

Chapter Eight

Building an Urban Teacher Residency in a Third Space Partnership

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In the fall of 2009, the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services at Montclair State University invited the authors and a third faculty member to re-imagine what teacher education could look like. In response to a Teacher Quality Partnership grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement, she charged the faculty team to create a math and science teacher residency program in collaboration with the College's longtime partner, the Newark Public Schools. The resulting urban teacher residency program blends knowledge from the university and from the schools to create a "third space" serving the needs of all parties involved.

The defining feature of an urban teacher residency is an extended apprenticeship in a school with a highly skilled mentor teacher (Solomon, 2009). Coursework is often intertwined with residents' classroom experiences, and an induction program usually supports teachers in their first years of teaching. Research on urban residency programs indicates higher retention rates for graduates compared with graduates from traditional teacher education programs and documents the benefits of the extended and intensive fieldwork component (Papay, West, Fullerton, & Kane, 2012).

From the start, the Newark Montclair Urban Teacher Residency (NMUTR), and in particular the math/science secondary program, rested on a unique and radical vision of teacher education. Drawing from the fields of cultural studies, post-colonial theory, geography, and critical literacy (Bhabha, 1994), it was conceptualized as a third space, a hybrid program located between the institutional partners, that was continually being negotiated and constructed.

Building this residency required educators from the district, school, and university to think differently about teacher education. Combining the strengths of these individuals and their respective institutions led to an entirely new program that was neither led by the university (first space) nor the schools (second space) but existed in a third space that was always being negotiated. The residency became a hybrid space that embraced the essential elements of both institutions while inviting the creation of new features, practices, and tools.

Those involved had to re-imagine their roles in teacher education and develop new ideas about how to prepare urban teachers and foster teacher leadership and school change. For instance, mentor teachers do not customarily develop curriculum for university courses and university faculty do not teach in high school classrooms. Could these traditional boundaries be crossed? Creating a third space required ongoing, generative conversations among all participants to determine roles and responsibilities, common goals/objectives, instructional strategies, assignments, and assessment tools. It was a difficult and time-consuming process that required constant tending.

The guiding vision was to prepare urban teachers who would develop socially just, inquiry-based practices. This meant challenging deficit stereotypes of urban youth and creating a teacher education curriculum that enabled residents to develop more complex, sociocultural portraits of their students and their communities. Teaching *about* culturally responsive teaching was not enough. Residents needed to reflect on their own identities and develop authentic relationships with Newark youth so that they could begin to think about teaching from a “funds of knowledge” perspective (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Hopefully this would lead to classrooms where students were active constructors of knowledge, working alongside teachers to pose and solve problems in the world (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970).

NMUTR SECONDARY COHORT PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

Residents enter the program with an undergraduate degree in a math or science field that met New Jersey’s content area certification requirements. Most residents live in New Jersey. Some were recent college graduates; others were more seasoned change-of-career candidates. They bring varying degrees of professional experience and experience in urban contexts.

During the twelve-month program, residents receive a \$26,000 stipend as well as free tuition for a Masters of Teaching from Montclair State University. In exchange, they are asked to complete three years of teaching in Newark with induction support provided by the university. Additionally they receive support and guidance in seeking certification and a teaching position in the district.

The program begins in June with an intensive week-long course at MSU, co-taught by three faculty. Residents reflect on their own learning experiences, analyzed learning theories, unpacked issues of identity and social justice, and developed goals for the summer. In the second week, residents participate in a professional development workshop on inquiry-based learning led by the staff at the Newark Museum, one of the community partners. Then they teach science and math units at the summer camps at the Newark Museum and La Casa De Don Pedro, and serve as “relationship managers” for urban youth participating in the Newark All Stars internship.

In August, residents meet with their mentor teachers to map curriculum and design lesson plans for the upcoming school year. Together they set up their classrooms and attended school-wide professional development workshops. On the first day of school, mentors and residents greet their students as co-teachers. Residents then spend the next ten months completely immersed in their Newark public school communities. Once a week, they meet with university faculty for a three-hour class held at one of several schools.

During the regular school year, mentors participate in all aspects of the program including curriculum development, observations, and evaluation. The third space design team created new processes for writing and reviewing lesson plans, conducting informal and formal observations, and ultimately evaluating the residents. The lesson plan format scaffolds the kinds of thinking that the mentors and faculty valued for instruction. As the fall semester progresses, residents present their lesson plans for review. The structured process allows mentors, residents, and faculty to provide constructive feedback aimed at promoting inquiry-oriented teaching.

New structures for observing and debriefing residents’ teaching are also used. Observers script lessons, focusing on the exchanges between resident and students. These scripts provide a basis for mentors and faculty to engage in rich discussions about residents’ lessons, based in records of practice, rather than personal judgements or assumptions.

A modified version of “Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol” (Piburn et al., 2000) provides a framework for instructional rounds. Developed at Arizona State University for observing constructivist math and science inquiry teaching, this tool helps residents observe, reflect, and refine their teaching practices. In the fall, rounds focus on mentors’ teaching; in the spring, the focus switches to residents’ teaching. Having different faculty conduct these observations provides residents with varied perspectives on their practice.

During the spring, residents participate in a series of workshops that helped them examine learning needs and modify instruction for English language learners and students with disabilities. They also carry out an action research project and a social justice inquiry project. The year ends with residents presenting artifacts reflecting their growth and learning over the

year. During the last months of the school year, residents prepare for the job market by writing resumes and educational philosophy statements, participating in mock interviews, and debriefing the job application process.

USING "FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE" TO TEACH FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Although my family has grown up in Newark and I spent a lot of time there growing up, I am only beginning to understand what it means to be a part of an urban community and the challenges that people face as well as some of the intricacies that make it so beautiful. (Resident, 2013)

The first summer was designed to disrupt preconceived notions about urban youth that residents brought to the program and to help them develop more complex ways of thinking about their students. Even though many residents have suitable pre-dispositions for urban teaching, they still hold problematic assumptions about urban youth, which surfaced in early teaching experiences. Combatting these stereotypes is critical to a social justice foundation for teaching.

The goal is for residents to recognize curriculum and assessment practices that perpetuate and increase social inequities and to create curricula that give students opportunities to find their voices and examine issues of power in society. Clearly a year-long program can only lay a foundation for such work. Additional support for socially just teaching would be needed during the early years of teaching.

From the start, residents participate in a variety of learning experiences designed to help them begin developing a listen to teach habit of mind. Developing such a disposition enables residents to learn to construct curricula that bridges their students' needs and interests and the essential questions, skills, knowledge, and understanding of their content areas.

For example, before the first class, residents read *Hope in the Unseen* in which Ron Suskind, a reporter from the *Wall Street Journal*, tells the story of a young African American man who went through the Washington, DC, public school system and eventually attended Brown University. The narrative demonstrates the complex challenges of low-income students of color who are often successful academically in their urban public school settings but severely underprepared for a rigorous college environment. In discussing the intersections of race, class, gender, language, sexuality, and ability, residents juxtapose their own experiences with those of the young man in the text. These preliminary conversations begin to shed light on the privilege that many residents bring to Newark and their relationships with urban youth.

The faculty and Newark community partners thought that having residents participate in several community-based internships would further the

third space framework, provide valuable perspectives on Newark youth and highlight some strengths and needs of their communities. Building strong relationships with Newark youth would offer insights into the complexities of the students' identities and begins to illustrate the "funds of knowledge" of their families, homes, and communities (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Working with these organizations would help residents get to know Newark and begin to recognize its many community resources.

In addition, the community organizations could accommodate inquiry teaching and authentic learning without the constraints of a set curriculum, standards, and testing found in schools. Here residents could facilitate learning that was meaningful, engaging, and relevant to the Newark students. For example, one year, residents developed a zombie inquiry curriculum, which produced deep student engagement. While challenging, these experiences help residents see the power of relating curricula to students' lives. They can also take risks, collaborate with one another, experience trial and error, and formulate beliefs about teaching and learning.

MENTORING NEWARK YOUTH

Besides their internships, residents mentor a Newark All Star youth who is interning in a corporate setting. A privately funded development program for poor, urban youth of color, Newark All Stars focuses on the social, cultural, and creative development of urban youth through performance. Project leaders believe that by focusing on community, performance, and creativity in and out of school, and bringing together corporate executives, artists, dancers, and others to dialogue and perform, urban youth can develop some of the tools they need to succeed in the real world. Their message to the youth is—"You don't just live in your socially over-determined, parochial neighborhood. You live in the world. And your participation in the new community can develop you to be a builder of the world, a more cosmopolitan citizen" (All Stars Project, 2007, 4).

While residents mentor their All Stars youths, in many ways the experience allows for "an exchange of insider information," as one resident put it. Residents guide the youth in navigating a professional corporate setting and the youth introduce residents to adolescent life in Newark. As part of their mentoring role, residents organized at least one social experience with their mentee and visited him or her at their assigned corporate internship site.

After six weeks of mentoring, residents write a case study about their mentee, reflecting on the implications of their shared experiences and on their emerging identity as an urban teacher. Besides producing a rounded portrait, they analyze and interpret their shared experiences, using evidence to support their developing understandings. The experience greatly influ-

ences residents' thinking about themselves as teachers. As one resident wrote:

Through my interactions, I have gotten to know some of the realities that urban youth face regarding safety, mobility, and common differences in family structure. Regardless of these differences, I believe that all people, both adults and children, desire respect, autonomy, and acceptance. I learned that a lot of them are looking for connections which is particularly important in the urban environment. When the students got to know us, they were more than happy to work with us to do something or to help us. (Resident, 2013)

BECOMING SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHERS: THE INQUIRY CYCLE EXPERIENCE

The summer experiences lay a solid foundation for the program's social justice paradigm which rests on from Freire's (1970) "problem posing pedagogy" and which integrates the research and practices of funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005). According to this paradigm, students are considered constructors of knowledge, and teaching is built upon the experiences, language, and cultures of the students. But how would residents learn to enact this kind of teaching? How would they learn to design math and science curricula with a social justice orientation?

From the beginning, the program embraced inquiry as a way to examine the social and cultural norms that are constructed and re-constructed in schools (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). The fall semester is devoted to helping residents understand what socially just inquiry in math and science teaching entails and design units in keeping with this orientation. The spring semester is a time for constructing curricula that help high school students make sense of their worlds. This happens through a curricular structure called an inquiry cycle experience project (ICE).

Before residents create their own inquiry cycle, the faculty facilitate and model the experience by creating learning stations and an inquiry project around issues of race and class in schooling. A typical inquiry cycle begins with questioning, problem-posing, or a "wondering and wandering" phase to spark a question (Short et al., 1996). Then follows an investigation of the question or problem, a synthesis or creation based on the results of the investigation, sharing and discussing the synthesis, reflection on the process, and sometimes an action (Freire, 1970).

To launch this group inquiry, residents rotated through learning stations, examining texts, music, and videos related to the theme of social justice in schooling, taking notes, brainstorming questions, and writing reflections about their experiences in the learning stations. Residents were then asked to design and teach an ICE unit in their own discipline. The units were sup-

posed to build on students' interests, revolve around authentic, open-ended questions, require students to gather various kinds of data, and conclude with a dissemination of findings. The residents taught these units to their students in the high school classrooms toward the end of the spring semester. They also presented their ICE projects, including a rationale, lesson plans, graphic organizers, student work examples, and learning reflections to the faculty, mentors, and their peers.

Unit topics included rates of asthma, the availability of organic food, the production and processing of garbage, the amount of electrical energy used. Students designed research projects to examine these issues, collecting data in the field and presenting their findings. For example, one group of high school students examined the access Newark families have to fresh organic produce. The following year, this resident, now new high school teacher, collaborated with a colleague from the program to plan, develop, and maintain an urban garden where students grew fresh fruits and vegetables. He reflected that when students have projects "that are their own," the quality of their work and the level of their motivation increases greatly. He also recognized how social justice teaching gives students the opportunity to "cultivate their own voices on issues that are relevant to them" (Taylor & Klein, 2015).

USING VIDEO WITH MENTOR TEACHERS

Constructing a third space partnership is often a fragile, even utopian enterprise. Long-standing, complex hierarchies stand in the way of such work. This was particularly striking in working with the mentor teachers. As they embarked on the year-long residency, university faculty assumed that telling mentor teachers they were "co-teacher educators" would make that so. By the end of year one, however, it became clear that the traditional roles of classroom teacher as owner of "practical" knowledge and university professor as holder of "theoretical knowledge" had been recreated. University faculty designed and implemented the new curriculum while mentor teachers focused on classroom experiences. Figuring out how to disrupt this traditional dynamic became the goal of the next year's residency.

Helping mentors think aloud. One successful strategy involved finding ways for faculty and mentors to study their own teacher education practices together, including mentoring practices. This profoundly shifted the dynamic among the different participants (Taylor & Klein, 2015). Two faculty, a number of mentor teachers, and a doctoral student began meeting weekly to talk about the challenges of mentoring. During these conversations, a key mentoring challenge emerged—how to help mentors make transparent their interactive decision-making and problem solving. As one mentor put it, "I can't even verbalize sometimes why I've done something. It feels like it's

natural. I think I've just been teaching for so long and I've had so many student teachers that, for me, it isn't difficult."

This propelled mentors and faculty to seek a way to articulate the often unnamed work of teaching. One idea involved the use of videos to help teachers "name" teaching decisions and reveal why they do what they do. Since the program aims to prepare inquiry-based math and science teachers, residents needed to learn to use teaching methods they may not have experienced as students. Having mentors articulate the thinking behind their use of inquiry methods was critical to that learning process (Taylor & Klein, 2015).

The protocol required mentors or residents to videotape themselves teaching and then choose a clip to share with each other. First mentors videotaped themselves and modeled the process for the residents, choosing a motif to focus the viewing. The video protocols also supported the integration of theory and practice. Videotapes of mentors' teaching provided opportunities for residents to "catch" and unpack the ways their mentors enacted theories which had been discussed in classes.

Mentors found they could also teach theory through conversations around videotapes. Often what seemed automatic and un-thought-out to residents was in fact deeply intentional on the part of the mentors. Mentors had theories and intentions that guided their classroom actions. When prompted to reveal why they did what they did, they could make connections among content, students, and pedagogy. Over and over residents were able to "see" examples of "engagement," "inquiry," and "student-centered teaching" in practice, ideas frequently discussed frequently in faculty-led courses. Some mentors used video-based discussions to model practices they wanted their resident learn. They could point to something in their video and say: "See, this is an example of where students get to ask questions and construct their own knowledge."

CONCLUSION: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

The NMUTR supported my growth as a socially just teacher leader and it has allowed me the opportunity to help produce and develop outstanding teachers. . . . Of the six residents I have mentored in the program, five have been hired within the school and it has been nothing but exciting and rewarding to watch them grow as educators. Mentoring has forever changed my own philosophy of education to one that is centered on the necessary support and community based efforts required to educate our urban youth. In a small way I feel as though I am not teaching only my five classes of students, but through collaborative efforts and working, I am also reaching the students of my former residents and current peers. (Mentor teacher, 2013)

The program relied on three main strategies for promoting sustainable school change. First, the program counted on graduates to assume leadership roles

in their schools by creating school communities that foster socially just inquiry-based curriculum. Second, the program built collaborative reciprocal relationships with mentors, supporting their growth as teacher leaders and their work as change agents. Third, working closely with principals and department chairs strengthened the likelihood that the vision of the “third space” residency as a vehicle for sustainable change in schools would be realized.

In developing the program, faculty leaders thought strategically about the boundaries of our spheres of influence. By working collaboratively with district administrators, school principals, and math and science department chairs at our partner high schools in Newark, they sought to foster a sense of agency among an intergenerational cadre of teacher leaders, both mentors and residents. They assumed that leadership for change would involve a “mutual dependency” or “a joint enterprise involving leaders and teachers in a reciprocal activity of realising the organisation’s core objectives” (Haugh, Norenes, & Vedoy, 2014, 358). They hoped that faculty would also support and sustain this change through their conversations with mentors about articulating their practice.

At East Side High School, for example, the principal saw the residency as an opportunity to make change from within the building. He knew from the literature on leadership and school change that he played a key role as principal in creating the conditions necessary for teacher leaders to flourish (Taylor, Goeke, Klein, Onore, & Geist, 2011) and he worked with his department chairs to provide strategic opportunities for mentor teachers and residents to initiate new programs, design curriculum, and innovate teaching.

The science and math department chairs also saw the residency as a vehicle to ignite pedagogical change among the mentors and other teachers, mainly shifting from traditional teaching methods to a focus on inquiry-based learning (Taylor & Otinsky, 2007). On several occasions, teachers who were not participating directly in the residency took advantage of the presence of the NMUTR faculty and their focus on inquiry to improve their own teaching practices and increase their students’ engagement and ultimately their achievement.

For instance, one mentor and resident invited another mathematics teacher to attend their Honors Pre-Calculus class on a daily basis. This invitation gave the other teacher an opportunity to observe and participate in the kinds of inquiry-based practices encouraged by the NMUTR. He then used these strategies in his own teaching, which led to his being rated as a “highly effective teacher.”

The following year, his first year teaching Advanced Placement Calculus, this teacher’s students received scores of 3s, 4s, and a 5, scores that in most cases give the students college credit. The same teacher coached two teams who won first place in both the Calculus and Pre-Calculus competitions of

the Newark Math Olympics. He attributes these achievements to his learning experiences with the mentor and her resident. Rather than receiving a formal directive from the principal or department chair to change his pedagogy, the teacher was influenced by the mentor and her resident.

A “third space” partnership needs constant attention through honest dialogue and reflection in order to achieve its goal of promoting socially just, sustainable changes in schools. It also underscores the value of multiple perspectives and the need for flexible expectations and responsibilities. Such a multidimensional, third space framework allows a variety of stakeholders with unique strengths, experiences, and positions of power to work collectively toward the goal of school change. The model meets people where they are and allows them to position themselves as agents of change and to grow in ways that align with social justice teaching and inquiry-based pedagogy.

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