TRANSFORMING FUTURE TEACHERS' IDEAS ABOUT WRITING INSTRUCTION[1]

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In our combined experience of nearly 10 years, we have seen the goals of writing methods courses grow and deepen. Today, we think of teaching writing as a process of "scaffolding," or supporting children's language development in ways that broaden the writer's expressive possibilities, deepen his/her understanding of written language and text, and socialize the young writer into the role of literate adult (see, for example, Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1979). It is our responsibility and challenge to initiate prospective teachers, who may not have been taught writing in this way, into the problems and possibilities of teaching the writing process inventively and meaningfully.

Having spent more than 12 years participating in school literacy events, teacher candidates come to us with prior knowledge of what writing is and how it is taught. However, this knowledge is limited in several ways. First, it is limited to what teacher candidates have learned about writing from the pupil's point of view. Second, what teacher candidates have already learned about teacher thinking and pedagogy is based on informal childhood observations of teachers while participating in lessons. Third, learning from one's experience as a pupil typically reflects the status quo rather than state of the art practice (Florio-Ruane, 1989). In this paper we describe a course that offered opportunities for prospective teachers to transform their prior experiences of teaching, writing, and children as they began to assume the role of the teacher. We then assess how this curriculum was experienced by the teacher candidates.

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Background of the Project

Teacher candidates bring to their formal professional education background knowledge about writing, teaching, and children. Some of that knowledge is compatible with our educational hopes for them, but some is not. The future teachers we studied were enrolled in a writing methods course as part of a four-term language arts/reading/literature sequence. In addition to methods classes, they observed and taught in elementary classrooms two mornings each week. In an initial survey of the future teachers, we found that they had little information about how writing is learned by children, had very limited categories for the forms and functions that children's writing might take, and saw their primary role as explaining the process of writing to their students in direct instruction. We designed our course and research to focus on changes in these preliminary views that might occur as a function of increased disciplinary knowledge and opportunities to apply that knowledge while working with children. We attempted to track growth and change in the prospective teachers' understandings by means of collection and analysis of several kinds of data. Six of the juniors volunteered to be studied in depth. Their growth as teachers of writing was investigated in the following ways:

1. **Initial Interviews**: Our students' conceptions of writing, writing instruction, and children's development in writing (as well as responses to samples of student-written text) were elicited in individual interviews at the beginning of the term.

2. **Field Notes**: We wrote field notes describing class activities and student participation in them. We also wrote notes describing interactions we had with the six participating juniors in relation to writing instruction.

3. **Work Samples**: The written work of the participating juniors was collected, along with samples of writing from the elementary students with whom the juniors worked.

4. **Follow-up Interviews**: In addition to questions exploring how the future teachers' response to children's texts and conceptions of writing instruction changed during the methods course, we also asked about their learning and their experience of the class.

We also collected the following data from all the students in the course:

5. **Free Writing**: We asked the students to do some "free writing" (Elbow, 1973) or spontaneous, unedited writing before and after our course. The initial free writing was on the topic, "Myself as a Writer/Myself as a Teacher of Writing." The final one was on the topic, "Most Significant Things Learned."

6. **Course Evaluations**: University-required written evaluations were completed by all students.

7. **Field Notes**: We held group discussions with the future teachers after the course was completed. We discussed the students' experience of the course and recorded these discussions in notes.

Our course attempted to challenge and enrich the future teachers' ordinary assumptions about children, text, and writing instruction. In place of these assumptions, our curriculum substituted knowledge from several disciplines to guide the young teachers' planning, teaching, and interpretations of children's written work. This knowledge came from (a) developmental psychology, which provided new ways of thinking about emergent writing in young children and the developmental path of that writing to mature composition (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982); (b) rhetoric, which provided alternate ways to categorize the forms and functions of children's writing (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, and Rosen, 1975); and (c) social research on the organization of classroom lessons, the negotiated nature of knowledge, and the importance of shared authority between student and teacher when children are creating texts (Barnes, 1976). The assignments we asked our students to pursue in the elementary classrooms where they worked related this knowledge to practice and were intended to enrich our students' conceptions of writing and its instruction.

Preliminary examination of our data suggested that as formal knowledge was made more available to the juniors and applied in their practice teaching experience, it broke their ordinary frames of reference and ways of thinking about writing instruction in important ways. The juniors began to learn that children write (i.e. learn letter formations, page arrangement, spacing, etc.) even before schooling. Thus, the beginning teachers' conception of writing instruction shifted from introducing and explaining the writing process to helping shape writing's purposes and offering supportive instruction. Their conceptions of the kind of texts and purposes children can undertake broadened from generic categories such as "stories" and "creative writing," to include purposes or functions such as the creation of aesthetically pleasing representations of experience in narrative or poem (the "poetic mode"), writing to express directly one's experience, knowledge or feeling state (the "expressive mode"), and writing to get things done by argument, correspondence, or explanation (the "transactional mode") (Britton et al., 1975; Temple, Nathan, Burris, and Temple, 1988). Although distinctions among the function categories can be blurred in both practice and development, they provide useful ways for teachers to think about diverse student texts and purposes for writing.

Finally, the beginning teachers started to become aware that writing is a social process in school. It became important for them to understand the curricular and social authority they would hold in the classroom to determine the nature and purposes of children's texts. If children were gradually to assume the role of author, beginning teachers would need to know more than how to maintain classroom order. They would need to learn when and how to mitigate their textual authority so that children could assume more control over their own topics, audiences, and purposes in writing.

The Course and Its Challenges

Although the above might suggest a smooth, cheery transition by novice teachers to new interpretive frameworks for writing instruction, this was not always the case. The beginning teachers often felt threatened and frustrated in their movement to new perspectives. What were the sources of their discomfort and difficulty?

Stressing the idea of "function" or purpose in writing, our course broke with traditional tendencies in American classrooms for reading and writing to be approached in terms of the genre or category of text and its formal properties. While this shift may seem subtle, it makes a great deal of difference. Issues of audience and purpose are intimately related to the structural features of texts. In contemporary writing classrooms, teachers encourage students to learn to identify audiences and purposes for their writing as well as to learn the features identified by literary theorists and critics to mark different textual forms. We therefore chose to emphasize that writing is created by people to accomplish certain intellectual and social purposes. We did not stress the teaching of writing as the isolated teaching of textual types or genres since, in Moffett's words,

> perhaps more than anything else, genres are marketing directives. As such, they provide convenient rhetorical bins. Pedagogically, they constitute a hazard by making both teachers and students feel that they have to "define" what a short story or a poem is, i.e., find something similar in all the examples. Even if this were not futile, one would be left with only a definition, another substantive reduction that does not help one to read or write, or even appreciate. (1968/1983, pp. 5-6)

A second sense in which we broke from ordinary understandings was related to the ways we envisioned the writing classroom. Rather than a classroom of straight rows of desks facing forward with the teacher explaining the rules at the front of the room, we envisioned what Calkins (1986) and Graves (1983) have called "the writing workshop." In such a classroom many social groups are at work producing text. Children may meet individually with their teachers in conferences; children may work with one another in conferences unassisted by the teacher; and children may present their writing to the class for questions and comments by their peers. All of these arrangements are notable for the background role the teacher plays in setting the social norms for collaboration and in enabling writers through coaching and other forms of technical assistance. We not only encouraged our students to attempt to design the writing classroom this way in their field sites, but we attempted to design our methods classroom this way and stressed cooperative learning among our own students.

The third sense in which we departed from ordinary assumptions was in our view of the child and his or her acquisition of the writing system. Our students' responses in their initial surveys and free writing suggested that they believed it was the teacher's job to teach the rules of the written language system directly to children by explanation and example. We did not find in these responses a sense of "acquisition" in which children gradually learned these rules by actively manipulating the writing system and sharing with adults their purposes in the process. That part of our course which applied disciplinary knowledge from developmental psychology confronted our students' assumptions by asserting that children begin to write before school and are actively involved in figuring out the writing system.

Surprisingly, our students warmly embraced alternative views of the learner. However, challenges to their sense of teaching as showing, telling, and explaining led to two standoffs around the issues of (a) a functional view of writing versus a formal one and (b) a traditional view of classroom organization versus cooperative grouping. These will be described in the following sections.

Function vs. Form

In an earlier reading methods course, our students were offered note-taking guides for the study of text (see Figure 1). These were developed by Raphael and Englert (1989) for use by experienced teachers wanting to help children learn to read and respond to written drafts. While it was clearly neither the developers' nor the teacher educator's intention, these guides were taken by our students, not as note-taking heuristics, but as descriptions of how a writer constructs a text. Thus when we later challenged this conception of writing by the idea that writers begin with a purpose or function and design text to achieve it, our students were left insecure in their knowledge of the relation of form to function in text. Examples of this idea and its problems when presented in our class are described below.

An example of the emergence of structures within the context of writing for various purposes was presented to our students during a visit by a local fifth grade teacher. The teacher described teaching elementary students about how to read and appreciate mystery stories by initially having the students try to write mysteries themselves and think about what it takes to create suspense in an audience. Although he gave them support materials and ideas about how mysteries worked, most of the literature activities centered on students writing story maps and trying to build into those story maps opportunities for foreshadowing, for clues, and for leaving information unexpressed to the reader. In this activity, the teacher's role was not to describe and explain the structure of mystery texts and have the students follow that schema to create mysteries of their own. Rather, the students tried to discover the structure of the mystery text, and the teacher served as a respondent, coach, and a resource.

Our use of functional categories for written text was a rather direct challenge to our students' conceptions of the teacher's role. Despite the examples and encouragement we provided, our students' conceptions of teaching about text remained largely intact. This was evidenced in the prospective teachers' use of `model' as a transitive verb. When they described writing lessons to us in class or in written assignments, they often explained that they `modeled' the text for their children using heuristics identical or similar to those in Figure 1. As an example, we share a lesson objective listed by one of our students in her plan for a writing activity:

> Given a model letter written by me, students will compose the rough draft of a letter to Rotchel, knowing that they will have a chance to rewrite it if they want. (Work Sample, February 1988)

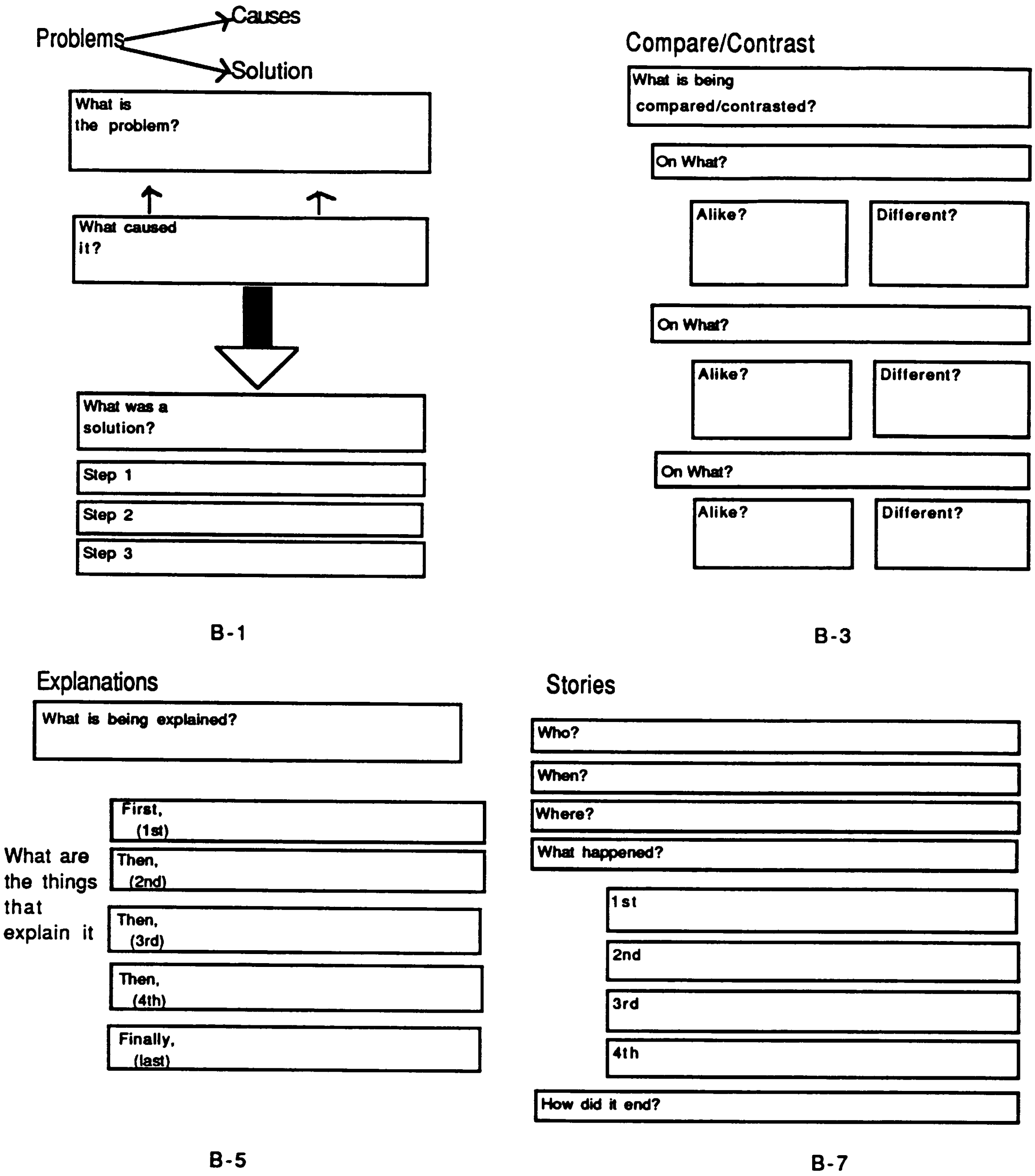

Problems
Causes
Solution
What is the problem?
What caused it?
What was a solution?
Step 1
Step 2
Step 3
B-1
Compare/Contrast
What is being compared/contrasted?
On What?
Alike?
Different?
On What?
Alike?
Different?
On What?
Alike?
Different?
B-3
Explanations
What is being explained?
What are the things that explain it
First, (1st)
Then, (2nd)
Then, (3rd)
Then, (4th)
Finally, (last)
B-5
Stories
Who?
When?
Where?
What happened?
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
How did it end?
B-7

Figure 1. Instructional aids stressing text structure (from Raphael and Englert, 1989, p. 19).

Traditional Instruction vs. Cooperative Grouping

A hallmark of our approach to writing instruction is the idea that writing is learned and practiced most effectively in classrooms that foster cooperation, community, and the sharing of written drafts (Graves, 1983). Cooperative grouping for learning enables students to practice revision and to grow in their sense of audience. To support our own students' learning of cooperative grouping for use in their classrooms, we filled our course with many opportunities for the students to teach and learn from one another.

However, our use of cooperative groups in the course received a striking amount of criticism. Course evaluations and discussions we held with students after the course was completed brought to the surface some complaints about our use of cooperative groups which were quite legitimate. They focused on concerns with the suitability, for group work, of some of the tasks we asked them to complete and on the problem of some students not doing their fair share of the work or contributing to group discussions. More often, however, complaints about working in groups seemed to arise from the fact that students viewed cooperative grouping as simply an overused motivational technique which lacked great pedagogical significance and uncomfortably violated or transformed school norms our students were used to following.

As evidence that students saw cooperative grouping as mere motivational technique, we refer to comments such as "too much of a good thing is bad" (Course Evaluation, March 1988) and to comments in which being in groups too often is compared to "seeing a cartoon too often--it loses its appeal, and therefore its usefulness" (Field Notes, April 1988). Put another way, the effectiveness of cooperative grouping is linked to its novelty. Our sense is that many students believe grouping worked when it worked because it was different. We wouldn't deny this aspect of group work. But there are other reasons for using cooperative groups, including diminishing teacher control over how students pursue meaningful tasks and solve problems, which were not considered by some of our students when they criticized use of cooperative groups in our course.

The second point--that cooperative grouping violates students' ideas about what it means to be a student--cuts deeper. One student said that she thought using cooperative groups was a way for the teacher to get out of teaching. She commented that "we want someone to stand above us and tell us what to do." Another student said that she "would like to be told some information, absorb some information, an opportunity to assume the student role." A third said, "I for one wanted to come into a class and be taught, rather than teach myself." Later, she said that she was "relieved when someone put up an overhead and I could just take notes." (Group Discussion, April 1988). Finally, one student wrote, "In all of our classes, we are *always* getting in groups and I think it would be nice to receive instruction once in a while" (Course Evaluations, March 1988). We find the language that our students used to describe the problem with cooperative grouping striking. Phrases such as we "want someone to stand above us" and "tell us" or "would like to be told some information" or "absorb information" suggest a passive receiving role for the student and a conception of schooling in which the teacher tells students information and the students receive it to later give back to the teacher.

Some Painful and Some Not So Painful Breaks

To this point, then, our attempts to help future teachers break with their ordinary experience seem quite unsuccessful. Our student teachers have been largely resistant to our efforts to suggest alternative teacher and student roles. Why might this be so?

First, these breaks from experience potentially altered our students' understandings of the teacher's rights and responsibilities at precisely the moment that our students needed to draw on these understandings in assuming the role of teacher. In other words, our students had a certain investment in the conceptions of teacher and student they already held. These conceptions have been quite successful in high school and college. What they knew about teaching from being in school for so many years was compelling to them and formed the base from which they would act as they attempted to become teachers (Florio-Ruane, 1989). We were challenging these bases for action.

Second, in challenging their deeply held bases for action, the alternatives we offered (i.e. functional views of writing; cooperative grouping) seemed at worst incorrect to our students and at best trivial. As Buchmann (1989) has argued on this point,

> Regardless of their merits in the abstract . . . , new understandings offered to teachers have to match the *authority* of the lessons absorbed in experience: their impressiveness as well as their practicality, or objective chances at success (allowing teachers to get some content across to some people some of the time, while keeping the class in order and coping with conflicting external pressures). (p. 12)

Neither our stressing of the purposes (or functions) of children's writing over schema for structural correctness nor our emphasis on teaching and learning in cooperative groups was sufficiently impressive to our students to propel them to risk loss of predictability and control in the name of more adventurous teaching. Moreover, these new understandings put at risk the immediately important matter of "control" of both curricular content and classroom interaction. They supplanted knowledge and strategies which would likely grant young and inexperienced teachers that kind of control, and the risks of the new understandings and approaches far outweighed, in the eyes of our students, their benefits.

However, it remained for a third aspect of our curriculum--the study of the inventive ways in which youngsters begin to write--to move our students to new action and a new way of teaching. New understandings about children as writers neither challenged older, strongly held beliefs nor threatened damaging loss of control of curriculum or classroom. It is to that less painful break from ordinary ways of seeing that we now turn.

Children and Their Writing Development

Carefully designing our students' experiences with children in school was extremely important to their development as teachers of writing because of two limitations in the ordinary experiences of beginning teachers. The first limitation is that observation of merely status quo teaching in the field does not provide much of a window on children's thinking or children's ability to transform what they are learning and apply it to new situations. Much of the teaching our future teachers might observe in ordinary classrooms would feature the teacher telling and the students passively receiving, thus reinforcing our own students' ideas of children and how they learn. Second, our students' entering assumptions are so strong that they might be inclined to view all classroom interaction through these lenses and see even occasions when children are truly inventive in their learning and initiating of learning as relatively less important than teacher-directed situations. Consequently, we tried to meet these challenges in two ways: first, by creating field assignments where our students would interact with small groups of children in nontraditional ways; and second, by introducing knowledge from the disciplines (particularly the psychology of child language development) in which our students would come to understand even children's earliest attempts at writing meaningfully.

In the first assignment, for example, we had our students interview children about what they thought writing was. This interview was based in part on the work of Lavine (1977). In her study of how children think about writing, Lavine developed a series of cards with graphic symbols on them. There were four kinds of graphic displays. The first had pictures of familiar and unfamiliar objects and of geometric designs. The other three displays had real English writing (Class I) in both cursive and print letters, writing that looked like Roman letters but written in the Hebrew alphabet (Class II), and writing that did not look like Roman letters and made up of Chinese letters or a Mayan design motif (Class III). She showed a series of cards to children of various ages and asked them if what was on the cards was writing or not (see Figure 2). This exercise helped her to understand the development of youngsters' (aged 3, 4 and 5) sense of our culture's writing system and its organizing principles. Lavine found that their development was considerable even among the youngest children who had received no formal instruction in writing (Temple et al., 1988, pp. 22-25).

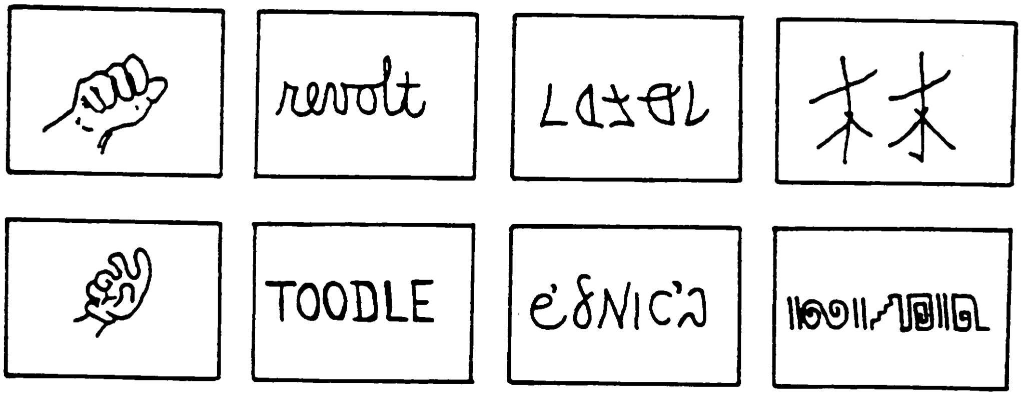


Figure 2. Cards from Lavine's interview (from Temple, Nathan, Burris, and Temple, 1988, p.22).

When Lavine presented all types of writings to the young children and tallied and compared the responses of three-, four-, and five-year-olds, she reported interesting patterns of response. According to Temple et al. (1988), who summarized this research,

> no one said the pictures were writing--not even the three-year-olds. Only the youngest called the Class III figures writing [these were the Chinese and Mayan figures]. But all the age groups called both Class I [writing] and Class II [Hebrew characters] writing. Class II figures shared features with Roman letters, but they were not Roman letters and they were not likely to have been seen in the children's environment. (p. 22)

These findings supported several hypotheses about young children's writing. First, they suggested that children seemed to be using features of the writing system rather than a mere inventory of letters they had seen to make their classifications. Second, younger children used both linearity and variety in the writing they examined to decide that it was, indeed, writing. Older children were less likely to use these features and to base their decisions on the appearance of individual figures. This suggested support for the hypothesis that, as they develop, children move from using gross features of text to finer features in making decisions about writing (Temple et al., 1988).

Findings like these in themselves fascinated, even astounded, the prospective teachers with whom we worked. They encouraged the teachers to see school-aged writers as considerably more advanced in acquiring the writing system than they had originally believed. Moreover, they demonstrated the active participation of youngsters in making sense of the graphic systems around them.

Our students performed a similar procedure with one child in their classroom. They showed Lavine's cards and also elicited a drawing and some writing from this child and then asked him or her questions such as the following: What is writing? Why do people write? What is the difference between writing and drawing a picture? Like Lavine, our students tried to characterize their child's conception of writing. And, like Lavine, they found that children indeed had conceptions of what writing was and that these grew systematically more complex as children grew in maturity and experience with written language.

In later assignments and activities, our students read about principles of child language development, viewed samples of young children's work and learned to describe and analyze these samples, designed and carried out instruction in which children produced written text, and documented one child's learning in one of the instructional activities. The students' responses to these experiences contrasted with their response to learning about functions of writing and cooperative grouping. Here they seemed to entertain new possibilities based on new knowledge and ways of seeing and talking to children. This knowledge was generative and hopeful rather than painful. It was not resisted. Theoretical knowledge about children's writing development, especially information on invented spelling, seemed to permit our students to retain a teacherly concern for spelling and writing growth while helping them discover in children's texts the emerging competence of the child as a writer and thinker. Just such a response to this break from ordinary experience was provided by one of our students who wrote:

> I had a first grade class and I saw a lot of "new" spelling going on. My first response to this was to correct their spelling . . . [but] this is part of the learning process. It's funny that a lot of children would misspell the words the same. . . . In the beginning I wasn't able to always read what they wrote. But I've learned to sound out their writing, the same way they do. (Free Writing, March 1988)

Understanding the place of invented spelling in children's development led to a new respect for children and news ways to respond to their texts. Another student wrote, "Before I thought that five-year-olds' writing was only scribbles; I learned to think-spell, [i.e. match written letters with their sounds in words] then I could respond (Free Writing, March 1988). Another wrote with amazement: "They don't just put *any* letters down on paper!" (Free Writing, March, 1988).

With the idea that even young children attempt to make meaning with text, there seemed to grow among our students the idea that children could do more on their own, be allowed more control over their writing. A shift in teacher role, then, came indirectly and was connected to a new way of seeing children. One student implied as much when she wrote that talking with children about their writing stood out in her mind as one of the most significant things for her development as a teacher. She concluded:

> I never had a teacher sit down with me in elementary school and talk to me about writing, so this whole concept was very new to me. . . . I was unsure of how I could get them to open up. . . . I thought that I would end up doing all of the talking and editing but I was proven wrong. I had the students read to me and then, by asking just a few questions, they took right over. (Free Writing, March 1988)

In this statement, the student is suggesting a conception of the teacher's role that Graves (1983) calls, "following the child." In such a conception, the teacher takes seriously children's attempts at making meaning. She tries to find in children's texts and talk, clues to their writing progress and problems. These clues enable teachers to respond instructively to children and their written work.

This transformed conception of teaching was embraced by most of our students by the end of the term. In final free writing on the topic of the most significant things they had learned during the course, students rejected a heavily teacher-directed conception of writing instruction and talked instead of the need to "assess and guide," to "assist the students in learning to write," not to be a "judge or simple grade-giver, but a facilitator." Others talked of "following students in their writing" and said that they had "learned to listen" (Free Writing, March 1988).

Conclusion

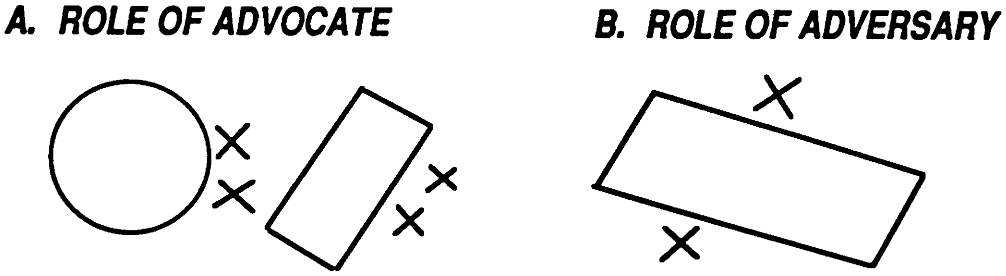
Future teachers found some beginning conceptions harder to let go of than others. Some changes we wished to encourage were resisted while others were embraced. Our students seemed to experience the most difficulty and discomfort when our curriculum or pedagogy challenged their ordinary views of school roles and curriculum in ways that directly threatened their ability to maintain control or seemed uncompelling. But when they worked with children and saw them in new ways, the break from ordinary experience provided by disciplinary knowledge seemed almost reassuring. They embraced the idea that children were making sense with writing long before receiving formal instruction. Children's "mistakes" were seen not as simple errors to be corrected and instructed about, but as opportunities for the teacher to think about how to respond and plan for future instruction. How do we explain this response by future teachers?

One possibility is that our students, by virtue of their extensive apprenticeship of observation, simply had fewer hard and fast conceptions of what *children* are like than they had of what teachers are like. This fits well with their initial views of teaching as showing and telling. If teaching is basically a transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the child, then it is not necessary to know much about children, since the child's role is to receive the well organized and correct knowledge that the teacher provides. It is interesting to note that only 2 of 30 future teachers mentioned learning more about children and their development in response to an item on our initial questionnaire about what they wanted or needed to learn to become a good teacher.

Another possibility is that the focus on children and the formal knowledge we provided about them served to distance our students from the activity of teaching in a way that helped them to entertain multiple views without feeling personally vulnerable. This seemed especially so in the first field assignment. Here instead of being asked to act like teachers, our students used Lavine's experiment to interview children about what they thought writing was. This is an example of what Cazden, Diamondstone, and Naso (1988) refer to as the role of inquiry in "recalibrating" teachers' understandings of their work. The various conceptual frameworks provided by research may have afforded our students an opportunity to take apart, analyze, and interpret children's work in ways that did not directly threaten their sense of themselves as teachers yet altered fundamentally their behavior as teachers. In a sense, children became the focus of our students' learning. Trying to understand children's early writing heightened our students' appreciation of learning's complexity. Another example of this phenomenon has been documented by Duckworth (1987) describing an experiment in which experienced teachers explored complex phenomena such as time measurement, music, and the movement of the moon to increase their appreciation of their own learning and hence of children as learners. Of this experience, Duckworth writes:

> The teachers learned both to question and trust their own experience as learners; and, as a result, on another level, in their work with children they started to develop the capacity to see the sense of a child's question, a "cute" remark, or "wrong answer." (p. 85)

Finally, it may be that focusing on the child rather than on the teacher is an opportunity for the teacher educator and future teacher to share a common point of interest and reference rather than to come at one another as teacher/evaluator and student/evaluated. Cooperative grouping, for example, presented not only a challenge to how our future teachers conceived of teaching and learning in elementary classrooms, it also presented a more immediate challenge to how they acted as students within the university classroom. We are reminded here of Donald Graves's (1983) discussion of ways that teachers can assume an adversarial or advocate role in writing conferences with children. In the role of adversary, the teacher sits opposite the child and emphasizes status differences by being above the child. In addition, the teacher avoids eye contact and takes the child's writing from him or her without permission. In the role of advocate, the teacher sits beside the child and is as close to the child's height as possible. From this position teacher and child look, together, at the child's text and the child maintains control over that text (see Figure 3).



Sits near and next to child.
As close to equal height as possible.
Engages child visually.
Child holds piece, may offer.

Sits opposite.
Does not want to be next to or near child.
Chair higher.
Ignores eye contact.
Takes child's writing.

Figure 3. The language of conference settings (from Graves, 1983, p. 98).

Discussions of teachers and students moving to the same side of the table and sharing control over what is to be learned often oversimplify the risks involved for both teacher and student. As Cohen (1988) observes, it is difficult for teachers to give up control in the teaching and learning relationship since, in our society, a great deal of teachers' success depends on having their students learn successfully. Likewise, students have something to say about whether they will permit teachers to move to their side of the table. When we attempted to have students assume greater authority in their own learning by using cooperative groups in our university classroom, our students resisted. In their behavior both as students and as beginning teachers, they reiterated more traditional conceptions of teaching and learning. Thus our students worked to keep themselves on opposite sides of the table from both us and from children.

However, when they shared with us a fascination about how children learn to write, the prospective teachers moved into closer contact not only with children but with us as teacher/colleagues. Our experience suggests that in helping prospective teachers make the transition from student to teacher we must seek worthwhile objects and topics of study. What we teach and learn about must compel our students to teacherly action that is both practicable and wonderful. When we introduced our inexperienced teachers to children's worlds of writing and the wonderful process of writing development, they saw both children and teaching in a new way. They realized new possibilities for the teacher to play a supportive and responsive role as children learned to write. Like the experienced teachers who came to know about children and teaching in new ways by participating in Duckworth's (1987) project, as our young teachers studied writing development,

> they did not see this as an exercise in psychology. Rather it was as *teachers* that they wanted to make sense of what children were doing. It was as *teachers* that they realized that the better they could judge how children were seeing a problem, the better they could decide what to do next. (p. 96)

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