own teaching methods, and our interactions with each other, our students, and our colleagues as we moved through the semester, my intention was to create a space, within which a pre-service teacher would have the freedom, support, and encouragement to pursue the aims and goals of social justice education (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009; Banks, 2003; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter & Grant, 2009) and to avoid assimilation into the dominant discourses so pervasive in mainstream education. Making visible the invisible at such an
early juncture in a new teacher’s career could help to “liberate” (Friere, 1970/2006) his/her practice from the strictures of the status quo.

Offering this encouragement and support was my promise to Lacey, and keeping that promise was on my mind from the moment I met her. What follows are excerpts from our journals and conversations (both in italics, Lacey’s voiced noted by a change in font), organized thematically using the descriptors from the University of Regina IPP, which is found in the University of Regina’s Internship Field Manual (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013).

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<th><strong>Communicates &amp; Monitors Expectations</strong></th>
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Well, this part of the story has officially begun. I met Lacey today. She had contacted me last week and after a few tentative emails, we agreed that she would come by and meet me this afternoon. I tried not to over-think our meeting, which led to me not thinking about it at all until she arrived. It was an awkward start for me—I showed her our team’s three classrooms and the book room. Then we came back to my classroom for conversation. I showed her a document that showed the units that we had covered this year and all the skills. I did my best to explain what we do and how we do it, but mostly felt like I rambled. She asked a few questions about what I teach and what she might be teaching. I told her what I know. In the back of my head I wondered if I shouldn’t hold back because sometimes partial information is worse than none.
I agreed to email her as soon as I knew when our team would be planning for next year so that she could be included. I also asked if we could meet one day over the summer after my Social Justice class to talk theory in that way. She agreed.

I tried to get a bit of her “story.” She attended a local Christian college for... 2 years? before going to the university and then was there for a little while (a year?) before she was accepted into Education. She is married and got married when she was 21. I shared that Chris and I were married young when I was in school as well.

At the end of the conversation, I let her in on some of my concerns—that the power relationship worried me a little because I never want her to agree to something to do with the research for the wrong reasons.... I also did my best to communicate to her my excitement for this project and let her know that I want this to be a successful experience for her—one where she gets the learning she needs and where she is able to start her career on the right foot—get to know the right people, help her be known in the school.

In my narrative inquiry class last week, [another grad student] mentioned that she now tries to think of communication in terms of her intention and the intentions of others (i.e. “Why did they just say that?” “Why did I put it that way? What was I trying to accomplish?”). Reflecting on my intentions for the meeting and what I communicated: I wanted Lacey to feel comfortable. I wanted her to know that I am excited for this opportunity and I wanted to keep her fire of excitement burning. I wanted her to feel like I was a calm, trustworthy,
knowledgeable coop who would treat her as an equal. I wanted to start things on a positive note.

At the end, she reflected my positivity back to me and said that she wanted me to know that she was so excited for the opportunity. When she left, I feel like she left with a bounce in her step.

While it was awkward at times, as I rambled and was unsure of what to say or where to go with it, I think it was a positive start and reflective of where I am with my understanding of narrative and social justice: uncertain, but committed and excited. (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, May 28, 2012)

From the start, I tried to be very forthright in my communication with Lacey. The degree to which I was successful varied. I wanted to be transparent and openly critical of my own practices, assumptions, and interactions, but of course I would need to be consciously aware of all of them in order for this to happen. In hindsight, our meeting could have occurred in a neutral location; it could have been less about the school (the topic about which I was the “expert”) and more about getting to know one another. In spite of my missteps, I was trying to be the “kind, nurturing… colleague who shared [her] passion for continuing to learn and grow” (Long, et al, 2006, p.120). In this case, the efforts appeared to be well received and reciprocated. Between June and August prior to the commencement of internship, we exchanged over 30 emails and dialogued through comments on her unit plans, created as shared documents online. By the time we attended Internship Seminar, a three-day experience co-sponsored by the University of Regina, the Saskatchewan Teacher’s Federation, and the Ministry of Education designed to establish
a strong working relationship between cooperating teachers and interns, I felt we had a great rapport.

So far, working with Lacey has felt very natural. I wonder about this level of comfort and what it means. I suppose that so far, as we have not done any actual teaching or had to challenge any existing practices, I have not felt out of my element or expertise. Certainly, any comforting experience is so because it confirms for me what I already know/believe. So what has this affirming experience looked like?

Lacey and I interacted primarily over email and comments in online documents (her planning) over the summer. Any questions she had, I felt I could answer. Any concerns I had, I felt I could voice. I did my best to remain ever aware of our power relationship and qualified so many of my responses to assure her that my thoughts were not to be taken as “right answers.”

At the internship seminar, we were able to get to know one another better in person. We found that we had many things in common, but also discovered some differences in our personalities.

Her maturity, insights, and understated expression all give me great respect for her. My personality tends to be bolder—at times to my detriment, I’m sure. I think my activism will become more refined and more nuanced if I follow her example in this sense.

I wish I would have written it down, but during our group’s discussion of Social Justice, she expressed her concern about her ability to practice Social
Justice Education as a white educator very eloquently and was incredibly perceptive about her relationship with students.

We discussed our feelings of ambivalence with regards to the concept of “good teacher.” While we recognize that common sense notions can be problematic and construct oppressive relationships, we questioned the alternatives and expressed frustration at “bad” teachers (ones who do the bare minimum, ones who do not engage with students, ones who do more harm than good). Reflecting on this discussion, what I did not do was raise the question: How do we think “bad” teachers get that way? What is it about the nature of the profession that encourages such behaviours? Would our common sense “solutions” to these problems (more supervision, merit pay, etc.) actually fix anything? Could changing the system inspire change in our teachers?

...I am left wondering if Lacey really has found our interactions as easy as I have. I wonder, too, what I have missed. I am still doing most of the talking and need to ask more questions of her—for her observations and ideas. (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, August 29, 2012)

This conscious focus on communication and the heightened awareness of the power relationship between us was necessary practice for my future interactions with students and dialogues with Lacey about enacting social justice education.

Communication in education can too often be one-sided and an expression of power. For students to genuinely learn and not just perform the script that was written for them, they must have the opportunity to genuinely participate. For them to be empowered in their
educations, they need to have a voice. Once again, my choice of methodology harmonized with this intent:

Narrative inquiry is… a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds. In the process of beginning to live the shared story of narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4)

More regularly now, I am able to catch myself in these imbalanced interactions and take action to correct it. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012), assert that

Understanding social justice means that we must be able to recognize that relations of unequal social power are constantly being negotiated at both the micro (individual) and macro (structural) levels. We must understand our own positions within these relations of unequal power. We must be able to think critically about knowledge. And most importantly, we must be able to act from this understanding, in service of a more just society. (p. 145)

Lacey demonstrated a keen understanding of these relations from the earliest stages of her planning and I did my best to affirm for her that she was on the right track. An email exchange we had in July demonstrates her desire to “act from this understanding” but as much as her university education had tried to prepare her for the diversity that is commonplace in our schools, she was still experiencing the same kinds of anxieties about teaching a diverse student body as Geneva Gay observed teachers experiencing 40 years ago: “Among the fourteen apprehensions expressed by white teachers toward black students are a lack of understanding of their interests, life styles, values, and language, lack of confidence in their own abilities to handle prejudices and other racial problems”
Hi Brenda,

I'm trying to get the feel for what big ideas the students should walk away with. I need to pour over the curriculum outcomes and match them to my own ideas as well. I was thinking of doing a pre, during, and post progression linking the cultural ideologies and world views to the texts that we view. I thought it would be interesting to have the students take a kind of pre-test to find out what they know before delving into the unit. 

_I love this idea. I am too often guilty of assuming/presuming what my students do/don't know/feel/believe and usually end up eating a little crow for that each semester._

I am nervous to teach to the Aboriginal students in the class. The last thing I want to do is come across as the "white teacher who knows all about a culture she really knows nothing about."

_Sometimes I wonder about our universe.... I read this email and then said, "I will respond once I'm done with my readings for tomorrow's class, when I can focus on it." Literally 5 pages into my reading (which I was only going to skim because I've read Kumashio before), I read this... (L. Steele & B. Baisley, Personal Communication, July 7, 2012)_.

I was then able to share with her an excerpt from _Against Common Sense_ (Kumashiro, 2004, pp. 67-68) in which Kumashiro addresses her exact concern, ending with this point:

_Imagine if the incomplete knowledge we have of our students was a part of what gets discussed in the classroom. Imagine if the limits of our knowledge get_
discussed in ways that teach students about the partial nature of what and how they are learning? (p. 68)

I shared my own experiences as well:

_It’s okay not to know everything. When the importance of reaching Aboriginal students has been emphasized in the way that it has (and rightfully so), that obligation can become overwhelming—especially if we remain in the hypothetical and are still desiring certainty or right and wrong answers (something I still struggle with). Your frustration comes from the best place—a place of wanting to do right by your students. The fact is, being Aboriginal is one aspect of these students’ identities. It is one that needs to be attended to, but attending to it is more about asking questions than having answers. We do not know what it is like to be Aboriginal. Personally, I also do not know what it is like to be male, poor, hearing impaired, gay, EAL, etc. Each of our students is different from us in one way or another (some in more significant ways due to oppressive forces, others in more privileged ways). Let’s be sure to carve time into what we do and our assignments to ask for and listen to student stories so that we can better understand the complexities of their lives and serve our individual students as best we can keeping in mind oppressive forces that may be at work in their lives._

_I used to take for granted that I can reach my female students effectively because I am female, however, actual experience has shown me that the experiences of being female range so broadly that to assume a "sisterhood" of shared experience is faulty and can actually silence those who have had_
experiences other than what I believe is "norm." While we have to attend to a wide range of voices in the content of what we teach (though we can never get to them all), and how we teach (asking students to question critically not only content, but our own approaches to learning), we do not have to be experts on the infinite complexities of identity. One student's experience of being (insert race, gender, sexuality, ability, age, religion, etc. here) is not going to be shared with others. We need to let ourselves off the hook a little in terms of being keepers of all right answers and wear our uncertainties for our students to see (so much easier for me to say in my seventh year of teaching and with a permanent contract keeping me employed). (B. Baisley, Personal Communication, July 9, 2012)

Lacey’s response to my reply helped me to see that I was on the right track in terms of my support for her.

Hi Brenda!

… First off, your replies to my last email were extremely helpful. I really needed to hear that students’ identities are not only their culture, and that we have so many different influences that impact who we are. That helped to take a load off of my mind. I also think that it's important for teachers to admit that they are not the "beacon of knowledge" that they perhaps used to hold themselves to in the past. As we are in such an age of information, I question whether it's possible for anyone to truly be a "professional" at anything, because there is no way for us to physically get a hold of all the information on a given topic. I’ve had some people tell me that I would lose control in my classroom by being fluid and letting my students know that no, I do not know everything, and yes, please
question and challenge what I’m teaching you, but I truly believe that
teaching is (or should) be moving more toward that. I also think it puts
some accountability on the student to be the pursuer of her or his own
knowledge, as well as emphasizing critical thinking (a rather important
skill in this day and age), rather than just regurgitating information.

(L. Steele, Personal Communication, July 24, 2012)

This early and vulnerable communication on both of our parts built a strong foundation of
trust on which we were able to build a strong teaching partnership that sustained us and
made us each more confident in our attempts to practise social justice education. I hoped
that by bringing in research and sharing my own mistakes that I was modeling that I was
not, nor could I be, nor did I desire to be, the expert on everything. I wanted to give her
permission to do the same and to let go of the pressure to perform as such.

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<th>Demonstrates Theoretical Competence</th>
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<td>Is able to articulate the theor(ies) that inform their practice. Makes their theoretical intentions explicit. (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 133)</td>
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Over the summer, I was engaged in a three-week Summer Institute—a condensed,
daily graduate class that focused on Anti-Oppressive education—and during the fall
semester, I was completing a Directed Reading course based on the recommended
readings from a class designed to bridge theory and practice in critical social justice
education. This immersion in educational philosophy that aligned with critical social
justice education augmented my ability to support Lacey in meaningful, relevant ways.

Many of my readings were, appropriately, foundational. Jaime Alanis (2006)
provided an overview of critical theory through the juxtaposition of key theorists’
conceptions of its terminology. Reading the varying definitions of the terms, which are
used frequently in literature in taken-for-granted ways, helped me to clarify my own positioning.

More clearly defining the terminology allowed me to see areas where my practice is in line with my beliefs and areas where the chasms are wider than I knew. Drawing attention to Henry Giroux’s (2001) “language of possibility” (p. 77) affirmed for me the purpose of my research:

Critical pedagogy needs to explore in programmatic terms a language of possibility that is capable of thinking risky thoughts, that engages a project of hope, and points to the horizon of the ‘not yet’…. one in which the imagination is redeemed and nourished in the effort to construct new relationships fashioned out of strategies of collective resistance based on a critical recognition of both what society is and what it might become. (Giroux, 2001, pp. 77-78)

The idea of “the horizon of the ‘not yet’” resonated, too, with my evolution as a critical social justice educator in that I no longer believe that critical social justice education is a static destination at which I will arrive once I am sufficiently knowledgeable, but rather a continual process in which I will always be engaged. “Not yet” was what took seeds of nihilism and replaced them with hope.

I tried to share these understandings with Lacey in ways that would support her. Following her interim evaluation, a process that can be daunting to pre-service teachers, we had the following email exchange:

I actually got some time today to reflect on our discussion yesterday and some time to do some reading. The following quote from Alanis’s (2006) How
Much Are You Willing to Risk? How Far Are You Willing to Go? *resonated with me*:

As Freire asserts,

dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and recreation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. (p. 89)

In addition, Freire states, “Nor yet can dialogue exist without hope. Hope is rooted in men’s [sic] incompletion, from which they move out in constant search—a search which can be carried out only in communion with others” (p. 91). Last, for Freire, true dialogue consists of “thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved” (p. 92).

(Alanis, 2006, p. 169)

*I did feel that hope and love were at the root of our discussion. I also believe we tried to do a lot of naming. Reality as process, not static entity is also something I have been coming to terms with in my research. Yesterday’s discussion was very rewarding for me and I think that is because I have come to recognize it as praxis rather than looking at it as an attempt to reach some unreachable destination. I hope that you left our reflection on your IPP and goals*
yesterday feeling as optimistic as I did. (B. Baisley, Personal Communication, October 18, 2012)

Her reply:

I feel like love and hope was at the root of our discussion yesterday as well, which was so very encouraging to me, too. I feel really comfortable talking to you about things that I am questioning and your feedback has encouraged me and also given me places to get a footing in terms of research and things you've done in the past, etc. (L. Steele, Personal Communication, October 18, 2012)

Our relationship of teaching and learning has been a reciprocal one. Not only was I more conscientious in my planning and aware of my execution because of the audience and our explicitly stated endeavor, but watching an educator with similar passions and a different approach helped me to see my own methods in a new light. Not even a month of the school year had passed when I noted this in my journal:

Lacey has already had a major impact on my teaching. The first source of this has been my desire to model for her, in whatever ways I can, practices that keep issues of social justice and power in mind. Her presence has also encouraged me to plan using this lens.

The second way that Lacey affects my teaching is much more active on her part. In the same way that she so masterfully gets students thinking without interrogating, her gentle ponderings invite me to question myself. The other day, she wondered about how students felt about the gendered term “guys” (a term I use so often that my daughter refers to her father and me in terms of “Hey
guys!”). We informally polled some students who said they found it to be a gender neutral term. Lacey then went on to share with me about a paper she had written on the issue and since then, I have been much more conscious of my usage and corrected it when it has slipped. From content to my approach, to my reflections on my lessons, that social justice minded critical questioning is there. I am in no way espousing my skill level, but this level of consciousness is what I feel has been missing from my practice in earlier years. (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, September 26, 2012)

Purposeful support had led to purposeful reflection on my own practices. Herbert Marcuse’s (1972) assertion that “the revolution involves a radical transformation of the needs and aspirations themselves, cultural as well as material; of consciousness and sensibility; of the work process as well as leisure” (p. 16) drew attention to the fact that I had yet to truly step outside of the economic box in which I have been socialized. How often do I urge my students down the well-worn path of education for the sake of work and work for the sake of consumption? In fact, baiting students with this conception of success was my lowest common denominator.

“I just don’t get why we have to do this? Essays are dumb.” I’ve lost count of how many times I have heard this complaint.

“Being able to organize your ideas is an important skill for everyone.”

“Yeah, but why do I have to do it about a book? Seriously, when am I ever going to have to write an essay after high school?”

“Maybe you won’t, but to get out of high school, you have to know how to write one. And if you don’t get out of high school, what kind of job opportunities are
you going to have? Who do you think is going to pay your rent and your cell
phone bill if you’re making minimum wage?”

Ironically, this was the way I tried to coerce disengaged and disenfranchised
students into compliance. “Because this is the way it is” implies that “this is the way it is
and always will be.” This is not to say that I should “[pretend] that gatekeeping points
don’t exist” (Delpit, 1995, p. 39), but that I should find more explicit ways to tell students
“that their language and cultural style is unique and wonderful but that there is a political
power game that is also being played, and if they want to be in on that game there are
certain games that they too must play” (p. 40). It was not long before I had the
opportunity to share Marcuse’s paradigm-shifting notion with Lacey.

Following the introduction of a unit set to explore past and present texts created
by First Nations and Métis peoples, Lacey solicited journal responses to gauge student
attitudes, understandings, and prior exposure to issues she would be tackling. She then
created a lesson to respond to common themes that arose from the assignment. One of the
themes was, “How is this going to get me a job?” She had a response prepared that
effectively addressed the question head-on and did a fine job of explaining how cultural
awareness in the workplace is beneficial for everyone. I challenged her to offer her
answer, but also to reframe the debate, to challenge students to consider alternative
purposes of education and alternative goals for themselves as individuals. She accepted
my challenge and for at least one moment, in one lesson, in each of three classes, 75
students were given the space to imagine liberation from the very limited definition of
success education had so far offered them—a small, but significant step toward praxis.
While I was passingly familiar with culturally relevant pedagogy, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a) and Evelyn Young (2010) provided clarification. I was in the same category of so many of the teachers in Young’s study, “Challenges to Conceptualizing and Actualizing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy”: equating my ability to define, in isolation, each of the three words in its title with understanding the theory. I was able to make many connections to my present teaching context while reading these two articles. First, I was drawn to the fact that culturally relevant pedagogy is “specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 160) as I believe it works to combat expressions of whiteness and the discourse of “individualism” Julia R. Johnson, Marc Rich, & Aaron C. Cargile (2008) identify as a barrier to challenging racism and other forms of oppression in the classroom (p. 116). As someone who is always looking for different angles from which to approach the topic of critical social justice education with my colleagues, I was next struck by Ladson-Billing’s (1995a) assertion that “culturally relevant teaching requires teachers attend to students’ academic needs, not merely make them ‘feel good’” (p. 160). This idea of “watering down” our instruction in the name of self-esteem has been a common criticism of so many suggested changes to practice in the school, in the division, and in education more widely. I began reading with the purpose to determine if culturally relevant pedagogy might be a framework that I could persuade even the most reticent members of my staff to consider trying to actualize in their classrooms. The fact that the teachers catalogued in her study all practiced very differently, that “some seemed very structured and regimented…. Others seemed more open or unstructured…. Still others seemed eclectic - very structured for certain activities and unstructured for others” (p. 162) gave me
additional hope that the various teachers in our school might find it palatable. As for those of us who would not take much convincing, I also recognized that we had too often relied on an “overemphasis on cultural competence” (Young, 2010, p. 253) as the key to dealing with marginalized students, which betrays the “pervasive issues of power, privilege, and prejudice” (p. 253) among us.

My desire to extend my critical social justice reach beyond my own classroom is compelling. As an educator, I am keenly aware of the power and influence I wield over students and that this power and influence is amplified exponentially if I am able to influence my peers. While the nagging suspicion that ego, ambition, or the defense of privilege or “goodness” might be lurking behind my “good” intentions never quite goes away, and I am deeply troubled at the idea of becoming another well-intentioned white woman who does more harm than good, I refuse to be paralyzed by nihilism. No matter our paradigms or politics, educators impact learners. We can reinforce or we can resist; we can objectify or we can emancipate. There is no neutral ground on which to stand, and while every action we take can be problematized in one way or another, a critical approach to social justice education “can help teachers and researchers collaborate in creating the language of possibility… and classroom pedagogy geared toward equal opportunities” (Ndimande, 2010, p. 93). If I am transparent and strive to (and encourage others to) create a space that “would encourage students’ questions…. [and] help students develop their intellectual and emotional powers so they are able to use this knowledge to reflect on their everyday experience and relations with the broader social structures” (p. 98) then I am channeling the power—that my privilege has given me access to and my
dominance has made use of—to and through my students for them to wield in their own ways.

I happened to read Young’s (2010) article at the beginning of the school year, at the same time as every employee of the school division was called to gather to hear a message from the Director of Education. She gave us our mandate to increase graduation rates, particularly those of our First Nations and Métis students, but also our English as Additional Language learners, (to levels she even admitted were likely impossible) and we were chastised for the excuses we had made in the past. She informed us that she was done with the attitude of “why we can’t” and wanted only to hear about “how we can.” She equated French Immersion programming within our division, a program, she argued, in which we take much pride, to teaching EAL learners—something we perceive, quite wrongly in her opinion, as a challenge. With no mention of racism, poverty, or other forms of oppression, her PowerPoint presentation bared an uncanny resemblance to the one described in Young’s article—certainly her “overtone … was one of urgency to close the gap, not necessarily to question it” (p. 253). Discussions would surely follow in our staffrooms and staff meetings and my desire to bring some critical thinking to the discussion strengthened.

Young’s summary of Christine E. Sleeter’s (2001) and Geneva Gay and Tyrone C. Howard’s (2000) criticisms of pre-service teacher preparation for culturally relevant pedagogy (Young, 2010, pp. 257-258) as well as the assertion that “not enough is being done to extend ongoing support to practitioners who have accepted and are willing to implement scholarly theories into their pedagogy” (p. 3) drove me in two directions. The first was to deeper understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy and critical
methodologies as they might apply to our school context and in our classroom. The second was to finding articles and learning opportunities that would help me to support Lacey in facilitating class discussions designed to help students “challenge issues of power and openly confront racial and social injustices” (Young, 2010, p.249).

One of the most valuable experiences we shared was a trip to Saskatoon in October to listen to a presentation by Dr. Deirdre M. Kelly entitled Teaching for Social Justice: Valuing and Supporting Teachers. The two and a half hour drive there gave us time to debrief our present context. We discussed students, extracurricular activities, the politics of school, and our personal lives. The two hour lecture was a form of research in which we were simultaneously immersed. Hearing the stories of other educators engaging in similarly spirited work but in very different contexts and equally different ways was rejuvenating. The two and a half hour drive home allowed for us time to imagine new ways of enacting social justice pedagogy.

Brenda and I went to a Social Justice Education talk in Saskatoon on Thursday. I found the examples of what people are doing really interesting. The ones that jump out at me are the math teacher who got the students to draw out the ratio between school equipment and students in an impoverished school, then relating it to schools located in “better areas”. A social studies teacher did a sweat-shop simulation where students played different roles. Another teacher was disturbed when a group of students were afraid of homeless people, so they did a novel study about a homeless father and son. In an EAL setting, a teacher allowed the students to journal in their own language, and do translating. They created collaborated storybooks, where the images were
agreed on and the stories were in different languages. Parents were invited in to speak in their native languages.

I really enjoyed the thought of simply looking at the class and seeing where the needs are, and then challenging the students where they need it. Some things I’ve seen in our grade 9 class is segregation between EAL students, white middle class students, First Nations students, and impoverished students. The divide is clear. If we made it so these kids actually got to know one another, how would things change? I think it’s a really good idea to think of the class as something that can be researched, to take data collection on, and to try to bring in stories and people and circumstances that will help the students to view others and human beings much like themselves. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 13, 2012)

This shared pursuit of a common goal—bridging theory and practice—renewed my raison d’etre as an educator, as a mother, and as a citizen who wants to work, parent, and live with integrity, but that heightened awareness also brought heightened criticism.

As I continue to read more about culturally relevant pedagogy and critical race theory, I vacillate between feeling like a fraud and forgiving my inadequacies, instead of celebrating my efforts. As I read and make notes, I often beat up on myself for not knowing more, not waiting until I was more knowledgeable before taking on an intern for whom I am supposed to be offering “purposeful support.” I have flashes of myself modeling what I have come to understand is the antithesis of critical social justice education. I see myself in front of the students, oblivious to their level of engagement, allowing content to supersede relevance. I hear the
words that have come out of my mouth in meetings about students—words that lacked empathy, words that were dismissive and demeaning, words that were judgmental and self-centered. I recall my lack of critical questioning about why students have failed to retain what I have “taught” and letting myself off the hook because “I did my job,” but they have failed to do theirs.

When I am done admonishing myself, I allow myself to recall the other moments, the “sustaining moments.” I catch glimpses of myself, putting aside my lesson

I love you. Norah. (Chris and the kids just got home. Norah came running into our room, where I am writing this and asked if she could “write some letters that I want her to write.” I said, “Sure, honey, just let me think of what comes next...” and she said “I love you?” and I said, “Yes. That is exactly what comes next.”)

and instead giving students space to share what is on their minds that day. I think about the ways I have challenged the dominant norms and discourses, avoiding heteronormativity in my language, challenging students’ “common sense” assumptions about gender and race and sexuality and ability. I recall the moments of sitting in discomfort, unsure of what to do or say next and being ok with that. I consider the emails I have sent to my colleagues and administrators, inviting them to consider things as I am—with this critical lens. I hear myself reflecting to Lacey on my own mis-steps, urging Lacey to continue down the path she is on even though it might be difficult, helping Lacey to actualize her vision. That’s when I remember that I am not seeking a state of being. My job is to model
a process, regardless of where I fall on the continuum of critical social justice educators, my job is to show Lacey how to continue to grow into the educator she wants to be, not to be the perfect educator. There is no such thing.

... I should note that as my professional identity aligns with my values and beliefs, so do the other aspects of my identity. Digitally, I try to be provocative in the same ways I do in the classroom, sharing and posting about things that challenge the status quo. While I try to choose my battles, I do spend time thoughtfully responding to others’ posts in the hopes of troubling common sense assumptions. As a parent, I do my best to teach my pre-schooler to trouble those same assumptions she brings home from daycare and be critical about the world in which she lives. “Girls have to marry boys” “Boys can’t wear lipstick” “I want to have long hair, like a princess” “Why is her skin brown?” “Why do people do bad things?” I try to point out her privileges, being explicit about needs versus wants and essentials versus luxuries and avoid meritocratic discourses (If you work hard, you will be rewarded vs. You should work in a way that you can be proud of). When she asks tough questions, I try not to jump to easy answers and instead try to get her to question more deeply, resting in uncertainty. I encourage my children to play in ways that counter gender prescriptions. I dress my son in his sister’s hand-me-downs. As a partner, I encourage my husband (also an educator) to use his position to bring critical awareness to his staff. On evenings when the kids are asleep, we will often engage in discussions about politics or share our critical observations from the day. This weekend, we stayed
up until midnight, collaborating on a draft of the educational policy for a provincial leadership candidate of our political party.

There must be a word for what I am experiencing. What is the opposite of dissonance? Consonance? Not a consistent consonance, as in, “I have achieved this zen state of equilibrium in praxis”—there are still plenty of areas of discomfort—but consonance between who I would like to be and who I am becoming?

If I relate it to music—piano specifically—with my left hand being theory and my right hand being practice, I am hitting the right notes at the right time with both hands more often. It’s not to say that I don’t ever hit the wrong note or experience discord, but I suppose it feels like I’m getting the hang of it. And even though it is a simple tune that I am playing at this point it still feels rewarding and I am hopeful that I can conquer more difficult pieces in the future. Perhaps this metaphor is the one I have been looking for... I suppose what is lacking is that there is no song to learn by rote. My practice is eternally improvised. (B.Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, November 18, 2012)

Lacey seemed to settle into a similar acceptance of the state of social justice educators:

More and more I come to realize that social justice education is never an achievable thing. There is always something to work toward. Making teaching culturally relevant is something that Brenda has been focusing on and I have been lucky enough to be passed some articles and she has read me some information on it. Just as I feel that I might be gaining in one area, there is quickly something else — and not that it is a surprising thing for me. It is a bit disheartening at times, challenging at
others, and inspiring at others. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, November 22, 2012)

Elliot Eisner (1983) related this lack of predictability to embracing the “art and craft of teaching”:

the idea that the skills of teaching can be treated as discrete elements and then aggregated to form a whole reflects a fundamental misconception of what it means to be skilled in teaching. What skilled teaching requires is the ability to recognize dynamic patterns, to grasp their meaning, and the ingenuity to invent ways to respond to them. It requires the ability to both lose oneself in the act and at the same time maintain a subsidiary awareness of what one is doing. Simply possessing a set of discrete skills ensures nothing…. Humans … learn to improvise within a changing field, whether in the classroom, the board room, or the principal’s office. (p. 9)

His confidence that we as teachers are not simply equipped, but designed, to fill “the space between the theoretical frameworks and scientific findings we get from educational research and the concrete realities that we face on the job” (p. 10) encourages hope in my critical social justice praxis.

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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates a caring professional manner to all children regardless of developmental level, intellectual capacity, appearance, health, exceptionality, socio-economic status, gender, religion, race, or cultural background. (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 133)</td>
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I would concur that:

we lack complex understandings of how individual, family, community, school, and societal factors interact to create school failure for some students. It is much
easier to explain students’ failure by looking at something internal to the students than endemic in this thing we call school culture. (Ladson-Billings, 2006a, p. 106)

The perspective that “children who experience academic difficulties (especially those from culturally and linguistically low-status groups) require some form of ‘special’ instruction since they obviously have not been able to succeed under ‘regular’ or ‘normal’ instructional conditions” (Bartolome, 1994, p. 174) is certainly reinforced by our school structure. This dangerous pathologizing of the individual leaves us believing symptoms of greater systemic issues are actually the problem and that here are solutions that lie in behavioral or medical treatments. These children are labeled “at risk,” which is a problematic term as it creates a passive voice around the topic. There is an action (the putting at risk) without interrogating who or what is responsible. These students’ vulnerabilities do not stem from individual deficiencies, but from systemic ones. For the purposes of this discussion, within the current context at Flagstone, the term “at risk” means students who are likely not to pass a class and is often, though not always, connected with irregular attendance. Our present intervention model for “at risk” students—which I need to state has been created by engaged educators who really do want what is best for students and who are working within a larger structure over which they have very little control—is to pull them from class to get them caught up if they have not been attending or handing work in. This way, they remain in the deficit position and teachers are able to continue with their plans. If that does not work (and students have not yet dropped or been pushed out), we remove students completely from mainstream classes and assign them, instead, to “work at your own pace” classes where two teachers attempt to meet the multitude of needs of these students—hunger, poverty,
addiction, depression, etc.— and try to get them to meet some curricular outcomes as well. I have been told on more than one occasion by an administrator that “re-inventing” what we do for all students is a waste of energy because we are ignoring the fact that “it works for 80% of our students.” If we could just create programming for the other 20%, it will all add up. Of course, I have never debated the definition of “works” or had any meaningful discussion of why the 80% and 20% continues to fall along racial and socioeconomic lines, beyond, of course, the fact “that social inequity originates with sociocultural deficits and not with unequal outcomes that are inherent in our socially stratified society” (King, 1991, p. 133) much less in our schools.

In many staffroom and staff meeting discussions, members of my staff (myself included) have been quick to deem students’ refusals to adopt our cultural expectations as disrespectful, and until these readings I had never considered that my approaches in the classroom would be perceived as “irrelevant, dismissive, and disrespectful” (Knaus, 2009, p. 134) or worse, violent or silencing (p. 138) to students. I had simply accepted the dysconscious belief that learning to put up with irrelevance was a necessary skill for survival in our world and one I was responsible to teach. Here, I was as guilty as any of “[cloaking my] cultural understandings as correct behavior without acknowledging those of the students” (Ladson-Billings, 2006a, p. 108). Students in our alternative programs are given instruction on “school ready behaviours,”—“a type of instructional ‘coddling’ that mainstream students do not require in order to achieve at school’ (Bartolome, 1994, p. 181) but not in a way that acknowledges these behaviours as cultural or is critical of their assumptions. In my experience, we attempt to resocialize these students while simultaneously throwing our hands up in the air about teachers who still attempt to teach
in the style of Public School Way Back When (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 219). Students who are “at risk” of failure—First Nations and Métis, English as an Additional Language learners (referred to as English as a Second Language learners in other literature), learning disabled, poor attenders, and those with behavioural issues—are timetabled into the classrooms of teachers who are perceived as flexible and understanding. After all, there is no use trying to change those teachers who have no interest in changing and why would we punish these students by putting them in classes like that?

And what of the teachers who believe “schools can also serve as sites of transformative possibility” (Alanis, 2006, p. 171)? I know well enough that this belief is not sufficient when the vast majority of such educators graduated from teacher education programs (and have taught their entire careers in institutions) which embraced and espoused “academic, social efficiency, [or] developmentalist” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, pp. 217-218) traditions. So long as these paradigms continue to frame our discussions, we will not see real change. Or as Eisner (1983) put it, “The theoretical windows through which we peer circumscribe that portion of the landscape we shall see” (p.7). Lacey experienced the limitations of these paradigms first hand when teaching a senior level arts class. This class was a large interdisciplinary class taught by two teachers. Lacey and another intern helped with the class as well. Within this class, there were a group of students—who the teachers referred to as “the boys”—who were perceived as disrespectful and deficient. While both of the teachers had long histories with these students, histories marked by discipline issues and confrontation, Lacey did not. Her position as intern left her in an uncomfortable, vulnerable spot, unable to speak up about what she saw.
... overall they’re a very jokey, personable group, and it’s hard for me to not fall into the jokey, personable older friend role instead of the “I’m-going-to-point-my-finger-at-you-and-tell-you-to-grow-up” role — which, honestly, I see from the other teachers when they interact with this group. “The boys” are always being reprimanded. Always. I feel bad for them. It might be why I’ve wanted to take them under my wing a little bit, which I know they’ve appreciated. However, I also worry about my professionalism, and since I am only 6 years their senior (man I’m old), others could interpret my personability being that I am too casual. So that has been a bit of a battle in my head. Likeability with students only goes so far. Overall, I am their educator and however I treat students should be in a way that maximizes their learning. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 25, 2012)

The young man at the centre of the issue was the student that Lacey referred to as Z. His greatest success in our building was simply that he was still there. No one in his immediate family had ever graduated high school. He grew up in poverty and violence. His older brother was in prison completing a sentence for murder, another brother had dropped out. When he did attend class, he was often disruptive. His language and behaviour rarely resembled the middle-class norms expected in a school setting. Lacey sensed that Z was deliberately trying to make her uncomfortable and she wanted to find a way to bring an end to the behaviour before it got any worse. While she was encouraged by one of the teachers from the class to be authoritative in her response and the Vice Principal assured her that he would support her by dealing with it himself, she wanted to make sure that the outcome was one of seeking understanding, not punishment. She
discussed the whole process in her journal, and in spite of her position as a pre-service teacher, she was able to achieve an outcome congruent with her philosophy.

Yeah, I spent a bit of time in the VPs office. It felt a bit uncomfortable. What is it about offices that make us out of place? So this is what happened. There’s a trio of boys in [the arts class] that I have spent a fair amount of time with. While other groups are very independent and do not require a lot of help, this group engaged with me — and they also (well, two members of the group, Z and J) are not very motivated. They have told me that they are taking the class because it’s an easy credit. Over time, I’ve spent time trying to motivate them, but also talking with them and getting to know them a little bit. Over the past week I have noticed Z treating me more and more like a peer. He told me that he’s 19. He asked me if I wanted to go out for a smoke (jokingly, for the most part). He started talking about partying. Then yesterday he got really inappropriate … I told him to stop and that it was inappropriate, but he took it as more of a joke. Even when I walked away, they still laughed. I felt as though that group was not viewing me as a teacher, and more than that even, I worried about my reputation in terms of if someone else walked in to that conversation. I do want the students to speak to me about personal things, but not inappropriate things. Anyway. I talked to Brenda about it. [A teacher from the class] walked in, so we three talked, and [the teacher from the class] insisted that we go to the principal immediately. I felt pretty nervous about it, because, after all, I know this kid doesn’t like school and that many teachers don’t like him and I want him to succeed. We talked to the VP, then to the Aboriginal Advocate,
and had Z in. It went very well. The VP did the majority of the talking. They addressed it as a not-very-big issue but something that could cross a line and become a big deal. Half of the time was spent praising him for his good grades. Afterward, without prompting, he apologized to me.

... I hope that we can maintain a positive teacher-student relationship. He seemed to get it, and be aware that he did cross a few lines. [The Aboriginal Advocate] said that he “saw him” get it. That was a good sign. I felt really supported! (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 16, 2012)

In a later discussion, we reflected further on how the ongoing treatment of Z and other marginal students in this class had bothered her.

L: …just the treatment, the view I see them having of Z, J, and B. I felt like by putting them all in a group together, [the teachers in the class] knew [these boys] wouldn’t do well as a group together and it’s setting them up for failure. There’s another two kids, E and another one—they’re always together—and they don’t know English well and they visually stick out because they are minority students and they’re together as a group and I feel like it’s a segregation thing. … That kind of frustrated me. And always referring to the FN kids in the group as the boys, so we’d have like The Boys and Z was always the terrible one and I felt like they were always expected to fail and that was that.

B: And I think [one of the teachers] openly said that, “We’re just going to let Z fail” and she said that to [an administrator], so...
L: Yeah. And I mean, I came in fresh to the situation and I haven’t had to deal with him for years, so that’s also different. (L. Steele & B. Baisley, Personal Communication, October 30, 2012)

Here, the crossroads of intersectionality that complicated Lacey’s attempts to actualize her identity as a social justice educator are visible. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) define intersectionality as the “reality that we simultaneously occupy both oppressed and privileged positions and that these positions interact in complex ways” (p. 115). In this situation, Lacey was, in a position of power over a student who had used the gender dynamics between them to make her uncomfortable. The male Vice Principal, wanting to help, had assumed a paternal role by offering to deal with the situation on her behalf. As an intern at the school, Lacey lacked experience that would afford her the security to be able to approach her colleagues about the dynamics she perceived as oppressive. In the end, she had to accept the fact that, until she was in a position of greater influence, she could only control her own actions and interactions.

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<tr>
<td>Excellent listening skills. Sensitive to feelings &amp; needs of others. Culturally sensitive &amp; responsive. Demonstrates empathy for colleagues, administrators, or parents. (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 133)</td>
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In the same way that when conflict arose with students, we tried to consider why and what was truly behind it, I tried to encourage her to do the same for her colleagues. Following the previously mentioned circumstance with Z and her other cooperating teachers, Lacey’s ability to recognize her partial understanding of the situation created a space for her to sympathize with them. Acknowledging that these colleagues were products of a system with a deficit view of unsuccessful students and had been looking
for “solutions” to the “problems” this student presented for four years without success re-humanized them where viewing them strictly through a critical lens would have left them one-dimensional agents of oppression. We further discussed the dynamics that had contributed to the conflict:

B: *It is and I think it goes to show, too, in terms of your position on the landscape and your theoretical position. I see it and I’ve had a ton of these same kinds of discussions with my Advanced Placement kids that in group work—when you’re one of those kids who always shows up and always does their work and you end up in a group with someone who you are supposed to help rise to the occasion and they are unwilling or absent participants—the frustration that can come from that! And I think most people who become educators have been in that position and are perhaps overly sympathetic to it without being critical of it.... In [this arts class], if you are not self-motivated and self-directed, it’s tough. You don’t have time to teach those kids [who are missing skills or lacking motivation] when you have 60 kids who are there right now... I don’t know. I guess I can see through the lens through which they are looking. If you do come from the view that other kids are being punished by these kids—it’s a deficit view for sure.... there is a level of accountability that they expect and it comes out of a place of desiring excellence, but I don’t know if there’s a lot of critical questioning of it. I don’t know. ... You are in a relatively powerless position within it.... That’s a tough place to be in. Choice theory is—you’re the only person you can control. You can control your interactions with those kids and you can’t control your colleagues*. 

Because of the code of ethics, you certainly can’t disparage those colleagues; you
can have professional conversations with them and, again, I do think you need to pick which battles you fight at which time… think there are different ways of handling it and when you move into your own practice and you move into a staff and there are going to be different ways that you make relationships and sometimes it will be about letting go and sometimes it will be more “This isn’t ok with me and I am going to step up and do something.” I think it’s important to acknowledge that you haven’t been there for the whole picture and maybe it didn’t start this way. I wondered, too, to what extent are each teacher’s use of power, positive or negative—to what extent is it a consequence of the degree of control they feel they have in their teaching context. So if teachers are feeling that they don’t have the freedom to do what they want to do or how they want to do it—to what extent do they then pass it on to their students—I don’t feel power upwardly so I am going to exert power on them. I don’t have control over whatever else is going on and so it’s a subconscious turn to the students to say “You’re going to do what I say.” I was wondering about that because if you’re in a situation where you feel like there’s so much that you’re not controlling and you perceive that students should be within your control, taking your frustrations out there. (B. Baisley, Personal Communication, October 30, 2012)

When considering students’ and colleagues’ behaviours, I try to view them through a choice theory (Glasser, 1998) lens. I was first introduced to choice theory during my field placement (time spent in a practicing teacher’s classroom) in my first year of education. My cooperating teacher invited me to join her at a Restitution workshop. Restitution, an approach to discipline developed by Diane Gossen (1996), asks
teachers with “traditional methods of discipline” (p. xiii) to consider a paradigm shift and instead of using punishment, guilt, rewards, or other forms of coercion to control student behaviour, teaching students to “become self-directed, self-disciplined and self-healed” (p. 43). Restitution acknowledges that people’s behaviours are influenced by three internal motivations—to avoid pain, for respect or rewards from others, or for self-respect (Gossen, 2004, p. 24). It also identifies five basic needs that must be met and teaches that these needs left unfulfilled are the source of the behaviour problems (p. 103). Those five basic needs are: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun (p. 104). These five needs are drawn directly from Glasser’s (1998) choice theory, which states that “the only person whose behavior we can control is our own” and that “all we can give another person is information” (William Glasser International). With these fundamental beliefs in mind, I tried to frame our colleagues’ behaviours so that we would remember that all behaviours arise out of a context—whether or not we are aware of it and whether or not the individual is consciously processing it.

I tried to look critically at my own relationship with Lacey—questioning which needs I was trying to meet or were being met through it—and my relationships with others on staff. While I had found an ally in her, I wondered again about the power dynamics at work. I also considered the optics of our relationship and other colleagues’ view of me.

*Truly, this relationship I have developed with Lacey is a place of respite for me.*

*As I allow my identity as a critical social justice educator and activist to seep out the door of our classroom, into the halls, the staffroom, and my team interactions, I encounter tensions. Relationships that had previously been easy—whether close*
or simply cordial—are now strained. I don’t know if this feeling is reciprocated, but for me, my increasingly critical awareness has caused interactions that I wouldn’t have thought twice of previously to sit in my gut. The echoes of conversations with my colleagues gnaw at my critical consciousness. I pick my battles, certainly, and try to be diplomatic in my questioning of my peers. I don’t want to be militant, but I also don’t want to compromise my own integrity in the name of pleasing others. Having an ally who positions themselves similarly (that is not to say that we always view everything the same way) means that I don’t have to feel like the “lone nut.” While most of our discussions are about our own practice or theory more generally, it is powerful to be in the position to validate and be validated.

Lacey said yesterday that she hasn’t felt any pressure from the larger school structure. She acknowledged that likely because her teaching and interactions have gone on in our space and I have given her that freedom, she would not know what there was to fear. She then articulated that she was afraid of that—that when she is out on her own, that she will encounter resistance and not know how to handle it. I am hoping the confidence she develops in this experience will help in that area, but I am worried that her experience is somehow inauthentic in this regard. Have I sheltered her too much?

Rereading this journal, I am channeling Brene Brown (2012) and her work on vulnerability. I am wondering if I will come off as too needy and therefore unprofessional. I am concerned that others may perceive my relationship with Lacey as one where I am using her to boost my ego or as a
nodding sidekick. That by cataloging our successes that I am trying to fabricate something that isn’t there or prove a previous hypothesis right. These fears clearly stem from an archetype of teacher as objective professional and of intern as empty vessel. I am questioning my status as “good teacher.” It also stems from the residue of positivism that I am working to cleanse.

I know that this story could not have been the same with someone else. Had another intern have been assigned to me, this story would be different. Had this have had to wait a year, the story would also be different, because even I would be a different character. I am telling this story as honestly, as vulnerably as I can. No doubt there is room for analysis of my flawed character, but I am satisfied that the relationship we have built is authentic. (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, October 31, 2012)

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<th>Consultation/Referral</th>
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<td>Recognizes personal limitations for dealing with unique needs or situations... (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 135)</td>
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Lacey’s insecurities about being a white educator teaching First Nations and Métis content, led her to consult with the Aboriginal Advocate, Brayden, and the school’s Elder in Residence, Tom. These two individuals serve a multitude of functions within our school—from counseling students and organizing events to collaborating with teachers and collecting data on student progress. Because our school serves a proportionally high number of First Nations and Métis students in our city—students who are over-represented among “drop-outs” and under-represented come graduation—our school created the role of Aboriginal Advocate to better understand the issue and what we could
do to improve outcomes for these students. Lacey’s journal makes visible the unspoken anticipatory angst and ambivalence many educators feel when approaching topics about which they do not feel they have the expertise or even the right to teach.

I am really excited to meet with the Aboriginal Advocate about my First Nations unit. I want it to be as authentic as possible. I’ve sent him an outline of the unit and we are going to meet next week. I feel kind of intimidated by him, as he is a very well-known staff member and is known for being funny — and also because I so badly want to come across as someone who is a FNMI advocate and not a silly privileged white girl. If there’s one thing I feel ashamed about, it is that. I hate the image of the white man or woman going into make everything right and to “solve racism”, and yet I struggle with wanting to do exactly that. When Kony 2012 was at its peak of popularity, I remember talking to a fellow pre-intern about this very thing. I was saying that I was annoyed at the image of “white America” going to go “make all things right in Uganda” because Uganda obviously couldn’t do it for themselves. But at the same time, I believe that people who are living privileged lives (whatever ethnicity or background) have the obligation to take some of that privilege and share it. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 4, 2012)

In the journal entry that followed the meeting, she seemed empowered to move forward in a way that honoured the spirit of what she was hoping to teach.

Today I met with the Aboriginal Advocate and the Elder .... We had a really positive discussion. [The elder] made me nervous a bit when he started talking about the reverence behind some of the names used in storytelling, and that some stories are reserved for only certain people to
say, etc., but later on I talked with Brayden [the Aboriginal Advocate] and he made me feel better about it. “You’ll learn. You just have to have confidence. The majority of teachers don’t do storytelling for the same reasons as you: they’re scared. You just have to do it.” Tom talked a lot about the holistic approach, and that the purpose of the stories is to make human beings into better human beings. I like that. He talked about making it all about the student, and making it fun, and allowing them to express themselves in ways that they’re interested in. What I’m really excited for, potentially, is the final project. They got me thinking about how [it] could be about the students doing storytelling about their own lives, own morals they’ve learned, or reflecting on the month of the unit they have experienced. I am hoping that I can work with the students and get some ideas from them, and possibly have the students put on a little evening or lunch-hour to show their work…. There are a lot of details that would need working out, but it would be a great demonstration of learning. (Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 19, 2012)

In a discussion of Evelyn Young’s (2010) article “Challenges to conceptualizing and actualizing culturally relevant pedagogy: how viable is the theory in classroom practice?” Lacey was able to identify that while she was not an expert on First Nations or Métis cultures, nor was she well versed in the ways her students were impacted by racism or other forms of oppression, that excuse only carries one so far.

L: Probably what struck me was “culturally relevant pedagogy as being about ‘questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society’” (p. 128). She recognized, however, that teachers were often unprepared to discuss
issues of social and racial inequality mainly because they lacked the awareness of ‘the larger sociopolitical issues . . . that impinge upon their students’ lives’ (Ladson-Billings, 2006b, p. 37).” (Young, 2010, p. 252)

And I was thinking like how unprepared I feel about that. And when I was talking to Brayden about storytelling, I said “I’m nervous. I don’t want to breech some kind of traditional custom and do something wrong” and I asked him for some advice and he said, “You know what? Everybody who comes in here about storytelling says that to me. You just have to do it.” And so it made me think about this as well and that no matter where I’m at, whether I have a great worldview or not, or whether I know the issues that are actually going on in the community, trying to bring them up anyways… (L. Steele, Personal Communication, October 30, 2012)

In regards to culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (2006b) states, “doing” is less important than “being.”… Culturally relevant pedagogy is one of the ways of “being” that will inform ways of “doing.” I have suggested that our responsibility extends beyond the classroom and beyond the time students are assigned to us…. In a very real sense, the question is not how we do it but, rather, How can we not do it? (p. 41)

Lacey realized that confidence would only come from experience and giving herself permission not to be the expert on every topic.

L: And I think it’s even in places that I don’t know, if it gets to that point, then just saying that to the students—that I don’t have that knowledge but being open enough to be able to have those discussions anyways instead of shying away from it.
B: And no one kid in the classroom is ever going to have all that knowledge either, right? And so modeling for them how someone with a partial understanding of the world comes to have a greater understanding of the world, never a complete understanding of the world, that’s what all of us are doing, right? But if we trick the kids even if there was a way to cram and prepare and be totally ready, you’re selling the kids a very false image of “My teacher knows everything. My teacher holds the power.” There’s an unrealistic expectation set up for the kids that they will have all the knowledge and when they don’t, that’s their excuse to not… “well, I don’t so I’m not going to try.” I think that there’s so much more to be learned in modeling that. It’s not easy. It doesn’t always feel comfortable to do it! (laughter from both) But sitting here in the comfort of the coffee shop, I think that’s an awesome way to teach! (laughter continues)

(L. Steele & B. Baisley, Personal Communication, October 30, 2012)

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<th>Uses Multiple Perspectives &amp; Indigenous Ways of Knowing</th>
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<td>Integrates multiple perspectives (i.e. intern is purposefully controversial.) Integrates a variety of world views in content &amp; instructional approaches centres indigenous ways of knowing. (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 137)</td>
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The first time Lacey encountered resistance to her teaching, it was in her use of an anticipation guide and in journal responses from students that were designed to extract prior knowledge and existing attitudes which grade nine students had toward First Nations and Métis content. The predictability of their responses did not make it any less frustrating or disheartening for her when she encountered them. At this time, I had not yet read Johnson, Rich, & Cargile’s (2008) article “‘Why are you shoving this down our throats?’ Preparing intercultural educators to challenge performances of White racism”
and I was hesitant to offer advice on how to deal with it when she came asking. I knew my position of power as a mentor might cause her to stop looking for other answers and I was keenly aware that my lack of successful experience in this area meant that I was as much of a novice as anyone. Instead, with Lacey’s permission, I asked another cooperating teacher/intern pair to join our conversation. This cooperating teacher also happens to be a Ph.D. student whose primary focus is student conceptions of whiteness. We each took turns discussing possible action Lacey could take, but no definitive action was determined other than the fact that she knew she had to do something. That night, I read the article and was able to forward it on to her at a time when it was immediately relevant. Her action, then, was to “[mirror] to students their responses to classroom dialogues about race” (p. 130) through a PowerPoint that identified recurring themes (i.e. “This isn’t Social Studies!”, “Why aren’t we learning about other cultures?”) and gave statistical feedback about their responses to the Anticipation Guide in a bar graph. I must admit, even though she was doing everything she could to be guided by research, I was still very nervous for her. I interrogated this unease in my journal and tried to separate my own past experiences from Lacey’s present:

It was Sunday night when I was able to look at the presentation. While tone is difficult to read in such texts, my perception, based on the thoroughness of her responses and the rhetorical questioning, was that she was quite defensive. I was proud of her ability to use the curriculum in defense of her practice, but for the first time in this process, I was worried for her. My concern stemmed from a vision of her taking too defensive a stance, and parents getting involved. While I knew that everything in her unit plan was sound and would be supported by our
admin, I was worried that a negative interaction with parents would shake her confidence and cause her to be hesitant in the future. No doubt I was projecting my own experiences as a first year teacher onto her. (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, November 6, 2012)

My first teaching position was as the high school English teacher at an international school in Cambodia. Only three or four months had passed since I wrapped up my post-internship course on anti-oppression and I was ready to fight the good fight. My first major decision was to build a silent reading library in my classroom to bring some diversity to the dead white guys (and three dead white women) that lined my shelves. I chose texts using the American Library Association’s recommendations, not only seeking racial and cultural diversity of authors and characters, but also to represent diverse sexualities. Aware that the missionary families might have problems with that, I sent a book list home and asked that parents make me aware if there were any titles they did not want their children reading. Instead of the rational discussion I had naively expected, I was faced instead by two angry parents (one of whom was also a colleague) who were acting on behalf of a whole contingent of Christian parents who had held special meetings to decide how to take action. Their mandate was clear: get the books off the shelves, or get me out of the classroom. While I had the support of my administration, the attack left me weary of parents and controversy to say the least. Seven years later, the echoes of this experience still make my heart skip a beat when I pick up the phone to call a student’s parents or when I see a phone message waiting for me at school. While the racism and resistance to Indigenized education are real and present where we live and
work, my feelings of anxiety about Lacey’s approach likely had more to do with me than any real danger she faced.

In my comments, I cautioned her to use the knowledge in the room—to ask students what they thought in a honest way, to remember to address all the students, not the resistant white minority, and to maintain control of how the argument was framed (not to fall for the red herring of Education as purely a cog in the economic machine).

On Monday, she began her presentation with each of the classes, and it went without incident. In my observations, I questioned her use of the term “European” and whether or not she wanted to trouble the students’ clichéd response that there are two sides to every story. During our post-conference and pre-conference for the next day, she asked about activities with regards to stereotyping. I shared a couple that I knew, and she decided to try a carousel brainstorm approach to naming stereotypes of racial and age groups. Again, I was more cautious than I have been previously, emphasizing that it had to be couchled appropriately, but offering little practical advice as it wasn’t something that I had done before.

Today, she made it to that activity with the first group. When she presented the concept to students, she asked them to be “appropriate” and “consider the feelings of others.” The students struggled with how to name stereotypes while doing this. Because she invited me into the conversation, I attempted to make a distinction between naming a stereotype and mocking it. I also asked them to treat the activity seriously. The students, who had previously
been very quiet—apathetically so—seemed genuinely engaged, but struggled with the task. ... These students clearly do not have the vocabulary or the confidence to talk about race in a meaningful way. Our culture’s response to the fear of being labeled racist was palpable. If I don’t say anything, I can’t be wrong.

The other two groups spent more time talking about the PowerPoint. The second group, students grouped because they registered for French (this group is primarily white and middle class), were rapt with attention. Previously, this group had been nearly unmanageable. In fact, when I asked which class Lacey wanted me to take data on (her targets were pacing and withitness), she joked, “Well, I guess you could do it with Period B, but that’s going to be scary.” However, as Lacey asked them to share their thoughts and feelings on this meaty, relevant issue, they were literally on the edges of their seats. They listened intently to one another and were eager to share. There was certainly a sense of performance among those students, who I assume have “Good liberal parents.” The teacher-pleasers among them had taken to heart what had been told to them previously why it was important to learn about First Nations’ cultures. However, their whiteness was ever present in their pronoun use (We, Them, Us, They) and assumptions, “We have a lot to learn about the way they see the world.” Again, because Lacey had invited me to participate, I drew attention to this issue of who we mean by “we” and questioned why it might be important for FNMI people to also learn about historical events from this perspective. I also discussed the fact that those in the dominant culture have a choice about whether or not to consider others’ worldviews, because they can be successful without it, while minoritized
groups have no choice but to come to understand the worldview of the oppressor. Without it, they will surely fail. I used gender to demonstrate how, even though we might believe that we have achieved equality of the sexes, that it is more okay for a woman to embrace traditionally masculine characteristics, but men are still ostracized and ridiculed if they embrace femininity. Using my hands, I demonstrated how if the group “on top” actually looks down while those on the bottom are looking up, we might actually be able to achieve a more side-by-side relationship. Worth noting was also the fact that when a student in this class again suggested that there were “two sides to every story,” Lacey gently questioned them about whether there were just two sides. I hoped that my participation in the discussion was more about providing support than my own ego. I hoped that I was not de-legitimating her work by speaking out as the “real” teacher. I hoped that the students would see what I felt and that is that Lacey and I are a team, working together, and on the same page. I also hoped to plant seeds for future conversations.

Period C had the most vocal resistors. One girl suggested that we focus too much on the negative and that we need to remember that many FN people benefitted from residential schooling. One boy, using his white grandmother who had attended a residential school as his authority, claimed that it was just the way it was and that all people have had hard times. We should just move on. Lacey responded and so did I, but I don’t feel I did an effective job. I tried to address over-privilege and whiteness. Tomorrow, however, I will chat with the students
about the following and ask them to keep an open mind (and promise that I will do the same and to take their concerns seriously).

During our collaboration meeting with our team, it came out that some of the white resistance sentiments shared on paper with Lacey were shared verbally in Social Studies. That teacher’s response was to shut down the discussion because it is “wrong.” I am hopeful that Lacey’s class will provide some real discussion and revelation for those students who have been getting shut down for years without ever really being challenged in a meaningful way.

In sharing my fears with [my thesis advisor], I recalled experiences from my own internship where, after the fact, my coop had drawn my attention to “missteps” or offered ideas for how to “better handle it next time.” I remember the hot-faced sense of embarrassment and regret that I couldn’t go back and change what I had done. I just hope that if she ever does want me to back-off, that she can articulate that to me, and that if she disagrees with me, that she still feels she has the freedom to try it her way. I also hope that I don’t create any sort of co-dependence, where she psychologically feels like she needs me there. I want her to be confident in her own abilities, because, my goodness, she is so bright and talented. I have so much to learn from her introspection, responsiveness, and gentle approach. (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, November 6, 2012)

In these moments, Lacey was living proof that “confrontation can be accomplished with kindness and humanity, but it requires addressing racism directly” (Johnson, Rich, & Cargile’s, 2008, p. 115).
In the following classes, the discussions about race and defenses of whiteness continued and so I sent her a copy of “‘My ancestors didn’t own slaves’: Understanding white talk about race” (Trainor, 2005). The next day, she brought me her copy and read aloud a couple of the interactions Jennifer S. Trainor described (pp.159-162). She was struck by how closely the text reflected the responses in the class discussions she led the day before. While she did not “encourage students to investigate their own responses to texts in rhetorical terms, to identify and interpret the emotional and political appeal of the various discourses about race that they rely on to structure their responses” (p. 162)—it is not a task that I believe either of us would have been able to tackle with any efficacy at this stage in our learning. While I was hopeful that she was comforted in knowing that there were larger forces at work than just individual student responses, her journal allowed me to see that knowing and feeling are two different things:

I started the First Nations unit last week. I would be lying if I said anything besides I’m terrified. Do I fervently believe that FNMI education is important and needs to be a part of our education? Of course. Do I believe I am the credible option to be teaching it? No. Do I think I need to do it anyway? Yes. Spending nights on google researching terms and things that I need to know have made me feel very much like I have wasted the last three and a half years of education with the university. Like — what the hell! Internship has really opened my eyes to “what it’s really like” and “what I really need to know”. Any dummy off the streets who has done some reading and inquiring and has attended a lecture or two and loves kids could google her way into my position. Why am I not feeling more prepared? (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, November 4, 2012)
It didn’t take her long, though, to realize what a success it really had been:

I think that if there’s something I’m proud of doing as a teacher, it’s been the start of this unit…. I felt uncomfortable at times, but I felt good. And the kids were engaged. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, November 7, 2012)

Her hunch had been correct—students were engaged, and not just the usual suspects.

Last week there was a lot of fruitful and provocative conversation about stereotyping and about racism in the grade 9 classroom. I was really curious on how minority groups were feeling, and I had not heard a voice from any self-identified FNMI student (that I can recall). However, on Friday, we had a moment.

S and J and two FN girls in the class who are bright, but can be chatty and are often late. These girls keep to themselves a lot, and have been very shy about speaking in front of the class. There have been instances at the start of the year where they voiced (specifically J) discomfort from being “stared at” from the white girls in the room.

In my teaching, I want to be a voice for minority students. I am so annoyed at hearing “this is useless information,” “this has nothing to do with me,” and “I already know it all from 4 years of this in elementary” from the white males in the group. There have been comments saying “If I wanted to learn about a worldview, I would learn about my own.” At times it is all I can do from giving a pointed-finger lecture to these privileged boys.

So I was talking about stereotypes. We did a “carousel” activity where the students wrote down stereotypes about groups of people (European, retired, Asian, etc). With every group I compared the
“teenage” negative stereotypes with the “FNMI” negative stereotypes. It is easy to dismiss some of the negative stereotypes about teenagers (“druggies,” “lazy”), but why is it harder to dismiss these about FNMI people? You wouldn’t see a teenager and assume that they are a drug-addict or are lazy, but people do do that with FNMI people.

“YES! They do!” J and S said.

There was a pause. Not a long pause, but a pause. From myself, and the students. The joy I felt from hearing their voices was probably visible to the students. “Do they? What do they do?” I said. They explained that people look at them funny and judge them. They said that white girls are the people they get it the most from. I could tell the white girls in the room felt awkward, and I was happy about their discomfort. They need some discomfort! They need to see that the way they “look” at someone else can be degrading.

It was a gem in the classes I have taught thus far! I wanted to hug those girls. I love that they felt safe enough to express themselves.

That was a moment where teaching went right for me. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, November 13, 2012)

At the end of the semester, the students she taught created a scrapbook of thank-you notes and memories. These notes confirmed again that this approach had been effective—not only for those students who had been marginalized, but also for some who had rejected it initially in defense of their privilege. Lacey referenced these notes in our final, formal discussion of the semester:

B: What was your biggest achievement this semester or when did you feel most effective?
L: Probably some of those deep discussions that we were having. That felt really nice and all the kids were kind of on their toes with the content that we were dealing with. And R was one who started out really against it and in his note to me he said, “Thank you for talking about that with us because” it changed his mind. He hadn’t thought about it in that way and it changed his mind on why it is important to learn about FN cultures and different perspectives. I don’t think that happened with everyone. I’m not naïve enough to think I changed everyone’s minds, but to hear one voice... that really felt like an achievement. (L. Steele & B. Baisley, Personal Communication, December 21, 2012)

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<th><strong>Culturally Responsive Management Approaches</strong></th>
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<td>Consistently recognizes how to differentiate between treating students equitably versus equally. Recognizes how one’s own biases influence classroom management expectations. (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 135)</td>
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I would have to say that classroom management is the murkiest, most tension filled aspect of critical social justice education for me. As teachers, we have accepted the challenge to facilitate learning for dozens of students, many of whom would rather be doing anything but, in a single space for a set period of time. This industrial, efficiency model does little to humanize students and leaves teachers pitting the needs of the individual against the needs of the group. The belief that there are particular strategies that will serve as a heal-all for any management issue that ails us can leave teachers feeling bewildered and defeated when they feel like they have tried everything. The wavering between firmness and flexibility, teacher authority and student autonomy, the
needs of the individual and the rights of the group never seemed to achieve equilibrium. Lacey’s reflections captured the pull of these oppositional forces.

There is a student, K, who has caused trouble since day one. He has been loud and hard to keep on task. I’ve had a few moments, one on one, with him, that have really softened my heart toward him. I apologized for my stomach grumbling while I was helping him with his artwork. “Why do our stomachs growl anyway?” he asked. “So that we know we’re hungry,” I said. ... One part of me wanted to laugh out loud and I internally wondered how he couldn’t know the answers to these questions — but he was answering and questioning with honesty. It made me want to give him a hug and just spend a lunch hour asking him about his life.

These kids. They need so much love and care. Yesterday, I was feeling kind of hardened and grouchy. Today, these kids gummed me right up (is that an expression? “Gummed up”?) K had a much different reaction when I came around. He was defensive. “I don’t want any help,” he said right away. He caught me a bit off guard. We had a conversation. I came to understand why he was so defensive (or tried). I need to remember to give more praise than criticism and to be a voice for these kids, to showcase their good stuff. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 4, 2012)

Contrary to my attempts to “care” in my internship, Lacey managed to genuinely care:

“The carer attends, listens to the expressed needs of the cared-for—and responds in a way that either satisfies the need or explains satisfactorily why the need cannot be met”
(Noddings, 2001, p. 36). But later, when frustrated with the progress of the group, she reflected

Today I laid down the law in Period C. The chatty kids. I am not great at being authoritative, and it doesn’t come naturally to me, but it needed to be done. Brenda gave me a resource to look into: *It’s All About We: Rethinking Discipline Using Restitution*. I need to get it and read it and change my management style. As it said in an article Brenda gave me to read recently, simply loving the kids isn’t enough. It’s about creating a positive learning space. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 11, 2012)

In our discussions of classroom management, I was hyper-vigilant in avoiding passing off any techniques as neutral. Each time either of us encountered an issue with disruptions in class, inattention, or lack of participation, we first interrogated our perception of the problem, being critical of whether our previously held notions of “good student” were to blame. If the behaviour was determined to be a problem, we would question the factors that might be at the root of it. In determining further action, we always considered the power dynamics and attempted to create a democratic learning environment. Grappling with each individual issue was beneficial, but it felt haphazard. As she mentioned, I had suggested Lacey read *It’s All About We: Rethinking Discipline Using Restitution* (Gossen, 2004), but reading an entire book in addition to everything else she had on the go was unrealistic. In the search for something more theoretical on which to base our classroom management decisions, I came across “Looking at classroom management through a social and emotional learning lens” (Norris, 2003). The idea that social and emotional learning (SEL) “is an iterative process that requires practice with feedback and the opportunity to make adjustments followed by more
“practice” (p. 315) was an important reminder. I reflected on the fact that I had done little (purposefully) to build community or any social or emotional skills since the first weeks of school. To model for Lacey what this might look like, I asked the advisory students to engage in a number of activities to get to know one another better.

Helping students to see one another as complete people, rather than just as stereotypical shells, was also helpful for us in identifying our own biases and willful ignorance. As critical social justice educators, our focus lies in achieving equality for those who are oppressed or disadvantaged in any way. Ironically, this can cause us to overlook the three-dimensional lives of those we perceive to be in position of privilege. This did not escape Lacey’s observations:

...I’ve found myself “ignoring” the students that I have labeled “privileged white kids” in my brain and have focused on the rest. Is that really the solution? I really care about these kids (but obviously care about the privileged-looking girls the least, subconsciously. That’s troubling in itself that I’ve made those judgments based 100% on their looks, clothes, and the occasionally sassy look that I recognize from high school). Oh boy. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 4, 2012)

Lacey’s reflections led us both back to trying to be proactive about classroom management and building a culture of shared learning, rather than relying solely on authoritative, reactive measures. Her ability to maintain a gentle, approachable demeanor in spite of the “common sense” of a more hard-lined approach paid off for her in tangible, rewarding ways:

However, amidst all the building stress … there have been a lot of good moments. Good old M said I was his “favourite,” and that he really hopes
that I teach him in grade 10 next year (I hope I can get a job at Flagstone too, M!). C, who is extremely hard to get engaged, has been coming at homework room and has proudly showed me his writing. A girl I taught in the drawing class passed me in the hallway and told her friend “I like her! That’s Ms. Steele!” The faculty adviser came and watched me today and gave me a lot of positive feedback about the type of inviting environment that I create. She said that even though that may clash a bit with loud groups who may respond more quickly to a more authoritative figure, that she thinks the students will respect me more in the end. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 25, 2012)

In spite of the relationships and trust she had built with her gentleness, my gut instinct was still to push her to create a classroom that would be perceived as well managed. I wanted the rest of the world to know what a great teacher she was, but knew, realistically, that her reputation would be built on what students had to say and what people witnessed as they walked past her room. Just as, Noddings (1989) recognizes the relational definition of “good” women to the men in their lives, I was aware of the relational definition of “good” teacher to the perceived “goodness” of her students: “Their success has been her only success, their goodness the only manifestation of her goodness” (p. 70). “Good” students being first and foremost well behaved and compliant.

Teacher observation is something I have almost never seen in my six years with this school division. It is certainly something I have never experienced.

As I was reading about humanizing pedagogy today, I reflected on how I have been pushing Lacey to increase participation from her students in one class and “manage” another. I realized how much of my advice was “methods-based.” So,
tonight, I emailed her and suggested a more democratic approach—asking for student input into how they will manage their own participation and behaviours.

In a discussion with my husband about classroom management and his perceptions of teachers with “poorly managed classrooms” (defined as classrooms where the kids don’t listen to instructions and speak while the teacher is speaking), I wondered how Lacey would be perceived by him and what suggestions he would have for her. No doubt we teach students how to treat us and how to behave in our classrooms, but how do teachers with broader interpretations of “acceptable” behaviour avoid getting labeled as poor classroom managers? And how do we manage a group of students that include both internal and external processors? How do we know if students are being loudly attentive or if they are disengaged or distracted? And what if someone’s vocal attention interferes with another students’ need for quiet focus? (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, November 25, 2012)

One of the most significant hindrances to effective, socially just classroom management is a lack of time to grow and nourish a classroom culture that would align with our beliefs. A system that shuffles students from one room to the next (if they do not get lost along the way) with hourly bells does little to encourage relationship building. In one of our reflective discussions, Lacey and I talked about a student whose behaviours we still struggled to understand.

B: We want K to be successful and we know that when he comes to school, doesn’t do his work, and when he shows up late, and when he disrupts class, we know that these things are not going to equate success in his life. And we get so
fixated on wanting him to achieve success that we forget about him as a person and what our school definition of success is going to mean for his spirit. And where is the space and the time in our day to pull him aside and to try and build that trusting relationship? To try to find out why he’s resisting? And to either address those issues or to give him permission to resist? Or to try to show him to resist in a way that actually helps him learn? ... I don’t know, but I was really “taming, controlling, and rescuing” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 8). That could be my job description, you know? I’d like to think learning comes in somewhere there, too, but it’s like there are a lot of ways I think we are doing really great things, but for those individual students who don’t fit into this structure? I don’t think I have any answers. (B. Baisley, Personal Communication, October 30, 2012)

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<td>... Considers professional goals, the nature of the content, needs of students, time available… . (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 136)</td>
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Time has always been an issue for me in my practice. As an intern, it used to take me double the time to plan a lesson as it did to teach it. My cooperating teacher warned me that it was unsustainable and I made some improvement, but even as a first year teacher at an international school with over 600 minutes of prep time a week for 1125 minutes of instruction (this is such a laughable ratio to me now), I was still showing up early and staying at the school through supper to get the work done.

Fast forward eight years and now, my work is not my only obligation. I have two pre-school aged children and a master’s degree in the works. Burning the midnight oil is
no longer an option—the sleep debt that I have accumulated over the last 5 years of short, interrupted nights has left me without any reserves to tap. It has meant that sometimes, the marking does not get done in the two week window we are provided. Other times, “good enough” is the marker of an acceptable lesson: “everything was hasty in those days, everything still is” (Shields, 2002, p.10).

And what of the time in the classroom? Does any teacher ever get to everything they had planned? Is every learning outcome from the curriculum, which are designed to “define what a student is expected to know and be able to do at the end of the grade or Secondary Level course” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2010), covered as thoroughly as it demands? As we rush to get our “job” done, how often is it at the expense of students’ needs and our own?

For Lacey and I both, time was a resource of which we seemed to be perpetually in short supply. We both felt like we were robbing from our personal lives to give to our professional ones and experienced the frustration that comes from not having enough to give to both.

Within the first month, Lacey found herself having to schedule time with her husband, time for herself, and time to keep healthy and this was long before her full-time block of teaching. As time passed, she felt her ability to keep-up with both her professional and personal lives slipping away. She nervously anticipated what was to come with a foreboding tone:

Wow! Have I ever been exhausted! I don’t know if it’s stress, sickness, or what (probably a bit of both), but I have felt very drained. Things are about to snowball, very quickly, so I hope that I will be able to recuperate
somewhat before that happens. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 25, 2012)

At the beginning of the semester, interns typically begin by teaching only one class or observing their cooperating teacher. However, as the semester progresses, they accept planning and teaching responsibilities in more classes until they have a full-time course load, or “block,” for a minimum of three weeks. While the details and timing vary from internship to internship, the idea is the same: interns begin with few responsibilities and then stack on more until they have a “full-time” course load. Like all things, Lacey’s three-week block came whether she was ready or not. She took it in stride and balanced her life as best she could. She was tired when it was over, but she was proud.

I can’t lie and say I am not happy that my three-week block is over. It feels as though I’ve got something to celebrate now that I’ve had some time knowing what “it’s really like.” I was telling a friend that my three-week block might be more like four weeks a while back, and she was like “Isn’t that great? That’s what it’s going to be like when you’re a real teacher!” Yes…….. but man alive was it ever exhausting! (I was looking for pity.) By the end of my three week block I felt like I had made improvements in my teaching abilities, in my planning, in my use of time, in my ability to gauge how long things were going to take, and in classroom management, which feels nice! But I am looking forward to celebrating, winding down, and reflecting. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, December 2, 2012)

Unfortunately pride is not an antidote for exhaustion. It is a consolation prize for it, and one that costs us so much. This profession that refuses to limit itself to the hours of
8:00-5:00 does not only intrude on our time with family, it gets right into bed with us, refusing us the rest we need to do it as well as we would like.

I wake up in the middle of the night rehearsing lessons in my dreams or thinking about how a lesson went. Internship has definitely taken over!

(L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 25, 2012)

**Response to Stress & Conflict**

| Calm & composed under stress. … Seeks assistance when appropriate. (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 139) |

Exhaustion and the constant feeling of coming up short took turns discouraging us, leaving us feeling guilty and inadequate. Frustration and anger were not far behind.

Internship is about putting a student-teacher who will either view herself as credible or not credible (both are dangerous positions) in front of budding, breaking, atheist, sensitive, spiritual, self-minded, individualistic, questioning, obeying minds who may not even know English as their first language, with little to not help in planning (here is the curriculum — now DO IT!), with expectations of not only trying to simply teach, plan, and mark, but also to reflect, and improve, and — on top of that — to involve yourself in as many extra-curricular activities as possible in order to get your name out there, because, after all, the school system is political, and if you want a job, you need to do much more than simply teach.

I have been feeling a bit like I’m sputtering just above the water — and I’m not even in my three-week block yet. One day this week, I got to school an hour early, worked through my lunch, stayed at school until
7:30, then came home and worked until 11 and went to bed. It was a bit much. Other interns are saying things like they wish they were more busy. That they’re “thriving,” and “doing great.” I am not entirely sure how I am “doing.” To answer that, I’d ask the students: Are you learning anything?

So anyway, I’m feeling a bit frustrated. I feel like I have no time to reflect adequately, and though I’d love to be doing lots of theory readings, it’s just not practical right now — because planning and marking needs to come before that, because that is the basics of teaching and if I don’t do either, I will arrive at school ill-prepared and behind, even though I feel constantly behind. I’m not sure if it is something I am doing, or not doing, or what it is. But I am annoyed and stressed, and I’m annoyed at feeling constantly under so much pressure. And extra-curricular!!!! I mean, I would love to involve myself, but why are we expected to not only master the basics, be reflecting and improving, while also trying to put out a pretty smiling face so that we can get hired?

Meanwhile, I am actually in the middle of correcting, so I need to get back to it. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, November 4, 2012)

One of the worst parts of stress is not wanting to burden anyone else with it, even though the people around us feel the consequences of it, whether we admit that is what is happening or not. While I did my best to protect Lacey from seeing the severity of my own stress (the last thing I would ever want would be for her to think that she was the root of it), my journal reveals just how poorly I was coping with it all.

_Last night was not a good night. Both kids were up multiple times for lengthy periods (with nightmares, pain, etc.), each demanding my attention and_
often unwilling to accept their father’s. All I could think about was how exhausted I would be today and about the fact that I had planned to spend a good portion of the day working on my Directed Reading course. This course is one key to my research as it is providing me with so much in the way of theory that I can use to support Lacey. In my last reflection, I suppose I wasn’t entirely honest. The stealing of time is not one-way. I steal time that I had intended to dedicate to my studies to try to assuage my guilt about the time I previously stole (and forwardly intend to steal) from my family.

Back to my bad night. The conditions led me to a 3 a.m. fit of frustration, which wrongly took aim at my partner and my perception of his lack of support for this process.

Now, in the light of day, I see my role in this situation. I have avoided asking for the time that I need because I have tricked myself into believing I can be everything to everyone at the same time. I know that supporting me in this endeavor impacts my husband’s life greatly and at the heart of my behaviours has been an attempt to reduce this impact. The consequence of not setting aside specific time for this learning, though, has been a great deal of unvoiced stress, which in turn has also negatively impacted our relationship. Brimming with the anxiety of spreading oneself too thin means that the stress spills over into otherwise innocuous interactions. While I had convinced myself that I was doing him a favour by pushing my assignments aside, I was actually hurting us both.

This reflection has led me to a renewed commitment to my self-directed studies. Our calendar has been edited; dates and times have been set in digital
stone. It helps that there is an end date in sight. I wonder, though, what about the
time required to maintain this level of academic and professional dedication to
my practice? There is no end date on that. How will I find and achieve balance
once this research is complete? What understanding should I be gleaning from
this for my practice after the study?

Ironically, this past week, we had a school guidance counselor into class
to talk to our students about stress. During her presentation, she created a t-chart
of positive and negative ways of dealing with stress. I interrupted and surmised
that the heart of the difference between the sides was that the negative side were
all destructive behaviours, whereas the positive side were all constructive
behaviours.

I had been dealing with the stress of balancing my research, my studies,
my daily practice, my professional collaboration, my family, my social life, and
my personal time in destructive ways (I sincerely hope that the order of the above
list is not later read as a subconscious prioritizing of my life). I believe that the
schedule I have created and the time I have spent today, reading, envisioning, and
reflecting are much more constructive. Let’s hope this lesson sticks. (B. Baisley,
Personal Journal Entry, October 21, 2012)

Suffering in silence is not honourable. It is cowardly and it denies others
permission to reveal that they, too, are feeling similarly. Suffering in silence is not
selfless. It is egotistical and it will be the hamartia of anyone who would rather see
themselves as a hero than to ask for help. Suffering in silence is not a sign of strength. It
is weak because true strength is in numbers and found among allies.
Unlike me, Lacey was able to admit to her stress and even though she qualified it with a positive “I can handle this” spin and a very practical self-made solution, it enabled me to see where support was needed.

I have not had much of a break, unfortunately, this weekend. I had a bit of a breakdown today going something like "HOW AM I GOING TO GET ALL THIS DONE????" I am taking a few deep breaths and keeping at it! I bought a giant calendar to put on my desk to try to get everything out on the table… (L. Steele, Personal Communication, November 4, 2012)

Because of her journal and emails like this that gave me a clearer glimpse into her state of mind, I was able to offer her encouragement and assistance in our face to face conversations. At the very least, I was able to share stories of commiseration from my own internship and first few years teaching. Collaboration and a team approach to the most complex parts of our job helped her to weather the storm.

So I am a week into my “official” three-week block. It’s going well! Right before my three-week block, I was not doing so well mentally … I was skipping meals, having trouble sleeping, and getting into sweats thinking about preparing and doing a good job. Then I ranted on my blog, and ranted to my parents, and cried a few times, and then I felt better. In fact, I can’t believe how smoothly the transition into the three-week block has been (however, I don’t want to speak too soon. I did have the long weekend with next to no correcting to do that I was able to plan out this week more concretely). I still have quite a few details to work out for the next five weeks (only five weeks to go?).
I have, however, felt like I am being the teacher that I want to be. I've felt like I have been responding more fairly and consistently to disruptions in class. I have been stepping off of the pedestal of the front of the room and been able to have work periods, videos, and successful classroom dialogue.

Overall, I'm feeling good. For a while I was feeling stressed enough for it to affect my attitude, but I'm feeling rejuvenated and loving the students and teaching. I have talked to an intern who said to me that she can’t wait until 3pm each day. I don’t feel that way at all. I feel so lucky to be in the grade nine program. Today the four of us had such a fruitful discussion about what we’re doing in our classrooms and the responses we’ve had from the kids. Collaborating is so worth the extra effort! It’s really neat to see the different connections each teacher can make with the students — and to really hear how much Brenda, Chad, and Angela have invested into the kids.

Okay… back to planning/correcting! (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, November 16, 2012)

It is easy, during the best of times, never mind the stressful ones, to get caught up in minutiae —to focus on the details without seeing the big picture. I made it a part of my practice to try to draw Lacey’s attention to our impact beyond the semester in the hopes that it, too, would work to sustain her.

So I was just thinking—in university, were you ever in those conversations where the class was asked about who had learned about treaties or residential schooling and hardly anyone raised their hands? Were you ever in a position where you felt
angry because the truth of our nation's history and the implications as
descendants of white Settlers was kept from you? Or disheartened because your
attention was drawn so late to the fact that your actions, thoughts, and beliefs
protected forces of oppression? As a female, was the wind ever knocked out of
you as you came to understand the role socialization had played in your
development or how the historical odds had been stacked against us? Had you
ever wished you would have known it sooner so that maybe you could have
changed things before they had gone so far?

Because of the work you are doing, there are nearly 100 students who, as
they move through their education, can no longer say that "they didn't know."
Chances are there are future teachers among them, and as they head into
education and are asked these same questions, they will be able to put up their
hands and say, "When I was in grade 9..." And they will not be starting fresh, and
so hopefully, they will be able to go farther, faster than we have been able to.

You are doing really important, necessary work. And you're in the home-
stretch of this chapter. I hope you're able to get some rest this weekend! (L. Steele
& B. Baisley, Personal Communication, November 24, 2012)

That “big picture” is one that I need in order to sustain myself. It is, after all, why I
became an educator—to make a difference. And not just any difference, but to make
things more socially just and, now, more storied.

So much has happened recently that I have not accurately captured (and I will do
my best to get to it). Here, I am coming to fully understand a huge restraint of
teacher as researcher: time. Narrative inquiry relies on data constructed by the
researcher and participants. Stories happen whether or not they are told and time is needed to tell them. Stories are necessarily partial and I understand that, but how partial they are is not only determined by perspective. It is also determined by time.

In this same way that time infringes on my ability to record the story as I experience it, it also infringes on my ability to become fully the critical social justice educator I hope to become.

The time we are allotted is a structural constraint and oppressive force. Without time to critically reflect on our actions, what hope do we have of achieving change? Without time to research and develop professionally, what hope do we have of enacting change when we do have the opportunity?

Organization is key to activism. Organization requires time.

So from where am I getting this time to reflect and to change my practice and affect change around me? Because, as prior and future entries will surely tell, I do feel a sense of agency that I have not felt in past years. I do feel that my practice is improving and that I am affecting change. But that is not the whole picture.

Thoughts scattered throughout the day. Colleagues raising eyebrows at my too regular apologies for confusing dates, not replying to emails, and other inconsiderate behaviours of the over-extended. More often than not, arriving home later than promised, exhausted, to kids who miss me and a husband who in spite of his own professional obligations has tended to the “home” ball which my juggling act has allowed to fall to the floor. I am thankful for the hot supper on
my plate and wash it down with a swig of guilt stemming from my helplessness to alleviate the spousal and parental burdens I have placed on my husband. The question of social engagements most often unasked as the answer is abundantly apparent: no time. “Sorry, Mom. Chris, the kids, and I won’t make it out this weekend. Too much work.” “Sure, I’d love to do coffee. How about next month?” “I’m so relieved she cancelled. I didn’t know how I was going to work it in anyway.”

So many late nights, the only light illuminating my kitchen the blue glow of my computer screen—kids and husband lying asleep upstairs, my promises to come to bed soon so often broken that they no longer have meaning. Hard, heavy pits of anxiety rest in my gut, the furious heartbeat fueled by the adrenaline of anxiety over factors beyond my control pounds in my chest, and the never ending, perpetually speeding loop of thoughts lap behind my eyes as I do try to rest once I do make it to bed. Have I done everything I was supposed to do? Am I prepared for the next day’s lessons? What happened today? Where did I fall short? How will I do better? Who do I need to enlist as an ally? How do I best frame this issue to achieve results? What do my colleagues think of me? How could I have been more supportive of Lacey? How could I have been a better model of critical social justice education? I fight the common cold for weeks, my immunity defenses down, until I succumb to the pressure in my head and my voice is inaudible, and finally I take a day. A day to rest. A day to heal. A day to get done all that cannot get done between the teaching and the learning.
What is important to know is that I have had these same symptoms in my previous years of teaching, only in the past they have not been balanced by the same degree of reward because my efforts were haphazard and directionless. It is also important to note that not all of these anxieties stem from my pursuit of social justice. Sure, the time commitment to this research process is an additional constraint on the little time I have, but the actual act of teaching and interacting with this intent, that pursuit that gives me the energy to continue this journey (I need a more sophisticated metaphor). Now, with a clear focus, theoretical spaces in which to seek guidance, and the impetus to commit to change, I feel like the discomfort might ease over time as I hone my craft and spend more time living as the teacher I want to be. My data collection and readings will pass. And I am confident that the professional who will be left standing at the end of this process will be stronger, better equipped, and happier for it.

For now, though, I am a time thief, stealing from my family and my personal life to invest in my profession. And is this not the same action I suggested the government take in its approach to education? Short term discomfort for long term change. (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, October 18, 2012)
Chapter 5: Implications

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Over my nine years as an educator, I have engaged in varying degrees of critical reflection. Most often, it has been informal, incidental, and occasionally, inconsistent. As such, it rarely involved any purposeful research on my part. I sometimes identified what felt as if it went well and what did not and might, in passing, speculate on why, but my thinking dwelled primarily in the micro: individual lessons, individual interactions, isolated classes, isolated experiences. When I did engage in macro level thinking, attempting to ask bigger “why?” questions (Why are the students disengaged? Why isn’t this student attending? Why is the division pushing this agenda?), it was primarily “common sense” thinking that provided my answers. It is true that my “common sense” notions may have had some critical underpinnings, but I have come to see how they were also fueled by my desires to maintain the status quo when it was in my best interests and in defense of my various privileges. Most notable are the times I would rest in a place of certainty that theory and practice could never be one in the same rather than interrogating the reason for the spaces between them. My collegial interactions would lead me to believe that this is true for many, perhaps even most educators.

Since beginning my graduate studies (an endeavor I originally hesitated to embark upon because I was dubious of its relevance to me at this time in my career), I have been required to engage much more consistently and purposefully in critical reflection of my practice and of the system of education in which I work, and the society in which I live.
My graduate studies and this exercise in research and reflection, albeit uncomfortable and daunting have brought me a sense of integrity and restored my conception of the educator I desire to be and of the world I hope to help create. Integral to this process has been having others engaged in it alongside me. I wonder if the idea of autonomy in our profession has perhaps lost its course and, like “the modernist tradition has set the individual, the conflicted self, up against the world” (Shields, 2002, p.121) to our own detriment. Interdependence, collective action, and cooperation have all been catalysts of agency and have helped my autonomous actions to be more effective, not just a symbolic act of sovereignty. Talking through the complexities of social justice and anti-oppressive practices with classmates and professors served to disrupt my self-interested analyses and gave me alternative viewpoints to consider. Most beneficial, however, has been having an ally in my classroom every day, one equally committed to critical reflection and similarly positioned in her pursuit of social justice. In the fall semester of 2012, I had the privilege of working with an intern, Lacey, who I promised to purposefully support in her efforts to actualize critical social justice education, but the relationship has been reciprocal to say the very least. Now that I am again alone in my classroom, no longer in direct relation to Lacey as a formal mentor, I am fearful of my susceptibility to re-socialization and distraction in the minutiae of daily practice. I have learned the necessity of research, allies, and the carving out of time for, both. Here, I hope to imagine ways that I could create and maintain a professional, relational structure that will encourage, rather than inhibit, my praxis.
One of Lacey’s journal entries that stuck with me was one in which she describes, what Schaeffer (2010) referred to as “sustaining moments” (p. 87)—moments that nourish teachers’ professional spirits and maintain their dedication to the profession. In contrast, she also provides moments of dissonance between the teacher she wants to be and the teacher she presently is:

I need to be thinking about ways in which I have felt that I have been “the teacher” that I want to be, and then other moments where I’ve felt restricted, either by my own brain or because of outside factors.

I have been the teacher that I have wanted to be when I hear feedback that says that I am approachable and gentle with students. I have been the teacher I have wanted to be when the class laughs. I have been the teacher that I have wanted to be when a student gets an “aha” moment (L: Does all language evolve like that?; L: I’ve noticed everywhere how people are acting out gender! L: I went home and watched movies and did the Bechdel test!) I’ve been the teacher that I have wanted to be when I have the freedom to teach about touchy subjects such as gender. I’ve been the teacher that I’ve wanted to be when students approach me in the hallway to talk about how much fun an assignment was, or who go out of their way to read me their assignment because they are so proud of what they have done.
Now to flip the coin. I have not been the teacher that I want to be when I gave the seating plan to period C. I feel that some kind of trust was broken there that I'm going to have to work at to get back. I didn’t approach it right, and put all of the blame on them. I have not been the teacher that I want to be when students have pivotal moments and due to myself being unprepared, or in a rush to finish the lesson, etc., I have rushed through it. I have not been the teacher that I want to be when I don’t notice that students are sleeping in the back, or are completely disengaged and I don’t take measures to try to win them back. I have not been the teacher that I want to be when I don’t trust the students enough to perform a task without me babysitting their every step. Most, if not all, of these things have been internal. I have felt a large amount of freedom to experiment in my teaching, and to bring up controversial issues. Brenda has challenged me to look deeper and address issues immediately and in the moment when it comes to students saying a heterosexist or sexist comment (or other). Sometimes I feel that I am not always “on” in the way that I should be paying attention to every student in the class. (L. Steele, Personal Blog Entry, October 25, 2012)

While I was regularly in awe (and, at times, envy) of Lacey’s degree of praxis so early in her development as a teacher, she remained quite critical of her own practice. Her journal allowed me to see when my words of encouragement may have set up an unrealistic expectation for her. How many teachers can say that they address every issue “in the moment” or have been able to pay attention “to every student in the class” at all
times? While Lacey and I were able to discuss and qualify expectations, I also had to critically consider my expectations of myself—past, present, and future.

After receiving some feedback from my advisor about not being so hard on previous incarnations of myself, I began to wonder about the steps one must take in order to adopt a new paradigm and if my expectations of myself as a social justice educator have been unfair. I also began to wonder about what has kept me returning to this goal, to this approach, in spite of the obstacles and structures in my way.

Reflecting on previous years of teaching and even my internship, I could consider my practice of social justice education one of fits and spurts. I question: are my returns to the status quo defenses of my privileges? Are they out of fatigue? What does keep us coming back? Is it possible to sustain our endurance for longer periods? (B. Baisley, Personal Journal Entry, September 26, 2012)

When engaged in self-reflection, it would seem that the shadows of our shortcomings are the first thing to grab our attention. When reflecting others back to themselves, it is so much easier to shine their own brilliant light back on them.

By this point in the semester, I realized that in addition to supporting Lacey, I also had to consider my own continued development so that when I resumed my fulltime teaching load, my dedication to critical social justice education would not wane. I was (and remain) convinced that I need allies in order to do this and that culturally relevant pedagogy might be a foot in the door with other teachers on staff who are struggling with student disengagement, attendance issues, and incomplete assignments. I needed more examples of this type of pedagogy at work, more evidence in defense of it in our
particular context, and a better idea of the resistance I might face. After all, this is not just a process of educating others on something new. It will involve, as it has and will continue to for me, a process of unlearning the “miseducation” (King, 1991, p. 140) we have already had.

Christopher Knaus’s (2009) article “Shut up and listen: Applied critical race theory in the classroom” affirmed the connection I had drawn between critical social justice education and narrative inquiry:

At the heart of critical race theory is an appreciation for storytelling, for those who are oppressed to express their insight into how society is structured, and how such structures impact their daily lives (see Delgado 1995). What makes critical race theory applied is the focus on expression of voice and narrative by students who are intentionally silenced by the everyday practices of schooling. (p. 142)

While socioeconomically a more homogenous group than those at our school, Knaus’s description of students’ “rejection” (p. 137) of traditional practices could describe students spanning every race, social class, gender, and ability in our building depending on the day: “hands glued to cell phones, … stepping in and out of class, … in-class disruptions, or… simple glazed over eyes as a student ‘checks out’” (p. 137). This highlights for me not the need for more special programming that segregates the students within our desegregated school, but for culturally relevant and critical social justice education for all. Reflecting on this, as well as Joyce E. King’s (1991) “Dysconscious racism: Ideology, identity and the miseducation of teachers” and Ladson-Billings’s (2006) “It's not the culture of poverty, it's the poverty of culture: The Problem with Teacher Education” helped me to problematize existing common sense beliefs within our
school about current student behavioural trends. When it comes to First Nations and Métis students, there are certainly many “dysconscious” (King, 1991, p. 135) explanations for their failure rates. Culture is used “with authority as one of the primary explanations for everything” (Ladson-Billings, 2006a, p. 104) and, “of course ‘culture’ is only the answer if the students in question are not white, not English speaking, and not native-born… citizens” (p. 106). In fact, the negative behaviours of students we would otherwise deem “good” (white, middle to upper class students), such as skipping class, showing up late, and handing in assignments well past the due date, are blamed on the minoritized students. After all, in trying to “accommodate” them by doing away with giving zeros on late assignments, no longer punishing students who arrive after the bell, and by providing multiple chances for students to demonstrate their learning, the “good” students see that there are not any consequences for “bad” behaviour. And because there are no deterrents in place (and clearly no intrinsic motivation to be “good”) they might as well act like the “bad” students. The nostalgia of “Public School Way Back When” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 219) is summoned and teachers lament its loss. This way the assumption can remain that “they, as teachers, are fine and do not need to identify, interrogate, and change their biased beliefs and fragmented views about subordinated students” (Bartolome, 1994, p. 174). Perhaps I am not being entirely fair. Certainly some of the backlash is a reaction to those who have gone too far the other way and who have taken strictly a “feel good” approach (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 160) to dealing with marginalized students rather than, as Lisa Delpit (1995) suggests, taking “the responsibility to teach, to provide for students who do not already possess them, the additional codes of power” (p. 40). However, it seems we are often so caught up in binary
thinking—that it has to be this way or that—that we cannot stop criticizing long enough to critically reflect, research, and re-envision another way.

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<td>Deliberate provision for transfer (bridging) within the subject, across subjects &amp; to life. ...(Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 137)</td>
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I began to wonder how I could facilitate professional development for the staff at Flagstone that focused on culturally relevant pedagogy and critical social justice education in general. Many of my readings offered examples of how teacher education programs worked with pre-service teachers to challenge their perceptions and offer new conceptions of the “problem” as well as the “solution.” Ladson-Billings (1995b) suggests “helping… teachers understand culture (their own and others) and the ways it functions in education…. to problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student/teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society” (p. 483). I have witnessed a similar process in my present teaching context, concerning assessment and evaluation. A superintendent and a consultant were brought in to lead us through a chapter of a book and some activities designed to trouble our ideas about assessment. The staff was put into heterogeneous subject groups to discuss the reading and the activities. Since then, we have had Core group discussions about how we are wrestling with the issue in our practice. Teachers have responded in a variety of ways, from thoughtful and reflective attempts to embrace the new thinking to “agree to disagree” attitudes with no changes contemplated much less attempted. While the small group discussions gave the opportunity for teacher voices to be heard, there was no discussion leader, knowledgeable of how to challenge “dysconscious” arguments like the “fact” that deducting late marks motivates students to hand in work on time and reflects life in the “real-world” or that
success means teaching students to conform to capitalistic notions of the employer/employee relationship. Therefore, much of the discussion was reflexive reinforcement with little critical thinking. I recognize that this is just my perception and would be curious to hear core leaders’ impressions of how much change has been achieved in this area of professional development.

Interestingly, Shield’s (2002) character offers insight into the nature of growth and development. Reta reflects,

Most of what I remember from the early years is my own appalling ignorance. A partial view of the world was handed to me… and the rest I had to pretend to know. Like all children, I was obliged to stagger from one faulty recognition to the next, always about to stumble into shame. It isn’t what we know, but what we don’t know that does us in. … The shame of ignorance is killing. (p. 143)

Unfortunately, the shame we associate with not knowing, leads us to hide our insecurities about not knowing from one another: “Such gaps in comprehension, such incompletions, had to be lived with silently—that seemed the natural law. … To name a perplexity is to magnify it” (p. 144). But the silence around shame is a cultural practice, not an absolute truth or “natural law.” Naming my mistakes and shortcomings has only become possible since I have surrendered to uncertainty. I have found that since I have started naming my fears and inadequacies, others have felt empowered to do the same. The relief that this act has brought has left me open to new ways of understanding and, more importantly, with the confidence to be able to admit that I have not had the answers all along. I think I have reached a place, at least when it comes to social justice education, where I understand
that. After all,

who would wish… a return to such grunting incomprehension, when… we are all
struggling to keep up a brave front, pretending to know how the world works?
The fact is, I didn’t need to know everything, and no one expected it of me in the
first place…. It seems I have a knack for self-forgiveness. This is one of the very
few easy comforts still available to me… that there is no need to suffer that
degree of guttered fear and ignorance again. (Shields, 2002, p. 152)

The kind of resistance that I witnessed is a predictable response to any attempt to
challenge the status quo (Johnson, Rich, & Cargile, 2008; King, 1991; Ladson-Billings,
1999; Trainor, 2005; Young, 2010). What was missing from this attempt at change was
the kind of confrontation advocated for by Johnson, Rich, & Cargile (2008) and the
“critical perspective that education is not neutral; it can serve various political and
cultural interests including social control, socialization, assimilation, domination, or
liberation” (King, 199, p. 140). Missing, too, was the idea of “interest convergence”
(Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 228). This approach is problematic, as it is “not aimed
specifically at changing teacher attitudes toward students…. Instead, this program speaks
to teachers' senses of competence and professionalism” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 228)
and allows teachers to maintain a “social efficiency” view of education. However, it
might serve as motivation to otherwise unmotivated teachers.

An anonymous qualitative questionnaire designed to a.) draw out teachers’
existing attitudes and beliefs about the nature and goals of education as well as their
perceptions of cultural “diversity” or “difference,” and b.) allow them to articulate their
frustrations might allow me to find areas of interest convergences while simultaneously
giving me the data I would need to create “a ‘recursive loop,’… [presenting] journaled responses publicly (anonymously and with permission), so [teachers are] given … opportunity for deep personal and communal reflection” (Johnson, Rich, & Cargile, 2008, pp. 130-131). It would also give me a much more accurate sense of where members of our staff position themselves as educators. This information may possibly allow me to make whatever further professional development I offered more relevant for my audience.

Perhaps predictably, this idea gives me the same sense of anxiety I know that Lacey experienced when raising controversial issues with her classes. The nagging discourses of “good teacher” and “good woman” try to stop me before I even start: “What if you don’t have the answers?” “What if you are not up for the challenge their responses present?” “What if you alienate yourself from your staff?” “Who do you think you are?” “What gives you the right to take a leadership role?” Turns out that my relative confidence as a social justice educator comes from working with students, with whom I have an imbalanced power relationship. I am the teacher, after all, and when it comes down to it, I have the final say. Being in a situation where I have no choice but to be democratic as I have no power at all over my audience makes “the slow and often scary work of challenging teachers to examine the way race and racism colors their thinking about human possibilities… the painstakingly slow and careful work that must be done with teachers to deconstruct and construct a vision of teaching that better serves all students” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 228) much more terrifying. After all, I cannot “require [the staff] to rewrite their autobiographies or reinterpret aspects of their life stories or previous experiences” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 229). Nor can I require them
to work in the communities to see the bigger context of students’ lives (p. 141). Instead, I have to find a way to “get [them] to ‘choose’” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 160) culturally relevant pedagogy as a means to a critical social justice education.

In the same way that “it is erroneous to assume that blind replication of instructional programs or teacher mastery of particular teaching methods, in and of themselves, will guarantee successful student learning” (Bartolome, 1994, p. 174), it would be naïve to think that there would be one correct way to engage in professional development for teachers. So while I do not intend to be reductive or overgeneralize, rereading Young’s article from the perspective of someone wanting to promote culturally relevant pedagogy helped me to identify some pitfalls I may encounter and reinforced the tentative conclusion I had reached about how best to start affecting change on my staff:

a more sustainable, more collaborative methodology is needed to support the teachers’ implementation of a theory into practice. Sleeter and Delgado Bernal (2004) found that even when they worked with teachers who already embraced the ideals of critical pedagogy, they ended up dismissing it because they did not know what to do with it in their classrooms. This study advocates a more hands-on, more praxis-oriented, and more collaborative model of research design that calls for inquiry-based discourse and iterative action and reflection to further support the work of teachers. (Young, 2010, p. 258)

I would argue that in addition to an inquiry into theory and practice, we should also seize the opportunity to seek student narratives—of their experiences in and out of school, of their perceptions of difference and diversity—to help guide us.
In a perfect world, this process of surveying, offering some readings and activities based on the survey to trouble our dysconsciousness, and then initiating an inquiry project with other motivated teachers, might proceed just as I have described. It would create for me (and others) a supportive space in which to be purposefully and critically reflective about my practice and to continue forward in my journey as a critical social justice educator. I know well enough that this is a far from perfect world, but I am also fortunate enough to realize that there is no reward without risk.

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<tr>
<th>... Leadership &amp; Initiative</th>
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<td>Fulfills commitments responsibly; positive, but realistic. Acts independently, but sensitively, to the needs &amp; feelings of others. Accepts &amp; acts on constructive criticism. Cooperative &amp; pleasant but not compliant. Addresses problems in a professional rather than personal way. (Joint Field Experience Committee, 2013, p. 139)</td>
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Writing, for me, is not often a process of articulating what I already know. Instead, it is a process by which I come to understand; writing is a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2000). When I began, the thesis I imagined looked nothing like this. Even as I moved through the research process, I intended to conclude with a very traditional “plan” of how to achieve my “outcome” of providing professional development for staff about culturally relevant pedagogy and critical social justice education. In spite of my anxiety and insecurities, I was positioned as expert and intended to create a syllabus similar to those I have worked with in the past that I would somehow require others to read. I drew no parallel between my work in the classroom, my beliefs about education for students, and my desire to “teach” my colleagues. Of course it needs to be collaborative. How could it be anything but inquiry based? And above all else, it must be responsive! I cannot help but laugh that at no point in my reading did I think to apply the
research I was doing about how students learn to my desire to teach teachers. As if they are not one in the same.

What does this reveal about the persistent subconscious beliefs I carry about the nature of teaching and learning? What does this betray about the degree to which I have internalized the values I espouse? In truth, it exposes something I already knew—that as a critical social justice educator, I am “always in the process of becoming” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p.478).
Epilogue

Everything is neatly wrapped up at the end…. I have bundled up each of the loose narrative strands, but what does such fastidious mean? It doesn’t mean that all will be well for ever and ever, amen; it means that for five minutes a balance has been achieved at the margin of … [a] thin textual plane; make that five seconds; make that the millionth part of a nanosecond. The uncertainty principle; did anyone ever believe otherwise? (Shields, 2002, p. 318)
Reference List


doi: 10.1177/1532708605282816


10.1080/13613320902995426

http://search.proquest.com/docview/195186637?accountid=13480


http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476635

http://www.jstor.org/stable/1163320

http://www.jstor.org/stable/1167271


http://www.iub.edu/~tchsotl/part2/McIntosh%20White%20Privilege.pdf


Appendix A: University of Regina Research Ethics Board Approval

University of Regina

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES
MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 11, 2012
TO: Brenda Baisley
3610 Green Bank Road
Regina, SK S4V 1M4

FROM: Dr. Bruce Plouffe
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: Exploring How Intentional Support May Inform the Practice of Social Justice
Education for Co-Operating and Pre-Service Teachers (File # 66S1112)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your
proposal and found it to be:

1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical
approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For
research lasting more than one year (Section 1F), ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST
BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY
TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report
is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must
also be approved prior to their implementation.

2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE
ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to
beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the
concerns to the Chair of the REB. **Do not submit a new application. Once
changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE
ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to
beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the
concerns to the Chair of the REB. **Do not submit a new application. Once
changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions
or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project
proposal might be revised.

Dr. Bruce Plouffe

cc: Dr. Valerie Mulholland - Education

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of
Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 523) or by e-mail to
research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4863

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APPENDIX B: University of Regina Internship Placement Profile

Faculty of Education, University of Regina

SAMPLE FINAL EVALUATION FORM – USE FOR FEEDBACK ONLY

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA, FACULTY OF EDUCATION
SECONDARY INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT PROFILE

INTERN'S NAME: ____________________________________________

NAME OF SCHOOL: ______________________________ TOWN/CITY: _______________________

GRADE(S): ______________________________ MAJOR: ______________________________ MINOR: ______________________________

COOPERATING TEACHER: ____________________________________________

FACULTY ADVISOR: ____________________________________________

ATTENDED INTERNSHIP SEMINAR: YES NO

DIRECTIONS:
This is the final evaluation document for the Secondary Program internship. The criteria are not meant to be an inclusive checklist of performance but rather should provide a general description of the areas in which professional growth can occur. Please select the appropriate rating for each item. The last category is the OVERALL EVALUATION. Please select only one rating. The form must indicate whether the internship is a pass or fail. Finally, the IPP must be signed by the cooperating teacher, by the intern, and by the faculty advisor. Interns use the IPP to secure their first teaching position. The profile needs to be carefully completed for this purpose.

SUMMARY COMMENTS OF THE TEACHER: ____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Date ______________________________ Cooperating Teacher’s Signature

Date ______________________________ Intern’s Signature

Date ______________________________ Faculty Advisor’s Signature

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### A. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Demonstrates Knowledge of Subject/Curriculum and Applies this Knowledge Effectively</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Establishes Professional Goals and Plans for Growth</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Engages in Pre/Post Conferences</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Collects and Analyzes Teaching/Learning Data</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Reflects Upon Experiences and Adapts Teaching Accordingly</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Uses School/Other Resources and Research Effectively</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Demonstrates Translation of Educational Theory into Practice</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Exhibits Knowledge, Social/Historical Contexts of Injustice/Inequality in Relation to Teaching and Learning</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Demonstrates Willingness to Participate in School Life</td>
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### B. INTERACTION WITH LEARNERS

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Demonstrates Respect for All Students</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Encourages and Supports the Growth of the Whole Student</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Fosters Climate of Care for Individuals and Local/Global Contexts</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Recognizes and Addresses Inequitable Classroom Relations</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Encourages Democratic Involvement in Learning</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Communicates and Monitors Expectations</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Anticipates Problems and Plans for Success</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Responds Fairly and Consistently to Minor Disruptions</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Motivates and Encourages Through Positive Means</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Uses Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Approaches</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Utilizes Consultation &amp; Referral Appropriately</td>
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### C. PLANNING, ORGANIZATION, ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Plans DAILY</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Develops Long Term Plans</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Keeps Accurate Records</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Provides Appropriate Assignments</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Provides Assessment and Evaluation</td>
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### D. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCE

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Provides Differentiated Learning Opportunities for All Students</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Uses Diverse Knowledge and Multiple Perspectives Including Indigenous Ways of Knowing</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Provides Treaty Education</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Provides Transfer of Learning Opportunities</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Effectively Utilizes Instruction Technology and Multiple Media Forms</td>
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### E. TEACHING STRATEGIES, SKILLS, AND METHODS

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Uses a Range and Variety of Teaching Strategies and Approaches</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Uses Explorations, Questions, and Discussions Effectively</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Demonstrates the Ability to Manage the Learning of Individuals, Groups, and Whole Classes</td>
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### F. PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Respects and Adheres to The STF Code of Professional Ethics</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Fosters Collegial Relationships Consistent with Principles of Equity, Fairness and Respect for Others</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Demonstrates Maturity, Dependability, Leadership, and Initiative</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Responds Well to Stress, Conflict and/or Controversy</td>
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<td>Communicates Professionally</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Values and Plans for Diversity Within the Classroom, the School, and the Community</td>
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### OVERALL EVALUATION

RECOMMENDED GRADE: **PASS** **FAIL**
### Secondary Intern Placement Profile Descriptors

**A. PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE & DEVELOPMENT**

#### 1. Subject Knowledge
- Rich in breadth & depth.
- Presents information, skills & methods of the subject accurately & in appropriate sequence. Uses teacher & student resources appropriately.
- Inaccurately, poorly used, poorly sequenced information, superficial skills & methods. Inadequate use of sources.

#### 2. Professional Goal Selection
- Consistently sets appropriate generic & subject-related professional goals for each lesson & unit without being urged to do so. Progresses creatively, as ready, from simple to sophisticated.
- Seldom, if ever, sets goals; set only when urged; inappropriate to content of lesson; seldom varied.

#### 3. Pre/Post Conferences
- In the pre-conference, based on pre-planning, clearly presents plans for all essential lesson elements & a specific goal. In the post-conference participates actively & receptively in analysis of feedback & plans for the future.

#### 4. Data Collection Methods
- Appropriately uses available instruments. Often designs suitable instruments which result in specific outcomes & observable behaviour. Data analyzed in portfolio.
- Data collection instrument rarely provided. Often inappropriate for goal or lesson. Rises on cooperating teacher.

#### 5. Reflects & Adapts
- Reviews data & initiates identification of key elements & patterns. Formulates, and takes ownership of appropriate generalizations or implications. Evidence in portfolio.
- Usually doesn’t analyse & interpret feedback. If attempted, fails to identify, or accept, data implications. Relies on cooperating teacher’s analysis & interpretation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Use of School Resources</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhances professional</td>
<td>Makes no effort to enhance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development through</td>
<td>understanding &amp; improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>readings, interactions</td>
<td>of classroom practice or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with school, university,</td>
<td>personal professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other personnel, &amp;</td>
<td>development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development activities.</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Demonstrates Theoretical Competence</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is able to articulate the theore(s)</td>
<td>Does not articulate their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that inform their practice.</td>
<td>theoretical intention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes their theoretical intentions</td>
<td>Must be asked to explain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explicit.</td>
<td>theoretical intentions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Knowledge of Social/Historical Contexts of Injustice</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistently &amp; thoroughly integrates the historical &amp;</td>
<td>Infrequently &amp; inconsistently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social context of injustice/inequity (e.g., sexism,</td>
<td>addresses the historical &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>racism, colonialism &amp; ableism)</td>
<td>social context.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>9. Participates in School Life</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>involved in a reasonable</td>
<td>Avoids involvement. Takes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of experiences outside</td>
<td>part only when asked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the classroom. Initiates</td>
<td>Involvement only token.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement, plans for these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences.</td>
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</table>

B. INTERACTION WITH LEARNERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Respect for ALL Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates a caring</td>
<td>Discriminates or stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional manner to all</td>
<td>or acts on personal preference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children regardless of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>developmental level,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intellectual capacity,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appearance, health,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exceptionality, socio-economic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status, gender, religion,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>race or cultural background.</td>
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</table>
2. Encourages & Supports

| Encourages individuals to do their best. Fosters development of a positive self-concept. Fosters development of positive attitudes toward others & the school. Sets challenging, but achievable, goals. Shows confidence that students can achieve goals. | Does not encourage students to overcome barriers or to achieve potential; does not show confidence in students. Is sarcastic or belittles & generally attacks self-concept of individuals. Allows or encourages negative attitudes toward self, others or the school. |

3. Classroom Climate of Care

| Creates an enjoyable environment conducive to learning. Fosters participation by all learners. Quickly deals with interpersonal tensions. Creates a positive attitude toward & excitement for learning. | Creates negative attitudes toward others & learning. Allows interpersonal tensions to build. |

4. Recognizes and Addresses Inequitable Classroom Relations

| Is able to identify what constitutes an inequity (e.g., name calling, bullying, curricular and structural exclusionary practices). Recognizes the consequences of inequity & the ethical necessity to act appropriately to address the inequity. | Seldom aware of inequities. Seldom able to recognize consequences of inequity & often fails to act appropriately to address the inequity. |

5. Encourages Democratic Involvement in Learning

| Recognizes the experiences & capacity of students to contribute to learning. (e.g., providing opportunities for students to determine how & what they will learn; providing opportunities for students to affect the learning environment, providing "voice, choice & say" in learning). | Rarely acknowledges students capacity to contribute to learning. |

6. Communicates & Monitors Expectations


Faculty of Education, University of Regina

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<tr>
<th>7. Anticipates Problems &amp; Plans for Success</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximizes on task behaviour through establishment of appropriate routines &amp; procedures.</td>
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<th>8. Responds to Minor Disruptions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is aware of &amp; unobtrusively &amp; immediately deals with minor disruptions, watches for reoccurrence.</td>
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<th>9. Motivates &amp; Encourages Through a Positive Means</th>
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<tr>
<td>Positively reinforces appropriate individual &amp; group behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<th>10. Uses Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Approaches</th>
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<tr>
<td>______________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consistently recognizes how to differentiate between treating students equitably versus equally. Recognizes how one’s own biases influence classroom management expectations.</td>
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<th>11. Consultation/Referral</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recognizes personal limitations for dealing with unique needs or situations. Provides appropriate documentation (with assistance) &amp; involves others as needed. (i.e., cooperating teachers, principal, guidance counselor, social services, parents, etc.).</td>
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### C. PLANNING, ORGANIZATION, ASSESSMENT, & EVALUATION

#### 1. Plans Daily

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistently prepares.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is little evidence of careful planning to set &amp; achieve outcomes. Professional goals absent. Superficial or inappropriate planning. Lack of consultation with cooperating teacher or advisor. No relationship of lessons to teaching unit goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent daily lesson plans designed to align curriculum outcomes with assessment for learning. Considers professional goals, the nature of the content, needs of students, time available. Consults cooperating teacher or advisor. Prepares in advance.</td>
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#### 2. Develops Long Term Plans

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepares well-rounded, well-articulated unit (or long-range) plans, congruent with student needs &amp; curriculum outcomes. Uses a range of instructional methods, student resources and assessment &amp; evaluation is fully developed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No evidence of long-range plans or plans which are incomplete, disjointed or otherwise inappropriate for pupil needs or to achieve course goals. No consultation with cooperating teacher or advisor.</td>
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#### 3. Keeps Accurate Records

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record keeping thorough, well-organized &amp; accessible (e.g., attendance, marks, pupil progress, assignment &amp; test schedules, record of professional targets).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Little or no evidence of usable record keeping.</td>
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#### 4. Provides Appropriate Assessments

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### 5. Provides Assessment & Evaluation

|                        | Assessment for learning congruent with outcomes & nature of instruction. Frequent formative & appropriate summative assessment. Helpful feedback and remediation. | Assessment & Evaluation not congruent with outcomes or nature of instruction. Unpredictable scheduling. Lack of feedback or corrective. Focus on facts & information only. Provides little or no feedback on pupil progress or instructional effectiveness. |

### D. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCE

#### 1. Provides Differentiated Learning Opportunities for ALL Students

|                        | Consistently & thoroughly attends to learning needs of all students by differentiating content, instructional strategies, resources & assessment & procedures. | Does not or incidental & or convenient attention to differentiation. |

#### 2. Uses Multiple Perspectives & Indigenous Ways of Knowing

|                        | Integrates multiple perspectives (i.e., intern is purposefully controversial). Integrates a variety of world views in content & instructional approaches central to Indigenous ways of knowing. | Frequently entrenched in a privileging world. Promotes a singular perspective on content and approaches. Does not use instructional approaches central to Indigenous ways of knowing. |

#### 3. Provides Treaty Education

|                        | Knows Treaty Education is a requirement and demonstrates an understanding of why it is a curriculum requirement. Consistently integrates Treaty Education content. | Minimal understanding of Treaty Education, inaccurate/inappropriate understanding of the rationale for Treaty Education, and rarely references Treaty Education in the content and instructional strategies. |

#### 4. Provides Transfer of Learning Opportunities

|                        | Deliberate provision for transfer (bridging) within the subject, across subjects & to life. Examples used are relevant & interesting to students. | Makes no attempt to bridge previous & new learnings, or transfer learnings within the subjects or to other subjects or life. |
### 5. Utilizes Instructional Technology & Multiple Media Forms

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- Wide variety of motivating media & resources used. Always appropriate to outcomes & learner needs & interests. Promotes internally motivated inquiry.
- Rarely, or never, use media or resources. Heavy reliance on text or workbook. When used, fills time but do not promote learning.

### E. TEACHING STRATEGIES, SKILLS & METHODS

#### 1. Uses a Variety of Teaching Strategies

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- Wide range of methods used which complements outcomes, learner needs & the nature of content. Learning styles accommodated. High learner involvement & interest.
- Overuse of lecture & assigned questions. Outcomes & learner & content criteria ignored.

#### 2. Builds on Prior Knowledge

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- Consistently assesses students' experiences before planning, instruction, & selecting content. Logical sequential, cohesive & coherent.
- Frequently approaches planning, instruction without assessing student experiences

#### 3. Uses Explanations, Questions, & Discussions Effectively

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- Excellent use of explanations. Promotes varied & high level questioning. Uses wait time & prompts effectiveness. Has dynamic interpersonal & group facilitation skills.
- No prior analysis. Often presented without emphasis on understanding. Poor selection of examples. Does not use wait time well. Uses only low level questioning. Mainly teacher centered.

#### 4. Demonstrates the Ability to Manage the Learning of Individuals, Groups, & Whole Classes

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</table>

- Aware of the class group & small groups as a social system. Provides instruction at all levels effectively.
- Instruction is mainly teacher centered. Difficulty working with individuals or groups or whole classes. May manage one well but not the others.
## F. Professional Qualities

### 1. Respects STF Code of Ethics

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Projects an image congruent with the expectations of the professional community with respect to commitment, appearance, & actions. | Respects peers, colleagues, the profession, & the community. | Disregards the Code of Ethics. | Dress & mannerisms often not appropriate for context. |

### 2. Fosters Collegial Relationships

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Excellent listening skills. | Sensitive to feelings & needs of others. | Typically egocentric or disengaged. Inattentive to needs & feelings of others. | Uses stereotypes. Discriminates on the basis of sex, race, or religion. |
| Culturally sensitive & responsive. Demonstrates empathy for colleagues, administrators, or parents. | |

### 3. Maturity, Dependability, Leadership & Initiative

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fulfills commitments responsibly; positive, but realistic. Acts independently and is sensitive to the needs & feelings of others. | Unreliable. Duties fulfilled in a haphazard or sloppy way. Must be reminded or checked up on. |

### 4. Response to Stress & Conflict

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Calm & composed under stress. Seeks & fosters satisfactory solutions to disagreements, or misunderstandings. Handles emergency situations calmly & expeditiously. Seeks assistance when appropriate. | Easily flustered. Displays unprofessional behaviour such as sarcasm or blaming rather than seeking solutions. Never admits that help may be needed. Avoids addressing problems and differences. |
5. Communicates Professionally

a) Spoken

| ____________ | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ |
| Audible, clear, & expressive. |
| Enunciation is correct & distinct. |
| Able to relate to students through language. Shares communicative burden with interlocutors. |
| Demonstrates ability to adjust to communicative needs of other through adjustment to tone, stress, and rhythm. |
| Speaks rapidly. Language used. Student communicative needs are congruent. Interlocutors have difficulty understanding verbal messages. |

b) Nonverbal

| ____________ | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ |
| Demonstrates awareness of cultural fluidity of nonverbal communication. Demonstrates ability to make adjustments to eye contact, physical proximity, gesturing, turn-taking, speech acts (i.e., refusals, apologies, requests, instructions). |
| Choices around nonverbal create discomfort for interlocutors. |

c) Written

| ____________ | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ |
| Handouts & assignments are easily understood, match students development level. Models written norms of English. Neat & presentable. |
| Handouts & assignments difficult to understand, contradictory, confusing, & illegible. |

6. Values & Plans for Diversity

| ____________ | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ |
| Fully engaged in understanding the community. Fosters a respectful coexistence across differences. |
| Occasionally uses judgmental & stereotypical language intolerant of differences. |