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## ARTICLE

**The Teachers Our Children Deserve**

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In describing “the schools our children deserve,” Alfie Kohn focuses on “moving beyond traditional classrooms and tougher standards” (1999) to argue for a progressive re-invention of schools. Kohn’s book also prompts us to think about the teachers our children deserve. By implication, from Kohn’s argument, the teachers who would work in the schools he envisions must be prepared to give learners an active role, honor their thinking, and enable their questions to help shape curriculum. Drawing upon Dewey, Kohn positions teachers as orchestrators of democracy as they negotiate the challenges and interactions of daily classroom life. Such teachers see their classrooms as places where a “community of learners... engages in discovery and invention, reflection, and problem-solving” (Kohn, 1999, p. 3). They see their role as responding to the needs and interests of their students, taking their ideas seriously, and using the shared experiences of classroom activities as the foundation for thinking and learning.

One author of this article, David Carroll, a university teacher educator, has been conducting a research project for the past several years to investigate the dispositional characteristics of prospective teachers that best prepare them to be not only outstanding teachers, but committed to the learning and well being of *everybody’s children*. From that research, he developed a framework of dispositional indicators and a related set of “performances of understanding” (Blythe & Associates, 1998) that serve as both guidelines for designing learning experiences and vantage points for assessing the development of these dispositions.

The other author, Annie Parker, was a subject in that research project and is just completing her third year of teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in a diverse, high-poverty urban classroom. As a teacher candidate, Annie’s development stood out among that of the other research subjects as among the most powerful and robust. Together, we explore and analyze the challenge of characterizing the teachers our children deserve. In doing so, we aim to address two major topics:

- What are the key dispositional characteristics of teachers who are prepared for and committed to supporting the learning and well-being of everybody’s children in ways that are consistent with Kohn’s vision? In addressing this topic, we focus in particular on the idea that *our children* must include the full range of students in America’s schools. We illustrate this using examples from Annie’s teaching.
- How does Annie’s experience illustrate the potential value in recruiting and retaining a more diverse pool of candidates to teaching? Annie brings to her work her own experience as an English Language Learner, having immigrated to this country from the Philippines and Japan as an elementary-aged child. She also brings her perspective as a person of color in U.S. society, having experienced racism and prejudice in her own schooling and having crossed socio-economic boundaries as a first-generation college student.

To explore what these ideas mean for the kinds of teachers our children deserve, however, we must first position the inquiry in the context of the demographic imperative (Banks, et. al. 2005, p. 236.) that characterizes U.S. schools today, even more so than it did over a decade ago, when Kohn’s book was first published. We have a demographic divide between the children in our schools and the teachers in our schools -- over 83% of teachers are European-American; around 40% of students are not (Nieto & McDonough, 2011, p. 364). This increase in the diversity of public school students has spread to all parts of the country – suburban and rural as well as urban (Nieto & McDonough, 2011, p. 364). There has been a simultaneous increase in the proportion of children in the United States who are living in poverty – which also disproportionately affects students of color (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 9). This increasingly means that teachers don’t share and/or face a growing challenge to imagine and understand the cultural and socio-economic frames of reference that their students bring to school.

To describe the teachers our children deserve, we must also address this demographic divide. To do so involves proceeding urgently on two fronts. First, we need to better prepare all teachers to have the sociocultural consciousness as well as the competence, represented by an adequate repertoire of practice, to teach all students effectively across cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences:

... aspiring teachers need to expand the horizons of their perceptions of the world if they are to learn to see life from the perspectives of their future students – that is, they need to become socioculturally conscious. (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 27)

Second, we need to address the demographic profile of prospective teachers. Between 80-93% of students enrolled in collegiate teacher education programs are European-American, depending upon the institution and location (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 5). Candidates of color are more likely to be prepared for the challenges of working effectively across the sociocultural and socioeconomic dimensions of difference by virtue of their experiences outside the dominant group in society. They have often experienced occasions of racism and discrimination, or have struggled to succeed in school while learning in a second language, and have learned to recognize how most schools more readily cater to the background experience and needs of the mainstream students. To shift this pattern, we need to recruit and retain teachers from a wider range of racial/ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds:

...In fact, to have reached this far academically, prospective teachers of color must already have a high degree of facility at crossing sociocultural boundaries. If properly tapped by teacher educators, these experiences and insights will serve as resources for the further expansion of their own sociocultural consciousness. (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 34)

In what follows, as we describe the teachers our children deserve, we will also illustrate how to address these two aspects of the demographic divide. We do so by proposing a framework of dispositional indicators for all teachers that attends to the importance of “sociocultural consciousness.” And by featuring examples from Annie’s teaching, we also provide an example of the potential value of recruiting and retaining more teachers from underrepresented populations.

## Dispositional Characteristics for Teaching Everybody's Children

The framework of dispositional characteristics that guides the analysis presented in this article emerged from a research project conducted by David Carroll, in which he studied two cohorts, each comprised of ten teacher candidates, across the duration of their pre-service teacher education program. Annie was a subject in this research project. The research used an inductive approach guided by ideas about "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Carroll collected extensive documentation including assignments, practicum and student teaching evaluations, and extended interviews with each subject at several points in their pre-service teacher education experience. Using the "constant comparative method," (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), he used existing literature to generate plausible categories/hypotheses to characterize the nature and process of the development of dispositions for teaching. He then integrated those ideas into a working framework and returned to the data to code it according to the headings of the framework. Subsequent analysis and comparison across subjects resulted in a consolidation and integration of the framework around a range of headings. As a means of representing the developmental nature of the process of developing dispositions, he employed the idea of "performances of understanding" (Blythe & Associates, 1998) for these headings, to illustrate how the research results suggest that candidates can both develop and reflect their emerging capacities for enacting dispositions through such activities as engaging with others to make sense of practice, interrogating their own perspectives, and attempting to "read" contexts of teaching for their inherent value emphases.

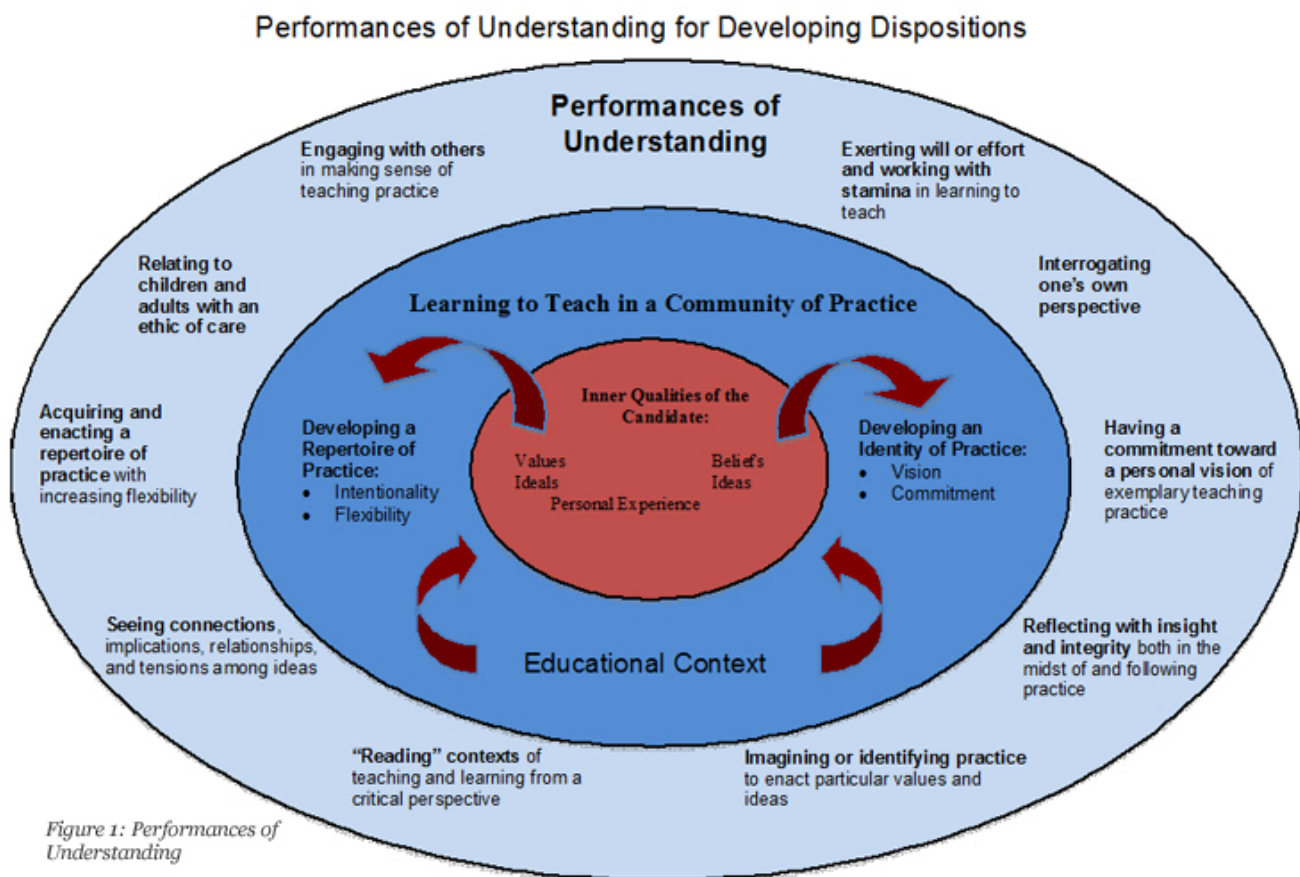


Figure 1: Performances of Understanding

The chart in Figure 1 illustrates how dispositions both develop and become evident through performances of understanding. According to the perspective developed through this research (Carroll, 2005; Carroll, 2007; Carroll, 2012), dispositions connect the inner qualities, both personal and sociocultural, of teachers and teacher candidates – values, beliefs, ideals, ideas, and prior experience – with action in particular educational contexts. Dispositions function as a process that connects these inner qualities with strategies or a repertoire of practice directed with intentionality toward deliberate outcomes. Dispositions for the kind of exemplary teaching needed to do well by everybody's children become a reliable characteristic of a particular teacher's practice with the development of a professional identity and repertoire of practice that grow out of acting strategically, achieving desired outcomes, and recognizing oneself as a person capable of doing so. This process plays out differently for different individuals as they negotiate ways of being a professional educator consistent with their inner values and commitments while practicing in the particular contexts of their own educational setting.

In linking this research with the idea of describing the dispositional characteristics of the teachers everybody's children deserve, Carroll brought this dispositional framework to the Recruitment and Retention Task Force, which he co-chaired at his college. This group was charged with examining and making recommendations for how teacher education programs in the college could better recruit and retain underrepresented students. Task Force members helped consolidate and integrate the performances of understanding to emphasize five important dimensions related to preparing teachers for everybody's children. As indicated in the accounts from Annie's teaching which follow, working effectively with the whole range of students in schools requires that teachers successfully attend to and address inherent issues in society that make their way into schools associated with race, class, linguistic and cultural background, and other kinds of differences that play out in school interactions. This framework is not intended as an exclusive list of dispositional indicators; rather it calls attention to what are particularly critical dimensions of teaching suited to

addressing the needs of everybody's children.

- Teachers need to reliably engage with others with an ethic of care, sensitivity and responsiveness.
- Teachers need to recognize that everyone grows up with a world view that is influenced differently by factors such as culture, gender, race, ethnicity, and social- background.
- Teachers need to have a commitment toward achieving a society that embraces diversity and promotes social justice.
- Teachers need to question their own perspectives and reflect with integrity and insight on their decisions and actions.
- Teachers need to be curious and persistent in pursuing academic and professional knowledge while acquiring and enacting a repertoire of practices with increasing intentionality and flexibility.

A more complete account of the process of developing this framework is published elsewhere (Carroll, 2011). While Kohn (1999) does not explicitly address the impact of the demographic shift and the increase in poverty in school populations in recent decades, he clearly aligns himself with a vision of schooling that is “defined by a concern for both the fulfillment of each child and the creation of a more democratic society (p. 120). He implicitly aligns himself with the idea that schools should be “places where a new generation learns the skills and dispositions necessary to *evaluate* those institutions” (p. 116). The intent of this framework of dispositions is to articulate capacities that teachers need to have to transform schools into places that will serve everybody's children.

### **Annie Introduces Her Classroom**

I am a relatively new teacher, just completing my third year of teaching. Eighty-seven percent of the students attending my school qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Almost half the students in my class have a Latino background. The remaining students are divided nearly evenly among African-American, Asian, and Asian-Pacific Islander backgrounds, with an additional small proportion of American Indians. Within my classroom, in addition to this overall pattern, most of the Latino students I have are students who have spent their prior school experience from kindergarten through grade two being instructed solely in Spanish during Literacy. I am teaching them reading and writing for the first time in English. There are also individual students – also English Language Learners – from Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as three special education students with IEP's. The academic background among my students covers an enormous range.

Life in my school is typically somewhat chaotic and full of conflict. At recess, children commonly experience a variety of negative experiences, including name-calling, bullying, and disrespect. One of the things I do to try to help my students learn to take responsibility for how they handle these situations, and how they treat each other, is to have daily class meetings. One of the messages I try to convey through this process and everyday encounters in the classroom, is that mistakes are OK, absolutely normal to being human, and that we can learn a lot from them.

I approach academic subjects in ways that are similar to these other features of my teaching. Instruction starts out in group meetings, usually on our rug. I make a point of differentiating my teaching to address the wide range of academic and linguistic backgrounds and approaches to learning among my students. Large-group instruction is followed up with frequent small-group work and individual conferencing. I develop clear and consistent routines for academic work time that enable my students to work well independently while I confer with individuals.

I think that you can see the impact of my teaching simply by observing my students. When you walk in my class, it is very quiet, and the children are productive and focused on whatever they're working on at the moment. In the hallway, we have one of the best lines in the school. I believe it is important to teach students how to walk appropriately in the hallway because we are all in this building together, and to remind them that we do these things out of fairness and respect for others who are learning in the school.

In what follows, we introduce the dispositional framework, illustrate it with examples from Annie's teaching, and draw connections to the vision of non-traditional progressive education proposed by Alfie Kohn (1999). Each section begins with a dimension of the dispositional framework followed by Annie's account of her own teaching related to that dimension.

### **Disposition #1: Teachers Need to Reliably Engage With Others With an Ethic of Care, Sensitivity and Responsiveness**

*Teachers need to have the ability to make connections with others, entertain their perspectives, appreciate their unique backgrounds and knowledge, and recognize gaps in their own knowledge and experience that may make it difficult for them to understand and appreciate the experience of others.*

**Annie's Account:** At the end of my first year of teaching, I went to speak with a veteran teacher about the students that I would be getting in my class for the following school year. Typically, we had blue file folders that gave us background information about upcoming students, their academic progress with examples, and other collected work. This particular teacher is someone I admire and a veteran teacher at our school, so her opinions and insights are valuable to me. I remember walking into her classroom and simply asking her to tell me about some kids in her class that I knew I was getting.

Her first response was to quickly label the list of students in a very informal manner. She looked at names, read them off, and would either say, “Oh, he's a sweetheart,” or “he's really smart.” A few students however came with some baggage from the teacher. She told me things like, “Watch out for this one, she is really sneaky. And she's a liar!” She also remarked how another student was very rude and disrespectful and had called her a bitch. As she continued, I could see the frustration and anxiety this particular handful of students caused her, and I tried to take in her words thoughtfully without interrupting or asking questions.

Having just finished my first, and very difficult, year of teaching, I wasn't sure how to take this teacher's advice. I went back to my classroom and sat down wide-eyed and drained. On the one hand, this teacher knows these students better than I do, and I trust that she had these experiences and felt this way about these students; but on the other hand, I had never met them personally and didn't really know them yet. I finally decided that I would just have to be cautiously optimistic and get to know the students at the beginning of the year. I would get a fresh start and so would they.

The problem is that once the school year had begun, these same students had started exhibiting the exact behaviors the previous teacher told me about! This is when I had to begin some trouble-shooting. I went to my bookshelf and reread some texts like *Positive Discipline* (Nelsen, et al., 2000) and classroom management books. I was reminded about thinking through why these negative incidents had started happening in my classroom. Eventually, I felt like maybe I hadn't done enough or was doing something in the wrong way. I wasn't sure what yet, but I had to start somewhere. I had these intense, rolling feelings of frustration, helplessness, and anxiety, and it began to remind me of my own time back in school, and how I was often misunderstood by my teachers. My teachers had no idea what my home life was like or how I was feeling, yet so many of their expectations were put onto me without understanding the kind of kid that I was and what I was going through in school outside of academics. I decided to start with Jack.

At the time, it had probably been about five weeks into school. The first two weeks of school is usually very easy, and students are nervous and excited to be starting a new class, so their behaviors begin to show up a little later as expectations begin to be clearly held. Jack, during this time, started becoming quick to give up and giving me attitude in some situations. When he didn't feel like he did something right or he wasn't being treated fairly, he would immediately shut down. He would start getting mouthy (under his breath), not following instructions I gave, and acting very immature, doing things like pouting and whining like a small child. His more frequent reaction was to simply ignore me and ignore the things that were happening in the classroom and zone out. I always feel like I work so hard in my class to set up the school year in a positive way, and to be mindful and thoughtful about my words, actions, and activities I do with students. So, after all of that effort, I was frustrated that this student was misbehaving so much, and I just couldn't understand why he was being difficult and acting out.

My urge to fix this problem led me to deciding that I would hold Jack in for recess and we would talk about what had been happening in class. I wasn't sure how I was going to start the conversation. I felt nervous to talk with him one-on-one about his negative behaviors, and I was uneasy about how he would react. One day, he acted up again, and I stuck to my guns and let him know that we would be having a chat during recess time.

Recess time came, and the first thing that popped out of my mouth was, "Why do you think you're in here for recess?" He replied, "I don't know." So I told him, "I'm noticing that you are doing things like talking back or not listening to me when I tell you to do something." His response was to shut down, of course. We sat there together for about a minute, and I could see on his face that he felt something. I wasn't sure what, but I was hoping this at least started the conversation around how I was feeling about the situation. Often, I tell students during private conversations that their behavior is causing me to feel disappointed or frustrated, so they understand that I am also a person with feelings and thoughts and that their actions truly affect others. Getting to know Jack was a slow moving process, but after about the third time of having him in at recess for a chat, I started to see that wall cracking. He would talk to me more about why he was mad or tell me his emotions instead of shutting down quietly and holding in his feelings.

He did end up opening up to me, but only after much prodding on my part and asking him about how he was feeling and why this or that was happening. At times, I almost fed him reasons for his behavior saying things like, "Maybe you're just having a bad day; I get like this too. Do you think that's why you didn't want to work on your math when I asked you to?" I tried to make connections for him and for myself for his behaviors. What was it about what just happened that made him react like this? What did I say right before he shut down? What was the class working on at the time? I had to do a lot of investigating and trying to keep an open mind to make sure I didn't push him away. Most people's reaction to unpleasant human beings is to simply steer clear and forget about them, but in my heart I felt like Jack needed me to crack that shell and not give up on him. I ended up talking to his previous teachers and trying to patch together some of my conversations with Jack. To some degree, I think his previous teachers may have embarrassed him unknowingly about his academic performance in class. Jack had a way of shutting down, especially when things got too hard for him, and would decide that he just wasn't smart enough and couldn't do the work. There was a consistent pattern of this behavior with him.

As time went on, I got to know the real Jack and began to understand that he was just an incredibly sensitive person. He took things very hard, and he felt stupid when he made mistakes. His self-esteem and self-efficacy were low, and I know that his school experiences contributed to his feelings of failure in class. With this in mind, I now had the power to change these experiences for him and be deliberate and planned in my actions to help him feel successful and capable in school and learning. I would do things like remind him of how well he did on math yesterday, so I know he'll be able to do the upcoming assignment; or I would set up activities where he could work with a partner first before speaking out an answer, so his confidence in class could build. A lot of the work was around noticing when he made an effort and pointing out his successes in class to him. It was also about showing him how far he was progressing even if he started somewhere he wasn't necessarily proud to be academically. As I continue to get to know students more and more in this way, I feel more comfortable in my actions and it reinforces my belief that making a connection with students is one of the most important things every teacher must do, especially with their most difficult students.

## **Commentary**

Noddings (1984) called attention to the importance of having teachers who could engage with others with an ethic of care, sensitivity, and responsiveness. To work effectively with children across boundaries of race/ethnicity, culture, language, and socio-economic background, a teacher also needs to have a regard for others' perspectives and a willingness to seek them out and learn from them (Nieto & Bode, 2008). This is a critical dimension of culturally responsive pedagogy that calls for recognizing "the rich and varied cultural wealth, knowledge, and skills that students from diverse groups bring to schools..." (T.C. Howard, 2010, p. 67). It also requires acting with humility, showing a willingness to be uncomfortable, and taking risks in order to acknowledge gaps in your own knowledge and experiences, and learning from others (G. Howard, 2006). Teachers who can do this reliably, take a positive, strength-based view of other people (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p.37).

This ability to engage sensitively and responsively with others is a hallmark of Annie's teaching, and is exemplified throughout the description. She questions her own understanding of her students relentlessly and insists on viewing them as capable, despite warnings otherwise from colleagues. In doing so, Annie is informed by her own experience as an English Language Learner and can readily empathize with the challenges her students face.

As Kohn might say, Annie honors her students' thinking, takes their needs seriously, and uses their shared experiences as the context for practicing democratic living. Teachers who are unable to do this effectively will be unlikely to establish educative relationships with the full range of students in our schools, and unlikely to be able to re-think the typical imbalanced teacher-student relationships of traditional classrooms.

## **Disposition #2: Teachers Need to Recognize That Everyone Grows Up with a World View That Is Influenced Differently By Factors Such as Culture, Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Social Class Background**

*Teachers need to be aware of and take responsibility for their own backgrounds and world views, be able to share them with others, and appreciate that others—both colleagues and students—have differing world views. They also need to be able to “read” educational contexts with respect to issues of equity and power that are experienced differently by individuals from different backgrounds.*

**Annie's Account:** One of the first times I realized that I hadn't dealt with my own issues of bullying and racism that I had experienced growing up was during my student internship. My host school was in an affluent neighborhood and was made up of predominately White students and teachers. I remember walking through the hallways one day, probably on my way to pick up students from the gym, and I had an encounter with a student coming out with a small group on their way to another classroom. I made eye contact with the group and said hello. It was a small pleasantry, and pretty soon one of the students began asking me what race I was. I told them, and hurried along, no big deal. Suddenly, I heard one of the students saying goodbye to me in a way that struck the deepest nerve in my soul. I heard him mimicking what a stereotypical Asian might sound like when speaking an Asian language. I don't even remember how I reacted, but I'm pretty sure that I told the student that it was inappropriate. In that exact moment, the school principal had come around the corner and heard what had happened. The principal immediately corrected the student and had a serious discussion of his behavior, while I quickly scampered away and into the nearest bathroom where I broke down in tears.

I felt so confused and embarrassed for so many reasons. I felt caught in the act, having the principal witness something very awkward and uncomfortable for me; I felt sad that this situation brought up raw emotions of how I was treated in school; and I felt ridiculous for letting a little kid get me down so much for something he probably didn't even realize was affecting me this way. The principal later came to me and apologized for what had happened, and the student came to me the next day and read me a letter of apology that he had written. This particular student was in a special education classroom and his teacher came with him to present the letter to me. As he read the apology, I remember getting emotional and having to fight back tears as I listened. When the teacher saw my face, she began getting emotional and was deeply apologetic for what had happened. I had not wanted to even think about this incident again and just erase it from my mind, and here it was affecting me the same way it had the day before and in front of an adult. I felt so ashamed and so silly for letting it bother me, but I can't seem to erase those very sharp and painful memories of myself being taunted as a child even to this day.

As I start a new class each year, I purposely address the issue of bullying, putting-down others, and name-calling with my students. I do so because I have seen it get the best of me in situations with students, and I've come to realize I must calm down before I handle some situations, and also because I need students to understand where I'm coming from and where I stand on these matters of social justice and respect. So in addressing this topic with my students, I usually begin with a read-aloud of the book *Chrysanthemum*, by Keven Henkes (2007), which is about a little girl whose name is made fun of. This little girl goes to school on her first day, and she loves her name, Chrysanthemum. Her parents love it, and she loves it, she's so excited. And then, pretty soon, she's being made fun of for having that very different, long name. It can be a lesson about name-calling and how others feel during school and how they can be further affected outside of school. We have a discussion around what happened to the character, how she felt in the beginning of the story and why, and how she felt towards the end of the story and why. It becomes a rich discussion as I probe students about their own experiences in school, “Has something like that ever happened to any of you before? What happened and how did you feel at the time? What do you think the other person felt at the time?” Students are very apt to share their own experiences of feeling put down or being called names during recess. Some even react much like I did and begin to relive those feelings of sadness, frustration, and anger as they tell the class their own stories. This becomes a perfect segue for my own sharing.

I discuss my history with my students. “Well you know, when I was a child, this happened to me, too – not with my name, but with how I looked, and I was bullied.” I share with them how it made me feel, and how this affects me as an adult. “So if you notice me being very on top of you about that, it's because I know how that feels, and I will not tolerate that in this classroom, because we all agreed we're going to feel safe and that we are a community that has to work together.” This adds to our Classroom Beliefs poster that we've been working on, which has our agreements of how we'll act and why, as our year-long contract together. Students are surprised when I tell them that I was bullied. They can't understand why someone like me, who seems very strong-minded, positive, and happy, could feel bad. Ironically, this is similar to how adults react when I tell them some of my experiences. It is as if it is unbelievable that this would ever happen, especially to someone like me who appears a certain way to the outside world.

Because of all this, I'm also especially sensitive to the issue of disrespect. When I see a child treat another child badly, I tense up. I can feel myself start to get emotional and I have to check my emotions and look at what's happening in the situation. I have to take a breath and calm down first before I go and talk to that child, because it hits home with me, and I don't want to overreact. Disrespect can occur between kids on purpose and on accident; sometimes it's because they really wanted to play with this person and the person didn't want to play with them so they had to do something about it; sometimes they mean to hurt others, but not as deeply as it turned out to hurt the other person; and sometimes they have done something and didn't even realize it hurt someone else. It's interesting to see the scenarios that can play out between students, and how they attempt at developing and keeping or breaking relationships with one another. It can take some detective work and observation to get to the heart of a child's true motivation. I often have to stop and ask myself things like, “Is this about hurting others, or is this truly about feeling left out all the time and separate from the group? What makes this child feel excluded, and what can I do to change that?”

### **Commentary**

Teachers working with everybody's children must be willing to investigate and take responsibility for their own background and world view and recognize how they are shaped by various factors in their lives, including aspects of gender, race, ethnicity, and social class background (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Darder & Torres, 2002). They must work to develop and maintain a “critical consciousness”

(Nieto & McDonough, 2011, p. 366) that enables them to read educational contexts, and recognize and explore how power differences among people in society affect learning and development. They must be willing to acknowledge that society is not *neutral* with respect to how different people are afforded opportunities and resources, and that schools usually reflect those inequalities (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 27).

Having been the target of racism in her own life, and having experienced growing up as someone from outside the dominant European-American community, Annie has always been aware of differences in world views, opportunities, and resulting inequities. She purposefully explores ways of sharing authority in her own classroom and uses her life experiences deliberately to help her students recognize and understand issues of social justice and the challenges of community life in their own lives.

Kohn's (1999) vision of progressive education does not address this dimension explicitly, although he does note that the educators need to "...start from where the student is and work from there. They try to figure out what the students need and where their interests lie. Superb teachers strive constantly to imagine how things look from the child's point of view, what lies behind his questions and mistakes" (p.131). He also emphasizes the importance of opportunities for discovery, invention, reflection, and problem-solving. These aspects of learning need to be used as well to address sociocultural and sociopolitical dimensions of society and schools. Teachers who are unable to do this are unlikely to be able get past their own perspectives and to act with interest in exploring how colleagues and students from different backgrounds than their own experience the world. They are unlikely to be able to recognize and address the profound impact of differences in access to power and opportunity in our society and how those differences play out in schools.

### **Disposition #3: Teachers Need to Have A Commitment Toward Achieving a Society That Embraces Diversity And Promotes Social Justice**

*Teachers need to value human diversity as an asset to be built upon, rather than a deficit to be overcome. They need to work at building partnerships to promote the well-being of students, their families, and their communities.*

**Annie's Account:** As part of our regular school day, we have a class meeting to discuss any issues happening between students and talk about what is going on with each of us if we want to share with the class. I see class meetings as an important time for our classroom and a genuine opportunity to learn and grow from each other through problem-solving daily life and learning how to interact with others in times of difficulty.

It starts out with giving a compliment around the circle, and then going to our "jar of issues" which is literally a small container filled with folded notes of students' issues. We pull one out at random and that person is asked to speak up about their problem. We have built an environment of trust all year for students to feel comfortable sharing their problems and understanding that this process is for students to help one another and bring different perspectives and ideas to the person needing help. At times, I'll use this forum when I am needing students to understand my teacher issues, and get their help in solving a problem I'm having. I will say things like, "Lately, I've been having a really hard time getting students to pay attention during math. They get distracted from the other groups playing games, and then they don't understand what I'm teaching. I don't know what to do any more. I am feeling really frustrated about it. Any solutions?" Students at first, find this process very entertaining but somewhat uncomfortable. They don't take it seriously, and we must go over and over again about the reason we have class meetings and why it is important. Eventually, students begin to see the impact it has. They begin to see class meetings as an outlet, a time to be together on a different level, and a way to talk out problems they may be having or feeling. Many of the issues that come up have to do with friendships, bullying, being bothered by someone and not knowing what to do, trying out solutions that didn't work for them, and for some students, it becomes an outlet to be noticed and be able to participate.

One year, our class meeting forum served an important role in talking out a scary incident that happened with another teacher. The students had been complaining about this particular teacher in the building during class meetings about him being mean to them and telling them to shut up. The students didn't want to go to his classroom anymore and we talked about different solutions like reporting it to me if it happens again or going to the teacher, if you felt safe enough, and telling him how his actions made you feel. I even would pop in once in a while to this teacher's class and observe the group for a couple minutes to see if that would help put anything to ease or see if any of the students' accusations were completely accurate.

One day, during my planning time, my entire class was brought back by this teacher because the students were being very disrespectful towards him. I immediately had the class sit at their desks while I talked outside with the teacher to find out what had happened. The teacher was very mad and upset. He told me that one of my students was not listening to him and being disrespectful by talking back and not following directions. I apologized to him, and let him know that we would be discussing what happened, and that I would talk to the student personally about his behavior.

I came back into the classroom and had everyone come quickly to the rug to have an impromptu class meeting. We sat in a circle and I asked what happened in class with the other teacher. Many students' hands shot up, wanting to tell the story. I listened, and continued to prompt with, "What happened first, then what happened?" Students chimed in, almost talking all at once, and finishing each others' sentences, agreeing, disagreeing, and clarifying what actually happened. Suddenly, the door opened, and the teacher they were having issues with had come back. His face was filled with anger and I could tell he was breathing hard. Apparently, he had been pacing back and forth down the hallway. He asked if he could speak with the class, which I thought would be fine.

He began talking about his frustration with the class and asking students things like, "What do your parents think you are doing in school? So, how should you act?" The students were stiff and silent, listening worriedly, and responding quietly when asked direct questions. When the teacher came to the student he was having problems with, he immediately targeted him, and began raising his voice. He said something like, "And this one. Why don't you listen in class? Look at me when I'm talking! Stand up! Stand up!" This student carefully stood and began fidgeting and looking around the room. He looked absolutely terrified, like a dog being scolded and wanting to scamper away. The teacher went on, "This is what I'm talking about. Keep your hands still, don't touch the things around you, and look at me when I'm talking to you!" At this point, I didn't know what to do. I myself felt scared and wasn't sure what was going to happen next. I also wasn't alone. At that same time, I had three middle-schoolers volunteering in my classroom, and their teacher was also in the room with me witnessing all that was happening. I wanted to jump into the situation and defend this student, but I also knew that I didn't want to start yelling myself and getting into an argument in front of the students with this other

teacher.

After about three minutes of this berating and trying to get answers out of the student he targeted, he simply walked out of the room and disappeared as quickly as he had appeared the second time, the door slamming shut behind him. The second that door closed, I took a deep breath and looked at the students. I was to the point of tears and simply told them, "I don't know what just happened. I'm really shocked right now. Let me just think for a second." After about a minute, I told them how upset I was and sat back down in the circle with them at the rug. I began crying and apologized, telling them that I just couldn't believe that had just happened and that it wasn't OK. The middle school teacher that was in the room at the time was appalled and told the students that it wasn't right what had just happened. I decided that I would report this to the principal immediately, and told the students that we should talk about what happened and check in on how we were feeling. The middle-school teacher was willing to take notes for us while we talked about what we had seen and heard just several minutes before. Everyone in the room felt the same way: scared, anxious, and sad. The student who was targeted said he would be OK, but I could tell that he was completely mentally and emotionally broken from the look on his face. After our class meeting, the middle-school teacher agreed to watch the students while I talked with my principal. Later on that night, I emailed the teacher about how that made me and the class feel when he came in and basically yelled at the students, and how sad it was that the particular student he targeted had come so far behaviorally in the school year, and how damaging his actions may be to him. That teacher had substitute teachers in his position for the next couple weeks before resigning. We never saw him again.

After that incident, the class was much closer and our class meetings were elevated to the next level in their seriousness and as a way of reporting out on problems. I feel like the students also saw me differently. They had a new appreciation for the way I talked behavior issues out during recess time and how I always tried to involve the students so we could solve them together. I feel like the students really saw me as someone who genuinely cared about them and my actions matched the words that I had been feeding them all year about staying calm, thinking through problems before reacting, and being problem-solvers in difficult situations. Class meetings in my classroom continue to serve this purpose, along with teaching students about and practicing much needed social skills.

### Commentary

If teachers are to genuinely provide the schooling that all of our children deserve, then they must value human diversity as an enriching resource (Vavrus, 2002, p. 37; Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 35). They must be able to foster relationships and equitable partnerships that promote the well-being of their students as diverse individuals, their students' families, and the community in which they work (Nieto & McDonough, 2011, p. 374; Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 72). Teachers who instead see diversity as a deficit to be overcome are unable to recognize the "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) that their students draw upon, and unlikely to be able to see beyond the cultural norms of the dominant society to genuinely respect the different cultural values and experiences that shape their students' lives and influence their learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, pg. 35).

Annie chose to become a teacher in part to insure that school experience would be different for her students than it was for her with respect to issues of diversity and social justice. She cares deeply about issues of mutual respect and is alert to circumstances that threaten it in her classroom. Promoting this vision of society is a daily aspect of her teaching. Teachers who are unable to do this are unable to stand as allies for everybody's children. Kohn's commitment to teaching as a way of living democracy is echoed in Annie's practice (Kohn, 1999, p. 4). As Kohn notes, "Ultimately, learning is most likely to be engaging and effective if it takes place in a classroom that feels like a caring community" (p. 155).

### Disposition #4: Teachers Need to Question Their Own Perspectives and Reflect With Integrity and Insight On Their Decisions and Actions

*Teachers need to be able to juggle numerous interrelated dimensions of teaching with effectiveness and integrity. Teachers who can do this rely upon a capacity for critical reflection to test and challenge their own perceptions, decisions, and actions.*

**Annie's Account:** Another thing I do with my classroom at the beginning of the year is to pay extra attention to students who are exhibiting troublesome behaviors because those are the ones I worry about the most, and the ones I have to work extra hard with at making a connection and establishing a positive relationship. In general, I ask students lots of questions, but I focus particularly on asking these target students about their actions when they are misbehaving during class time. I may say something like, "This is the third time I've had to talk to you at recess about blurting out during lessons. I think we're going to have to do something because it's really started to cause problems for me and your classmates. What do you think?"

One of the important things I try to do in these conversations is to work on getting buy-in from the student. I may ask, "Do you notice that this is happening, too? Do you see that as a problem?" Usually they say yes, and I ask them, "Well, do you want to change that? Should we do something about that?" Sometimes, it takes a little longer to answer, but they usually say yes, and if they say no, I remind them about our Class Beliefs and how we agreed to certain ways of being so that we could have a great year together.

I think the students recognize many behavior issues within themselves, but they just don't know what to do about them. It's almost like they're thinking, "I can't control my body. I just want to get up and run around during work time. I feel like I want to stop, but I don't know what to do about it." So part of my purpose as a teacher becomes helping them learn to monitor themselves; helping them learn to manage themselves. Part of this expectation on their part has a lot to do with my reactions and behaviors. Essentially, I am modeling for them every second of the day what I am preaching. If I have a mis-step, I recognize it with them, and try to correct myself in front of them, so they can see my thought processes.

As a teacher, I have been tested many times on my reactions and how I would confront bad attitudes from students and problems of all sorts. In the beginning of my teaching career, I have to be honest, I resorted to a lot of yelling and sitting at my desk crying out of frustration. I try not to cry too much in front of the students anymore, but I have really had to think about why I get so upset and how I can react differently. In this way, I have to practice all the time for myself, and for the students, how to breathe deeply and calm down before reacting to a situation. We have a positive time-out rug in our class and I have definitely used it—for myself, but also for the students' benefit of seeing how to deal with stress and anger in a positive way that won't hurt others.



One time, a student I had been really working hard on making a connection with and being patient with said something to me in the hall that just really upset me. I had been so diligent and consistent with this child all year, and for some reason he was having a tough day. When I approached him and tried to talk it out and problem-solve in my usual way, he started mouthing off to me and saying things like, "I don't care, get out of my face! I hate you! You don't really care about me!" After being so calm around this student when he acted out and being so patient with his work on behaviors, I had had enough.

When we got in the classroom, I could feel myself tense up, my breathing wasn't regular, I was angry, and my patience was done. I had the students go sit down at the rug and I sat at my computer and typed a letter to this student's mother to get my feelings out on paper. I went about typing this letter to calm myself down for a good 3-4 minutes, and then I came back to the group and we talked about taking a positive time-out. Of course, the whole time, the room was dead silent. They were sitting at the rug, waiting to see what was going to happen next since they could tell something was wrong and I was mad.

Those are the real-life examples that I use with my students, and when I'm feeling that way, it is a special opportunity that I see as a teachable moment. When I returned to the group, I said, "Thank you, guys, for being patient. I was really upset and I had to go to my desk, take some deep breaths and calm down. Because if I didn't, this is what would have happened... I would have come back to the rug like this... Sit down, be quiet..." I acted it out for them. They got the point and they understood what I meant by taking a positive time-out. To be able to connect those moments to real-life situations is priceless for students to see. They are reminded again that I am a person with feelings and that I also struggle with my emotions at times, but I can be in control of how I treat others and how I help myself to calm down.

### **Commentary**

Teaching is inherently complex and requires constant judgments and adjustments in relation to the changing contexts, diverse individuals, multiple perspectives, and constant interactions that go into practically every teaching moment. Teachers who can juggle these elements with effectiveness and integrity must be able to reliably engage in "critical reflection" to challenge their own perspectives (T.C. Howard, 2010, pp 118-119). To do so also requires working with effort and stamina to solve the kinds of individual and social problems that arise among the diverse participants in classrooms and schools (Charney, 2002).

Annie interrogates her own viewpoint relentlessly, whether in probing her understanding of her students or examining the appropriateness of her actions. She shares her own challenges with maintaining equanimity in the face of disrespectful actions with her students, and models how to carry out that kind of reflection. She also works persistently on the problems that arise within her classroom – whether it be to achieve buy-in from a student on committing to a behavior improvement plan, or to solve social problems at recess. Kohn advocates for this kind of practice in his view of a "classroom as a place where a community of learners – as opposed to a collection of discrete individuals – engages in discovery and invention, reflection and problem-solving" (1999, p. 3). Teachers who are unable to do this are subject to professional blindness and the inability to make changes in and from practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

### **Disposition #5: Teachers Need to Be Curious and Persistent In Pursuing Academic and Professional Knowledge While Acquiring and Enacting a Repertoire Of Practices With Increasing Intentionality and Flexibility**

*Teachers need to have both deep subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge that point them toward connecting students with curriculum. To achieve this connection requires recognizing relationships among ideas and understanding how to build bridges between students' background and experience and subject matter, and it requires curiosity and persistence. It leads to developing a repertoire of practice that can be used strategically in response to changing circumstances.*

**Annie's Account:** Over the years, I have steered away from classic guided-reading groups where I might pull four or five students to read the same book and then answer questions, go over vocabulary, and do other activities. Instead, I have learned that conferencing works the best for me. I get to know my students' abilities and needs, and they get the individualized attention from the teacher that they desperately need to move forward in their reading with very goal-oriented, specific tasks to improve their areas of weakness. For example, I will conference with a student and notice there might be trouble with fluency. I might then give a fluency strategy, explaining the things I noticed that were done well and the things that need work. Next, I teach the strategy and have the student practice with me. The student restates the goal, explaining to me the specific plans for what to work on until the next time we meet, and then I set the next appointment with him or her in my conferring binder. I like the flexibility and fluidity of conferencing. There is something that feels stifling for me to set up a traditional guided reading group and go through the motions. It just doesn't feel natural for me. I'd rather assess in the moment, guiding and steering students towards strategies and checking their growth over time, much like a coach.

During my very first year of teaching, my principal had me meet with a text representative for a big-name textbook company to explain and go over the school's reading curriculum. At the time, I didn't know who she was, and didn't realize that she didn't even work for the school, much less the district. She claimed to have once been a teacher so she understood the struggles of teaching reading to such a wide range of students. She promoted the product very well, for the most part. When the school year began, I started using it in my classroom, which was my only real resource for reading, anyway, so I wasn't going to complain.

After about a month of diligent, prescribed use of this curriculum, I absolutely hated it. I didn't feel like students were very excited about the readers, and my guided groups were not going well. I didn't have a focus, and I didn't know where students were essentially headed in reading. It became monotonous to introduce a story, read a story, and have students answer questions quietly at their desks in workbooks, while I formally met with a small group at a kidney-shaped table and repeated this process in a smaller setting. I decided to take advantage of our literacy coach in the building and trust her with my opinions about the reading curriculum. We talked about different ways I could meet with students and make our reading block a little more fun, for me and for the students. I told her my ideas about what I had learned in school about the workshop model, and how I felt more comfortable with that way of teaching, but I was nervous to go against the principal and not use the program he introduced to me, and that the rest of the building was using in their literacy practices. She was a smart lady who told me to go with my instincts. She gave me permission to try my own way and supported my decision to take a different direction.

Since that moment, my literacy practices have improved greatly, and ironically, the district moved a year later to a workshop model of balanced literacy. My doubts and fears, and justification to others about my work became a huge sigh of relief and vindication for following my instincts as a professional teacher.

### Commentary

Teaching in ways that are intellectually ambitious while also attuned to the learning and well-being of all children requires both careful and creative thinking. Teachers need not only a strong academic background and corresponding pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987), but they must also be able to recognize connections and relationships among ideas and be able to build bridges of understanding between their students' widely varying experience and the subject matter they are teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 69; T.C. Howard, 2010, p. 82). While holding high academic expectations for all students, they must also be sensitive to the different learning trajectories of their students and be able to provide both appropriate support and challenge (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 38). This involves a constant pursuit of new ideas and professional knowledge, which requires developing and enacting a repertoire of practice with increasing flexibility and intentionality (Wenger, 1998). Teachers who are unable to do this lose touch with the deep meaning of their subject matter and too often resort to the annual repetition of tired, over-used curriculum and learning activities without taking the time to anticipate the differentiated learning needs of their current students.

Even as a relatively inexperienced teacher, Annie has begun to pursue her own constructions and adaptations in her professional repertoire, influenced by her understanding of her students and herself. She steers her own professional path in her school, challenging her students to meet high expectations, adapting literacy practices, differentiating her instruction, adopting an ambitious program of class meetings, and developing a comprehensive classroom community-building program. Kohn describes a similar vision of the teacher our children deserve: "Some would call this teacher a 'facilitator of learning' but she doesn't 'facilitate' in the sense of 'making smooth or easy'; rather, she stimulates learning 'by making problems more complex, involving and arousing. She artfully complicates the situation, challenging the students to think harder and better'" (Kohn, 1999, p. 135). Teachers who are unable to do this become stagnant and fail to see critical connections and interrelationships among the intersecting aspects of teaching and learning.

### Illustrating the Potential Value in Recruiting and Retaining a More Diverse Pool of Candidates for Teaching

In this section, we use Annie's experience in choosing to become a teacher and learning how to be a teacher to explore the potential value in recruiting more teachers who come, like Annie, from outside the dominant demographic teacher candidate profile of European-American middle-class women.

Annie's background as a low-income person of color in American society played a critical role in her choice to become a teacher. The values she describes below in her application essay for entering her initial teacher education program are, by now, familiar to us from reading about her subsequent practice as a teacher. These have proved to be persistent and characteristic aspects of who Annie is as a person and a teacher.

Growing up, I felt as though no one believed in me or saw the potential I had. It was not until fourth grade that a special teacher, by the name of Ms. Sterling, made me feel as though I had any worth at all.... Too many children are lost and struggle with the upsets of the world. Often, they have no one to turn to who will give them the support and encouragement they deserve. It is crucial that children grow up in a positive environment that builds their self-worth and confidence.... Children desperately need to feel as though they are strong and capable, and that they can be successful in the things they take on. As long as there is one person that believes in their potential, it will give them the encouragement they need to succeed in our world. As a teacher, I want to be a mentor and role model that students can rely on. Elementary school teachers have a tremendous impact on children because of the time they spend with them in the classroom. I understand how challenging a broken home life can be, and will help students through my own experiences....

I am impassioned about helping children succeed and live up to their full potential. I know that the transformations I have made, and the challenges I have overcome, could not have been possible without the guidance and encouragement of my teachers and college professors. ... I continue to strive toward my goals and achieve, thanks to the people who believed in me, and who gave me a fighting chance to succeed. I want to give this same chance to the children whose lives I will touch through education.

Immediately following her undergraduate teacher education program Annie took a job teaching in a summer program. In the following description of her experience in that program, we see again how Annie's particular position and perspective, despite her inexperience as a teacher, led her to make a profound impact on one student in particular.

I applied for a summer school position through a non-profit organization that helps disadvantaged students in the city. They receive free, full-day summer school that also provides enrichment activities for six weeks. I was hired to teach 4th graders going into 5th grade.

The job itself was extremely challenging. Along with managing and teaching very difficult children with extremely difficult home lives, we had few supplies, materials, or resources to work with. Furthermore, teachers had to monitor students at enrichment activities in the afternoon and participate in field trips every week with the students.

The group itself was a small class, about 10-12 students, made up of mostly male, Black students and a few Asian students. I remember a particular student named Shawn who gave me a hard time and a lot of attitude. He would do things like automatically talk back when I said something. I remember during a lesson one time, I was trying to give him feedback or give some kind of directive and he kept saying "STFU, STFU, STFU," which later I found out was an abbreviation for *shut the f\* up*. There was a day when I had had enough of his antics, and I threatened him with getting in trouble somehow. I don't even remember what I said to him. He ended up saying something flippant like "Why do you always send all the Black kids out?" Then, he ran out of the classroom. Being a first-year teacher, I had never experienced someone running out, and instead of letting him go and calling the proper person to chase after him, I left the room and ran after him out of the classroom, telling the kids I would be right back. I was yelling "Shawn!" after him, which looking back was probably exactly what he wanted or needed from that situation - someone to chase him and call to him. The principal must have heard me yelling, as she quickly came

around the corner. Shawn had run outside somewhere, and she told me to go back to class while she took care of it.

At recess time, I went out to talk to the principal and found Shawn sitting in the hallway on some stage steps. The principal and I looked at each other, and she nodded and walked away, as I gave her an assured look that I would be OK. I sat down next to him, and we sat for a while. I eventually took a deep breath and told him how offended I was that, of all people, he assumed that I was racist. He continued to sit quietly, and smirked as if to show that I took the bait that he purposely threw at me for a reaction. We sat a little longer, and I was speechless. I'm sure I asked him why he had run out and he replied with, "I don't know." I didn't know what to say or do, so I asked if we could go back to the classroom and talk in private.

We went back to class together, closed the door, and sat at my desk. He wouldn't look at me and didn't say a word. I braced myself emotionally, and began telling him about my dad and how I was treated growing up around his age. I had heard from other staff that his dad was incarcerated and his mother was a drug addict living on the streets. I had felt that maybe somehow he wouldn't feel so isolated, and that he would trust that I understood how he felt, if he understood what I had been through in my own life. I didn't do well hiding my watery eyes, but I think he noticed and it somehow affected him. He began looking at me when I was speaking and began talking to me a little. I also listened to him intently when he spoke to me and opened up a little about his family. The conversation lightened and eventually, recess was going to come to an end and I sent him out to take a break.

I will never know if Shawn had heard stories like this from other adults in his life or talked to other teachers he had about his dad, but our relationship changed after that moment together. We had made a connection, and all it took was sitting with him for five minutes, sharing something about my life, and taking the time to look and listen to him. As summer school came to an end, we were writing thank you cards to all the volunteers and different staff that helped during summer school. Shawn was working on a card and he was adamant about my not seeing it and hiding it from sight every time I walked near his desk to check on other students' work. It made me smile, as I figured the card had to have been for me. He gave me the thank you card with his picture on the front cover of it from one of our field trips. He wrote inside the typical "thank you for teaching me in summer school," but had added a little more. He also wrote that we had both had hard lives, but we were both OK, and that we had some tough times together [in summer school], but I would always be in his heart and now I can never come out.

I still have this card, and I hold it dearly as a reminder that every child just wants the chance to be noticed and to be heard. It also reminds me that underneath tough exteriors, kids are still human beings who feel and relate, and many of them are simply looking (usually without even knowing it) for another genuine and human connection.

Coming to teaching from outside the dominant European-American culture and experience is by no means a guarantee that a prospective teacher will be prepared to support the learning and well-being of everybody's children (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). All prospective teachers need an appropriate dispositional foundation and the related repertoire of professional practices to enable them to be successful. Yet with so few teachers in our schools today who come from underrepresented populations, it is crucial that we make the effort to recruit and retain more such candidates in teaching. Research indicates a number of potential pay-offs for such a project.

- Teachers of color can have a positive influence on the school achievement of students of color, particularly if they share the same racial background (Irvine, 2003, as cited in Sleeter & Milner, 2011, p. 82; Nieto, 1999, as cited in Sleeter & Milner, 2011, p. 82).
- Teachers of color can serve as role models for students of color. In particular, if students of color only see white teachers in schools it can send the message that they are more suited to hold positions of authority (Villegas & Clewell, 1998, as cited in Sleeter & Milner, 2011, p. 83).
- Conversely, it is important for white students to have teachers of color to help dispel myths about racial inferiority (Villegas & Clewell, 1998, as cited in Sleeter & Milner, 2011, p. 83).
- Teachers of color can serve as "cultural translators" in the classroom (Irvine, 2003, as cited in Sleeter & Milner, 2011, p. 83), and "bring first hand knowledge about minority cultures and languages and personal experience with what it is like to be a member of a racial, ethnic, and/or language minority group in this country" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 19).
- Teachers of color tend to hold high expectations for their students and provide mentoring and advocacy (Irvine, 2003, as cited in Sleeter & Milner, 2011, p. 83)
- Teachers of color can provide culturally based teaching approaches (Irvine, 2003, as cited in Sleeter & Milner, 2011, p. 83)
- "[We see] teacher race and ethnicity as an indicator of the world views held within a school's professional teaching corps. The more homogeneous the teachers, the more homogeneous the world views that are likely to be used to analyze teaching and student needs..." (Sleeter & Milner, 2011, p. 83)

## Conclusion

We are living at a perilous time for advancing Kohn's agenda for achieving the *schools our children deserve*, just as we are for addressing the agenda for preparing teachers for *everybody's children*, as presented here. While there is wide-spread superficial agreement that the quality of teaching is a critical, if not essential, ingredient in improving schools and student outcomes (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2011), there are vast differences of understanding among those shaping policy at the federal and state levels, and those who are closer to schools themselves, about what such quality looks like in schools and how it is to be achieved. There are vast differences as well, about how we should go about improving the quality of teachers coming into the profession. While Kohn argues for a range of educative interactions that need to happen between teachers and students to position them as active learners within a community of fellow-inquirers, the prevailing policy climate reduces such relationships to achievement demonstrated on standardized test scores (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2011, p. 353). Many high quality teacher education programs, like

the one that Annie attended, are taking steps to provide systematic, practicum-based subject-matter methods courses and extended, scaffolded partnerships with schools to enable teacher candidates the necessary time and experience to enter teaching with well-developed repertoires of practices and dispositions for teaching everybody's children. Yet the federal government is expanding its support for Teach for America, which provides beginning teachers a scant five weeks of teacher education prior to placement as full-time teachers in some of the nation's most challenging school settings. Somehow, these don't seem likely to be the *teachers our children deserve*.

So, the fight goes on. Annie's practice inspires others, at her school and beyond. David reads accounts of her teaching to his current students and it gives them both hope and guidance in how they can navigate the difficult transition from prospective teacher to beginning professional, and how they need to be thinking about the needs of everybody's children. From her own standpoint, Annie sees her teaching as a continual work in progress and believes it is going to take more time, education, and personal growth and reflection to build the kind of classroom she envisions. David's teacher education program, informed in part by Annie's experience and that of other students from underrepresented groups, and cognizant of its own past failure in attracting underrepresented students to teaching, has embarked upon an ambitious recruitment and retention campaign that has already expanded the proportion of students of color entering the program by over ten percent. These are first steps on a longer journey. Now, more than ever, we need to attract people to teaching who can be allies for everybody's children and orchestrators of democracy as they negotiate the challenges and interactions of daily classroom life.

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