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Novice Teachers' Stories of Solving Problems of Practice

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Novice Teachers' Stories of Solving Problems of Practice

by

Yvonne Franco

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in
Elementary Education
Department of Teaching and Learning
College of Education
University of South Florida

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, whose support and encouragement has allowed me to reach beyond my own imagination. To my husband, Richard, who inspires me to dream big everyday; thank you. To my dear nephews, Jordan, Ryan, Jeremiah, and Eli, as you reach for your dreams in life, always remember that prayer and hard work will get you there.

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Abstract

National attention given to heightening the quality of educators, calls attention to the practices used by programs to prepare teachers (CAEP, 2013). The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) requires evidence novice teachers “apply the professional... skills and dispositions preparation experiences were designed to achieve” (p.13). Grounded in reflection, teacher inquiry serves as a pedagogical practice to prepare teachers to systematically learn from their problems of practice (Shulman, 1986; Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014). Despite evidence teacher inquiry leads preservice teachers (PSTs) to focus on student learning with the goal of improving practice (Capobianco, 2007; Dawson, 2006; Taylor & Pettit, 2007), research has yet to identify how beginning teachers approach their problems. Using a narrative methodology, this qualitative study interviewed two first-year teachers to glean insight into the problems of practice they identified, the inquiry related skills and dispositions that surfaced when they approached problems, and the barriers and facilitators to resolving challenges experienced in their elementary school context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Findings include (a) novices identified problems related to instructional methods, collaborating with stakeholders and teaching special need students; (b) inquiry skills and dispositions were most evident when approaching problems related to students’ needs and instructional methods; (c) critical learning and emotional intelligence surfaced, though with varying levels of depth, depended on the identified problem of practice; (d) novices demonstrated awareness their instructional practices impacted students; (e) novices sought ways to drive change in practice; and (f) critical learning

and reflective dispositions supported novices to regulate emotions. The study suggests several implications for school administrators, mentors, and teacher educators, such as (a) leading novices to see beyond classroom management; (b) emphasizing essential problem solving skills; (c) supporting novices when the nature of the problem of practice inhibits asking investigative questions; (d) communicating boundaries for novices to drive change; (e) fostering critical learning with reflective focus on student needs; (f) cultivating the symbiotic relationship between emotional intelligence, critical learning, and reflection; and (g) promoting the novice teacher researcher in a traditional novice teacher culture.

Chapter One

Introduction

National attention to the quality of educators in the classroom makes teacher preparation a high-stakes endeavor (Maloch, 2003; Pearson, 2001). Pearson (2001) acknowledges a shift in educational reform, whereby teacher educators are being held responsible for the ills of American education. Many from outside the field are turning to teacher preparation for insight into: “(1) What is wrong? And (2) how do we fix it?” (Pearson, 2001, p. 4). While educational researchers have studied effects of preservice teacher (PST) preparation practices, as well as practices employed to develop novice teachers, these phases of professional development have most often been studied in isolation. This isolation fails to explore links between preservice and inservice teacher professional learning. Specifically, we know too little about the use and influence of clinically based professional learning tools in teacher preparation, on the way novice teachers actualize their teaching practice (CAEP, 2013; De Angelis, Wall & Che, 2013).

In 2010, the National Research Council (2010) advocated for a link between the phases of professional development, expressing a dire need for specific researched experiences known to “result in more effective beginning teachers” (CAEP, 2013, p. 8). Informing current university accreditation requirements (CAEP, 2013), this perspective presents a broader mission for preparation, whereby teacher education programs must view preparation as their continued responsibility beginning with the program entry through induction. Crucial to this undertaking, is the knowledge that while teacher preparation programs are viewed primarily responsible for preparing novice teachers, continued learning relies on the novice teacher's commitment to their

own knowledge development and long-term effectiveness (CAEP, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In accordance, preparation programs are required to provide evidence of completers' impact on P-12 student learning throughout their first two years teaching, and induction programs to ensure on-going mentoring and professional development opportunities to novice teachers, as needed (CAEP, 2013).

Feiman-Nemser (2001) argues that despite contrary perspectives regarding the impact of teacher preparation programs, quality programs “can make a difference” (p. 1021). Referenced as an “initial phase of learning” (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 26), preservice teachers should be led to understand the learning process, diverse backgrounds of learners, explore content-specific knowledge and begin to develop a repertoire of pedagogical strategies for planning, teaching and assessing their future learners. Teacher preparation is tasked with facilitating these experiences, as well as leading PSTs to reflect upon their beliefs on teaching and learning, thus disrupting personal theories to accommodate new ideas, and a deeper understanding of teaching (Abell, Bryan & Anderson, 1998).

In their first years, research indicates that novice teachers are overwhelmed by the responsibility of both teaching and learning to teach, all while navigating unfamiliar problems of practice (Burkman, 2012; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; McCaughtry, Cothran, Kulinna, Martin, & Faust, 2005). Feiman-Nemser (2012) calls the transition period from preservice teacher preparation to novice teaching “a time of intense learning” and “intense loneliness” (p. 10). Novices are led to assume the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues, often feeling overwhelmed by the demands of their new students, parents, classroom, and school, as well as the lack of support from both colleagues and curriculum (Johnson, 2004). Moreover, studies indicate that they are assigned to larger classes, more students with special needs, extracurricular

activities, and classrooms with fewer resources (Patterson, 2005; Shields et al., 2003).

Consistent with Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow's (2002) findings, DeAngelis, Wall, and Che (2013) assess that during this demanding time, novice teachers most satisfied with the quality of their teacher preparation make decisions to remain in the profession. Those teachers who are less satisfied typically leave the profession, thus contributing to the high attrition rates among novice teachers. These findings create urgency for understanding "the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and the impact of preparation on teacher and student outcomes" (DeAngelis, Wall & Che, p. 351).

While CAEP (2013) recently calls for researched pedagogical practices that prepare teachers to effectively impact P-12 students' learning, Shulman (1986) has long advocated for the development of pedagogy evidenced to prepare quality teachers. Shulman terms these practices Signature Pedagogy (SP), establishing the criteria that to support professional development, they must actively engage future educators in professional discourse, teach them to make decisions under uncertain circumstances, and aid in the formation of professional dispositions. Yendol-Hoppey and Franco's (2014) review identifies six SP. These PST field related and research based SP include: 1) inquiry, 2) focused observation, 3) mentoring/coaching, 4) co-teaching, 5) reflection on teaching, and 6) integrated coursework and fieldwork (Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014, p. 5). Although each of these six clinically rich SP are designed to support PST professional learning, this study investigates just one of them, inquiry. Inquiry was selected because it was the tool that a novice teacher could most independently engage in as they began teaching in their own classroom.

Inquiry, referenced as teacher inquiry throughout this dissertation, is the signature pedagogy that led to this study's investigation of the problems of practice novice teachers

identify, and the ways in which they approach resolving them. Grounded in reflection, teacher inquiry empowers individuals to raise personally meaningful questions regarding a challenge, systematically researching them in their context, to generate purposeful knowledge that leads to implementing solutions (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Stenhouse, 1975). Because “the heart of knowing how to teach cannot be learned from coursework alone” (Bryan & Abell, 1999, p. 121), PSTs require that time be provided for “reflective experience” (p. 136). Teacher inquiry surfaces as a pedagogical practice in teacher preparation that enhances PST reflection on practice through the use of data. Throughout the literature, studies credit this practice for helping teachers embrace teaching as learning; thus, becoming more reflective, generating data from within authentic classrooms, driving decision-making, collaborating with peers to study and inform practice, overcoming problems specific to supporting students’ needs, navigating the uncertainty of teaching, and empowering individuals with a voice to serve as members of school reform (Capobianco, 2007; Dawson, 2006; Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders & Goldenberg, 2009; Halai, 2012; Keys & Bryan, 2001; Megowan-Romanowicz, 2010; Poekert, 2011; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1999; Taylor & Pettit, 2007).

Bryan and Abell (1999) emphasize that to facilitate professional knowledge-development in teaching, “teacher educators are challenged to coach prospective teachers to purposefully and systematically inquire into their own practice, encouraging them to make such inquiry a habit” (p. 136). Gunstone, Slattery, Baird and Northfield (1993) propose that reflective practice leads preservice teachers to assume responsibility for their learning, fostering a continuous learning disposition that is essential to life-long learning, and continued professional development.

However, despite the known developmental gains of teacher inquiry, the ways in which first-year

teachers possess an inquiry stance remains unclear. Feiman-Nemser (2001) attributes this uncertainty to a broader challenge in teacher learning, stating:

There is no connective tissue holding things together within or across the different phases of learning to teach... Professional development consists of discrete and disconnected events. Nor do we have anything that resembles a coordinated system. Universities regard preservice preparation as their purview. Schools take responsibility for new teacher induction. Professional development is everybody's and nobody's responsibility. (p. 1049)

National accountability measures on teacher preparation programs confirm that the time has arrived where programs must own responsibility for the novice teachers they produce beyond program completion (CAEP, 2013; DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; 2003; 2008). As such, it is only to a program's benefit that they partner with schools and novice teachers to seek insight into how their programs can be improved, and provide professional development support as needed (CAEP, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

In this chapter I introduce the background and problem statement that led to my research questions, the research questions guiding this study, the methodology employed to investigate my research questions, key terminology, and the significance and scope of the study.

Background

In my first year as a doctoral student and graduate teaching assistant, I found myself working as a teacher educator with 13 preservice teachers to explicitly communicate the knowledge I believed had made me effective throughout my nine years as an elementary classroom teacher. I believed that if only preservice teachers would hear what I had to say, I could transmit my experience-based knowledge to them. Despite the fact that the erroneous

perception contradicted my personal philosophy that knowledge is acquired through reflective experiential and inquiry-based learning, I embraced the misnomer. In retrospect, I lacked the knowledge, skills, and experience with pedagogical practices that could facilitate PST learning. I also lacked awareness of how I was exercising my own underlying beliefs in this new context.

Working with my advisor on a literature review to examine how teacher preparation programs are designed, I came across the word ‘inquiry’ as a systematic investigation of an area of one’s teaching practice with the purpose of coming to a better understanding of it (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). While the literature failed to consistently offer details regarding how teacher educators facilitated the practice in their programs, outcomes specified presented inquiry as an effective means to empower PST to develop knowledge requisite of teaching. According to the literature, engaging in teacher inquiry led to the development of reflective practitioners with a skill for questioning their practices, thus developing PSTs’ knowledge of students, pedagogy and content (PCK) to drive decisions made (Shulman, 1986; Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014).

With the support of a team of new doctoral students and my advisor, I was led to experience ‘inquiry’ as a new teacher educator in order to develop a personal understanding of my new role. Gradually, I began to position myself as a learner, owning the knowledge I developed throughout the process and understanding that I needed to embrace this method as a means to support knowledge development among my preservice teachers as well.

As part of a team of internship supervisors we came together to explore our own inquiry work. At the same time, I was assigned to one of six PST cohorts for two years. I looped with this group of 11 preservice teachers, leading them to use inquiry to study their teaching practice and overcome problems of practice. To scaffold their learning, I supported preservice teachers

as they identified an issue/question based on a felt wondering, learned more about their questions by exploring literature, planned an investigation, gathered and analyzed data, proposed answers, explanations, and predictions to their questions, and shared results with their peers and collaborating teachers (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009).

As they engaged in teacher inquiry, changes in their teaching practices and disposition towards classroom challenges evolved in accordance with the literature (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; Franco & Krause, 2014). To this end, I felt responsibility to make known the professional development experiences [grounded in teacher inquiry] that I facilitated. Presenting at professional conferences, I served as an “informed advocate” for the use of teacher inquiry as a pedagogical practice in teacher preparation (Spalding et al., 2011, p. 6). Personally acquiring evidence that this pedagogical practice prepared effective *preservice* teachers, had altered my beliefs regarding the objectives for learning and teaching. The purpose for learning became less about the acquisition of knowledge and more about the experiences that gave meaning to it. In consequence, I currently believe that teacher inquiry empowers learners to intentionally *live* experience, with the altered awareness that knowing comes from conscious discovery and reflects the meaning attributed to the discovery by its surrounding context. In this conscious discovery, we become owners of our knowledge, empowered to apply it to improve the contextual circumstance and professionally transform ourselves. The learner is no longer vulnerable to their situation, but rather only limited by ability to identify personal need and improve upon it.

As an educator, my role has become more meaningful to me than previously envisioned as well. It is no longer to simulate experience from which preservice teachers learn from; but rather to empower them with tools for investigating and learning from their authentic

experiences. I believe that investigation necessarily supplements hands-on experience with minds-on learning; and that through teacher inquiry, learners become teachers [when they intentionally develop professional practices and share findings with others], and teachers become learners [when they continuously study their practices to learn and improve upon them].

Contrary to my initial beliefs, I now realize my personal experiences as a former elementary school teacher add only to the lens by which I examine my own circumstances, doing little for my preservice teachers. I cannot give them the knowledge I acquired from these experiences. However, using teacher inquiry I can support them to develop an investigative lens for acquiring their own meaningful knowledge and using it to continuously improve upon their experience, thus empowering them with lifelong professional learning capabilities. Professionally developing alongside my preservice teachers as their internship supervisor, I enacted these beliefs and watched as they used teacher inquiry to purposefully develop their ability to learn and teach.

Upon graduation, however, I wondered if the 11 PSTs' year and a half long engagement with teacher inquiry would embrace professional learning in their new role as novice teachers. My wondering proved critical in light of literature documenting the expectation that 1st year teachers enter a survival phase, abandoning what they know for "safer, less complex" teaching methods focused on managing the new context (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1029). Further, I recognized the need for studies that examine teacher learning overtime, advising against teacher education's propensity for viewing new educators as "finished products" (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 26). If my mission were to understand pedagogical practices that result in quality program completers (CAEP, 2013), I would have to understand the link between PST preparation practices and novice teachers' practices. Specifically, I would need to investigate how novice

teachers prepared using teacher inquiry, sought resolution to problems of practice in their new learning context.

This study sought to use novice teachers' stories to understand how PSTs, who used teacher inquiry throughout their teacher preparation, navigated the problems of practice they identified from their first year in the classroom. The study is aimed at adding to the literature, as well as providing me insight as a teacher educator, into the inquiry skills and dispositions that can be gleaned from their described approaches to seeking resolution.

Research Questions

This qualitative study is guided by the overarching research question: (1) What stories do novice teachers tell about the problems of practice in their first year?, and three sub-questions:

- a. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
- b. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
- c. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Findings from these questions glean insight into whether the novice teachers employ inquiry skills and dispositions developed during their teacher preparation program, and if they do, in what ways?

To explore my research questions, I embraced Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) perspective that an individual's life unfolds like a narrative. The authors' state that "life— as we come to it and as it comes to others—is filled with narrative fragments enacted in storied moments... reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities..." (p. 17). Accordingly, because experience occurs narratively, "educational experiences should be studied narratively"

(p. 19). Thus, to fully understand the use of teacher inquiry as a self-exploration tool, it was necessary to examine novice teachers' narratives for inquiry skills and dispositions that surfaced in the stories of their contextually experienced life.

Methodology

I utilized an interpretive paradigm to understand the novice teachers' problem-solving decisions, deep awareness of their underlying ideas, and the context in which they solved problems of practice. Novice teachers' experiences solving problems of practice, identified using personal stories, served to highlight their unique transition from PST to novice teacher. This approach provided a contextually-sensitive source from which to explore novice teachers' inquiry skills and dispositions (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997; Day, 1999; Deal & White, 2009; Schön, 1983; 1987; Smith, 2004; Smith, 2012). By *contextually sensitive*, I mean that stories communicated problems of practice influenced by the unique characteristics of novice's first classroom and school, as well as the many stakeholders in the setting, which included students, colleagues, parents and even administrators. Moreover, the contextual experience of their teacher preparation, described in detail in Chapter Three of this dissertation, may (or may not) have influence their decisions. In gleaning insight into novice teachers' stories, I had the opportunity to capture if and how teacher inquiry skills or dispositions surfaced as they addressed problems of practice in their teaching. Within the interpretive paradigm, the study utilized a constructivist perspective, as knowledge was generated based on the subjective stories experienced and described by the novice teachers. This constructivist perspective allowed me to capture the novice teachers' inquiry skills and dispositions that revealed themselves in practice, as the novice teachers described how they made meaning and responded to classroom situations using both old and newly learned strategies (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Paul, 2005). The

perspective acknowledged cohesion between the novice teachers' evolving beliefs and experiences, and their new context (Paul, 2005).

An interpretive paradigm and constructivist perspective informed my selection of a narrative methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly explain that the “narrative view of experience, with the participants’ and researchers’ narratives of experience situated and lived out...” is the “theoretical methodological frame” (p. 128). Novice teachers’ stories provided a conduit to understand their ideas, context and experiences (Bochner, 2005). Four semi-structured interviews served as the data for capturing the novice teachers’ stories of their decision-making practices both in and out of the new classroom (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997). The interviews aimed to document stories of problems of practice, challenges, and milestones experienced, as well as the methods they selected to address them. Novice teachers were also required to share artifacts depicting the experienced problems of practice and their problem-solving methods. While the artifacts did not serve as an analyzed data source, they provided insight into the PST practices employed, serving as a jumping point for discussion and further informing the development of interview questions that more deeply explored novice teachers’ problem solving practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997).

Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) approach to narrative analysis was used. Novice teachers’ stories of problems of practice comprised the field texts in this study. The reading and rereading of these field texts generated “research texts” as chronological stories that reflected their past and present experiences, as well as the generation of their underlying ideas (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 130). The field texts were analyzed for Labov’s (1972) six elements, including the abstract, setting, problem, action toward resolution, and closure, in order to

chronologically organize the structure of each story, what was said, and how the novice teacher positioned themselves. Finally, field texts were each examined holistically with an inquiry intention to derive an understanding of the problems identified, the inquiry skills and dispositions that surfaced, and the barriers and facilitators experienced (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). “Inquiry intention” according to Clandinin & Connelly (2000), allowed me, as the researcher, to “read field texts in the context of other research and theoretical frameworks” seeking “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes” (p. 133) that provided insight into my research questions.

Key Terms

Many variations exist in the terminology used throughout the teacher education literature. The following are definitions used throughout this study.

Preservice Teacher (PST). An individual enrolled in a teacher preparation program that has not yet satisfied all program requirements and does not retain a Professional Educator’s Certificate (CAEP, 2013). Preservice teachers specifically selected for this study had inquiry experience during their preservice teacher certification, as a result of having engaged in teacher inquiry for a total of three consecutive semesters.

Novice Teacher/Program Completer. An individual in their first year in the classroom that has satisfied all requirements in a teacher preparation program and retains a K-6 Professional Educator’s Certificate. Teacher preparation programs are held accountable by the Council of Accreditation for Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2013) to produce evidence of their program completers’ impact on student learning for their first two years in the classroom. Participants in this study fulfilled all specified requirements under this definition.

Problems of Practice. Challenges experienced by the novice teacher/program completer in their first year in the classroom. Teachers evolve in their focus of problems from thinking about self, to their teaching tasks, only eventually considering their impact on student learning as they gain expertise (Fuller & Bown, 1975). This study lent attention to the problems of practice identified by novice teachers and their approach to resolving them, as described in their stories.

Teacher Inquiry. An intentional and systematic study used by teachers to generate personally meaningful knowledge to solve problems of practice (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Stenhouse, 1975). The systematic process includes: identifying a classroom problem of practice; reading literature to inform it; planning an investigation; collecting and analyzing data; and using the data to reflect, propose an explanation and improve a teaching practice. Findings can then be shared publicly with other teachers and/or professionals to inform the transformation of others' practices (See Figure 1.1).

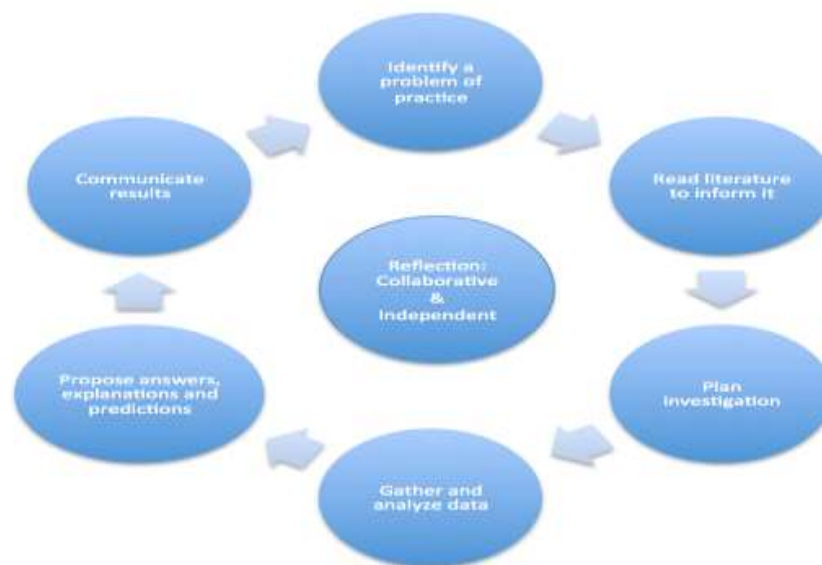


Figure 1.1: Teacher inquiry process

Impact on Student Learning. A program completers' demonstration of "competencies and skills necessary to achieve the state education goals; help all students in the state's diverse student population meet high standards for academic achievement; maintain safe, secure classroom learning environments; and sustain the state system of school improvement and education accountability" (FLDOE, 2015, p. 1). Teachers' impact on student learning is assessed by the state based on P-12 student growth. Preparation programs will need to provide evidence of the quality of novice teachers per these expectations throughout the first two years after completion of their program, thus supporting this study's rationale that they must begin to study the effects of their pedagogical practices in teacher preparation, on the skills and competencies of the novice teachers produced. Further, it responds to CAEP's call that "research to date does not tell us what specific experiences are most likely to result in more effective beginning teachers" (CAEP, 2013, p. 8).

Stakeholder. An individual invested in supporting students in a school context, including administrators, teachers, staff, and parents (Day, 1999).

Teacher Researcher. An individual actively engaged in using the systematic process of teacher inquiry to study and improve their teaching practice.

Signature Pedagogy (SP). Shulman's, (2005) concept of intentionally designed teaching routines that facilitate preservice teacher learning. Shulman's (2005) routines result in: developing preservice teachers' professional character, acknowledging that teachers must learn to make decisions under immediate and uncertain circumstances, and expecting preservice teachers to interact, collaborate and reflect with students, peers and other educators. Inquiry, referenced as teacher inquiry throughout this dissertation, is the signature pedagogy that led to

this study's investigation of the problems of practice novice teachers identify and the ways in which they approach resolving them.

Inquiry Intention. Analyzing “field texts in the context of other research and theoretical frameworks,” to seek “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes” that provide insight into research questions in a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133).

Skills of Inquiry. Skills of teacher inquiry consist of an individual's ability to identify problems within their practice, ask questions to investigate the identified problems, systematically collect and analyze data to make sense of it and drive change in action (Smith, 2012). Participants' narratives were analyzed for the use of any of these skills when solving problems of practice.

Dispositions of Inquiry. Dispositions are habits that dictate the precise ways individuals' respond to situations given a particular context. A disposition can show itself via a “set of interrelated habits” (Nelsen, 2015, p. 89). Dispositions of inquiry in this study are derived from the literature as reflection, critical learning, and emotional intelligence (Day, 1999; Deal & White, 2009; Schön, 1983; 1987; Smith, 2004; Smith, 2012). Participants' narratives in this study were analyzed for these characteristics.

Reflective Disposition. A “conscious” mindset, whereby practitioners ask themselves “What is this?” and “How have I been thinking about it?” therefore, questioning their beliefs and/or practices to better understand problems at hand (Schön, 1987, pp. 28-29). In this study novices' reflection is analyzed for depth per Handal and Lauvas (1987), with ‘action’ guiding reflection as the primary level, theoretical reasons on the second level of reflection, and moral/ethical considerations as the third and deepest level of reflection.

Critical Learning Disposition. When one engages in “critical analysis of [one’s] practice” and questions their work, with the purpose of “participating in ongoing reflection and learning” about themselves, and/or their problem of practice (Smith, 2004, p. 526). Zeichner (1993) adds to this definition that when questioning one’s work, an individual with a critical learning disposition considers issues of “ethics and social justice” (Day, 1999, pp. 29). In this study, novices’ stories are analyzed to determine if they critically analyze their practice, question their work and/or consider issues of ethics/social justice related to their problem of practice.

Emotional Intelligence Disposition. An individual’s ability to “...manage feelings, handle stress, confront failure with optimism, [and] persist in the face of difficulty...” allowing him or her to not only reflect on problems of practice, but also to reach out to stakeholders to problem solve, derive learning from experience, and regulate their behavior (Tait, 2008, p. 60). In this study, novices’ stories are analyzed for ways they confront problems of practice and regulate emotions.

Demonstrate. Exhibiting behaviors reflective of skills of inquiry and/or dispositions of inquiry.

Inquiry Stance. An individual’s professional position towards teaching and knowledge development, by which they continuously ask questions about their current situation, and engage in reflective practice to learn, make decisions, and drive change (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Smith, 2004; Smith, 2012). Smith (2004) calls this an “inquiry stance,” stating that it’s an “attitude of openness and acceptance that learning from inquiry” is never ending and continuous (p. 526). Participants in this study experienced first-hand all characteristics of this professional position in their teacher preparation, and may potentially display them through inquiry skills and dispositions that surface in this study.

Significance and Scope of the Study

This study served both as a practical and theoretical significance. First, as a novice teacher educator, the study helped me answer my own wondering regarding the role and use of teacher inquiry in educator preparation. Literature advocates for the signature pedagogy as a means for developing preservice teachers' knowledge, providing opportunities to "test theories, use knowledge, see and try out the knowledge advocated," as well as "investigate problems and analyze solutions that arise in the field" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1024). However, as effective as we know the practice to be in preservice teacher preparation (Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014; Franco & Krause, 2014), the literature necessitates an understanding of the preparation practice's outcomes on novice teachers (CAEP, 2013; DeAngelis, Wall, & Che, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2001, 2008). Moreover, because CAEP's (2013) latest measures for educator preparation hold teacher educator programs accountable for beginning teachers' quality, and teacher inquiry has evidence capable of cultivating quality PSTs, the practice in teacher preparation shows great potential to serve as a tool for actualizing CAEP's mission (CAEP; 2013; Capobianco et al. 2006; Cullen et al., 2010; Lebak & Tinsley, 2010; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1999). However, more specifically, the field needs to understand how, if at all, inquiry skills and dispositions surface when beginning teachers solve the problems of practice that minimize impact on student learning in their new context (Borko, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Shulman, 2005; Spalding, 2011; Zeichner, 2007). Feiman-Nemser (2008) and Desimone (2009) advocate for long-term effectiveness studies of pedagogical practices, recognizing that there is still much to learn regarding how teachers continue to develop in different contexts.

Finally, the sub questions in this study respond to CAEP's (2013) Standard 4: Program Impact, which seeks evidence that educator preparation programs verify if novice teachers

“apply the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the preparation experiences were designed to achieve” and report the preparation as “effective” and “relevant to the responsibilities they confront on the job” (p.13). This is crucial to preparation programs, as they begin to consider multiple methods to supplement “value-added measures” assessing the effectiveness of their programs. This study may add to a discussion regarding qualitative methods for attaining this critical data.

Scope/ Limitations

Given the small sample used in this study, as well as the specific contextual characteristics of the university preparation program and novice teacher elementary schools described in detail, findings from this study are not intended to be generalized. My intention is that this study contributes to teacher educators’ thinking regarding studying and defining the models of practice they employ. Further, I hope to ignite discussion in the literature about the need to study signature pedagogy beyond the years of teacher preparation, with the purpose of responding to Feiman-Nemser’s (2008) request to continue understanding how teachers professionally develop; CAEP’s (2013) requirement that programs study their practices; and my ability to advocate for a pedagogical practice that I have studied in connection to novices’ contextual experiences in the elementary classroom.

In the next chapter, I explore the literature pertaining to this study. Specifically, I examine literature to communicate the need to study models of practice in teacher preparation, and describe teacher inquiry’s historical context while situating it in terms of PST and inservice teacher professional development. In addition, I examine empirical and conceptual literature to describe the problems of practice novice teachers identify, inquiry skills and dispositions, and the barriers and facilitators to resolving challenges.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This study exemplifies one overarching research question: What stories do novice teachers tell about the problems of practice in their first year? This research question was complemented by three sub questions: (1) What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories? (2) How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions? and (3) How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them? In pursuit of understanding how preservice teachers resolved problems of practice in their first year as teachers of record, this literature review examines both conceptual and empirical literature. The review is organized into three sections. In the first section it uses conceptual literature to: (1) communicate the need to deeply study models of practice in teacher education, (2) describe the historical context of the signature pedagogy (SP) teacher inquiry in professional preparation, and (3) situate teacher inquiry in the context of PST and inservice teacher professional development. In the second section I explore conceptual and empirical classroom literature to describe novice teacher learning in terms of the problems of practice identified by inservice teachers, and the skills and dispositions of inquiry that surface throughout the literature. Finally, the third section is dedicated to describing Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model of human development, which was used in this study as a lens to describe the barriers and facilitators to resolving problems of practice, described by participants in their first year.

I. Situating the Study

The need to study models of practice in teacher education. Perceptions of teacher quality rely heavily on the shoulders of teacher preparation programs, as they are expected to consistently deliver highly skilled professionals into the classroom every year. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2013) maintains accountability standards for professional preparation programs, measuring the quality of their program completers via their impact on P-12 student learning and development, as well as the “satisfaction of the completers and their employers” (p. 2). Programs are expected to use this data to continuously revise and improve the preparation practices employed within their programs.

In supporting teacher preparation, CAEP (2013) has called for the dissemination of researched practices known to effectively prepare beginning teachers. The request is certainly not novel to the teaching profession. Scholars in education have long acknowledged that to be an educator, there is an existing body of knowledge that must be cultivated (Ball, Thames & Phelps, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997; Shulman, 1986, 1986, 2005). However, decisions regarding *what* that body of knowledge is and how it is to be developed have prevalently been left to the discretion of teacher preparation programs, resulting in great variation among them. Shulman (2005) identifies this as a challenge in teacher preparation stating, “Wherever you go in education, people want you to understand that what they are doing is totally different from what is done elsewhere . . .” (Viadero, 2005, p. 5). Thirteen years preceding CAEP’s (2013) latest request, his work on the Signature Pedagogies of the Profession (2005) articulated the need for continuity within our field, observing:

It’s very hard to learn to practice without powerful, consistent models of practice that we can *study deeply*, that we *engage with deeply*, that we can *reflect on*

deeply, and over which we have some control with regard to *quality* and *character*. (p. 16)

Shulman refers to these models of practice as “Signature Pedagogy” (SP), arguing that to be identified as such in teacher education, pedagogical practices must adhere to three criteria including: (a) developing preservice teachers’ professional character [pedagogies of formation], (b) acknowledging that teachers must learn to make decisions under immediate and uncertain circumstances [pedagogies of uncertainty], and (c) expecting preservice teachers to interact, collaborate and reflect with students, peers and other educators [pedagogies of engagement], in order to develop them professionally.

In response to this call, Yendol-Hoppey and Franco’s (2014) review of articles published in School-University Partnerships, reveals six Signature Pedagogy (SP) that emerge as “systematic and intentionally designed teaching routines that facilitate pre-service teacher learning...” (p. 4). Adhering to Shulman’s (2005) criteria, the SP is: Inquiry, focused observation, mentoring/coaching, co-teaching, reflection on teaching, and integrated coursework and fieldwork (p. 5). However, while this identification of SP begins to address the need for models of practice, it has yet to respond to Shulman’s (2005) call for communicating powerful models we know to be beneficial because they have been studied deeply, engaged with deeply and reflected upon deeply. Yendol-Hoppey and Franco acknowledge ambiguity in the specific structures characterizing the researched models of practice reviewed, making it challenging to discuss the specific conditions underlying them, and leaving much room for interpretation. This situation is not to be taken lightly as Zeichner (2007) forewarns of the historical propensity of advocating for pedagogical practices in teacher education, without documenting the specific conditions that exist around them.

Attention to the contexts in which SP is employed and teachers are developed is crucial, considering the understanding that learning is situated in both individual and sociocultural features (Borko, 2004). Feiman-Nemser (2001) identifies that while teacher preparation plays a large role in professional learning, much continued learning occurs beyond the university classroom context, when PSTs are confronted by the demands of their first very own classroom. Since “learning occurs in many different aspects of practice, including classrooms, school communities, and professional development workshops” (Borko, p. 4), professional development programs cannot fully speak to the quality of their models of practice if they neglect to reflect upon, deeply study and communicate how preservice teachers in the context of their first teaching experience, practice as a result of them. Moreover, because teacher preparation programs are regarded as largely responsible for preparing effective teachers, this sentiment is shared by CAEP (2013), whom requires that these programs “provide assurance of the high quality of its program completers during the first two years immediately following completion of the program...” (p. 3). For these reasons, this study responds to the field's need to understand how PSTs, after engaging in a teacher preparation program grounded in the SP teacher inquiry, solved problems of practice once confronted by them in their first year as teacher of record.

Historical context of teacher inquiry. As the first SP identified by Yendol-Hoppey and Franco (2014), inquiry is defined as a “systematic and intentional study carried out by teachers to improve teaching” (p. 7). Systematic references a formal process by which teacher researchers identify an issue based upon data or a felt wondering; learn more about the issue; plan an investigation; gather and analyze data; and use the data to derive an explanation and/or inform practice. While it has been referenced historically under a variation of names including “action research,” “teacher research” “classroom research” and “teacher inquiry,” the process has been

consistently characterized by purposeful reflection grounded on John Dewey's (1904; 1933) philosophy of education (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009, p.5). Moreover, because it is premised on acts of meticulous problem solving and deep self-awareness, studies indicate that inquiry serves to "empower practitioners to recognize political, practical, and personal problems related to practice, and to take action to resolve those problems" (Capobianco, 2007, p. 274).

John Dewey (1904) warned against informing education by learning from external conditions rather than the actual classroom environment. He argued that the interaction between educator and child, along with the underlying conditions of the classroom context, represented the only reality of the educational condition, and thus "the real course of study" (p. 268). The teacher, whom he regarded as "the only real educator in the school system" (p. 272), must not serve to enact externally required routine habits, but rather subsist as a learner of pedagogical literature, as well as "a student of the most fundamental educational problems in their most urgent reality" (p. 273). Learning, according to Dewey (1933), necessitates "reflective experience" (p. 150) as a means to gain understanding from past or present circumstance and action. With thinking as the link between action and consequence, he offered that to learn one must consider a puzzling situation, anticipate the consequences of varying approaches, collect data, clarify the challenge, revise the plan of action, and finally, act upon and learn from it (p. 150). In this way, educators could generate personally meaningful knowledge from within their own classroom experience to inform their work with real children.

Kurt Lewin later adopted action research in 1946, as a systematic investigative cycle of "planning, acting, observing, and reflecting," (Capobianco, 2007, p. 273). While his work pertained predominantly to the field of social sciences, its applicability to the education profession could not be ignored. As such, Stephen Corey was among the first to apply Lewin's

work in 1953, at Columbia University's Teachers College. Corey perceived educators' work of "curriculum planning and instruction" (Capobianco, p. 274) as an impetus for educators to utilize their professional knowledge to enact change. Action research offered a legitimate way to identify an area of concern, hypothesize possible solutions, enact them in practice, study their outcomes, and generate solutions (Capobianco, 2007).

In 1970, Lawrence Stenhouse perceived action research as a means "to demystify and democratize research, which was seen as failing to contribute effectively to the growth of professional understanding and to the improvement of professional practice" (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 136). Establishing the Center for Applied Research in Education at the University of East Anglia, Stenhouse collaborated with colleagues to use action research to advance the development of teachers' decision-making skills and improve educational practices. He inspired teachers to become active researchers of their profession, believing in the practice's potential for improving education, as well as the practitioners themselves (Capobianco, 2007; Stenhouse, 1975).

Grounded in reflection, Schön (1987) likewise viewed inquiry as a means for professional learning within the context of practice, rather than outside it. He objected to the idea that teaching was learned theoretically from university contexts, advocating for the profession as an intellectual endeavor from which practitioners in classrooms could use reflection to deconstruct their ideas and construct knowledge from experience. Accordingly, reflection in action, per Schön, occurs as teachers make decisions in the moments of teaching with "immediate significance for action," assessing their current situation and restructuring "strategies of action, understanding of phenomena, or ways of framing problems" (pp. 28-29). Contrarily, Schön's notion of reflection on action occurs during the moments prior to or after the

teaching has taken place, and thus is not bound to the immediacy of the context (Day, 1999). In this way, reflective practitioners systematically study their practice either independently or in collaboration with peers, planning for further “teaching and learning” (Day, p. 28). Finally, Schön’s reflection about action engages teachers in a broader analysis of the moral, political, and ethical forces that drive their thinking and the decisions they make in practice. Day explains that this form of reflection exercises “responsibility and accountability for the decisions that they make in their teaching and maintain broader understandings of the interrelationships between teaching purposes and practices and the policy contexts in which these occur” (p. 29).

Teacher inquiry in the context of PST and inservice teacher learning. Carr and Kemmis (1986), Elliot (1991), Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993), Feldman (1996), Zeichner (1996) and Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008; 2009) are among the many contemporary researchers whose work reveals teacher inquiry’s powerful ability to construct teachers’ professional knowledge and skill development. When utilized in PST preparation, Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserts that preservice teachers may experience “teaching as learners” (p. 1025), as they are supported to analyze their beliefs about teaching, and use problem-solving skills in the field to evolve to a deeper understanding of practice. In their study examining the effect of using teacher inquiry with prospective elementary and secondary teachers, Tabachnick and Zeichner (1999) identify that after acknowledging and investigating the initial belief that “if they organized instruction well, and...used authority as teachers effectively” students would be motivated to learn, PSTs reconceptualized the idea, recognizing that their unmotivated students became inspired when they, as teachers, listened to their misconceptions and used their thinking to guide instruction (p. 315). Awareness of the prospective teachers’ underlying beliefs influencing their practice, led to an increased understanding of how to enact inquiry-based

instructional practices such as stopping to listen to students' responses while teaching. Similarly, inservice teachers enrolled in formal courses or professional development engage in the full systematic process of inquiry within their authentic classroom setting, reconceptualizing their instructional methods. For instance, Halai (2012) found that 20 teachers enrolled in a masters program revealed initial commitment to teaching through rote memorization as a means to best prepare students. Using teacher inquiry, they reflected upon their beliefs and examined the results of related instructional practices on their students. Awareness of minimal student learning led the teachers to embrace innovative practices that better supported learners' needs according to their collected data, thus resulting in deepening their pedagogical content knowledge.

Moreover, because learning is a social activity, teacher inquiry's collaborative nature has made it an effective means for problematizing classroom situations and learning from problems of practice, ensuring supportive opportunities for discussion, sharing of knowledge, and on-going feedback (Emerling, 2010; Lebak & Tinsley, 2010; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Lebak and Tinsley (2010) found that in collaborative teams, participants in their study felt encouraged to "question one another's pedagogical approaches, suggest alternative modes of instruction, and help one another to identify what was working and what was not" (p. 969). The teachers supported each other to purposefully reflect on their teaching and experiment with new methods, gradually transforming their instructional practices to address challenges in the classroom. Likewise, Emerling's (2010) study of a collaborative group of four high school teachers, found that the first-time inquirers credited improvements in their practice to the dedicated and insistent effort of the group to design and deeply analyze lessons that more actively engaged students. For preservice teachers, research finds that communities of inquirers ensure a space for

individuals to not know the answers. This allows them to safely ask and investigate developmentally appropriate questions that encourage discussion, reflection, risk-taking, and merging knowledge to generate ideas (Dawson, 2006; Snow-Geron, 2005; Parker, Bush, & Yendol-Hoppey, in press).

Additional benefits of the use of teacher inquiry for professional learning are noted throughout the literature (Dawson, 2007; Parker, Bush, & Yendol-Hoppey, in press). Dawson (2007) calls teacher inquiry “a bridge between content learned in university courses and authentic practices” (p. 7). After studying technology integration in the university classroom, Dawson found prospective teachers in her study, reference it as a mere “theoretical concept” (Dawson, p. 9) until they were led to inquire about their technology use in the field where they learned to apply and experience the practice. Likewise, teacher candidates in Parker, Bush, and Yendol-Hoppey’s (in press) study used their queries to select and apply intervention strategies learned from literature, mentors, and supervisors to their classroom practice, thus bridging content knowledge and field practices using teacher inquiry.

Teacher inquiry has further been credited with supporting prospective and inservice teachers to establish a professional voice, by using generated knowledge from within the realities of their classroom to advocate for change. This is crucial as Cochran-Smith (1991) asserts “teachers are decision makers and collaborators who must reclaim their roles in the shaping of practice by taking a stand as both educators and activists” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009, pp. 17). After engaging in a professional development study using teacher inquiry, Cullen, Akerson, and Hanson (2010) communicate that 12 elementary school teachers expressed validation of their classroom knowledge and competency, and generated meaningful knowledge of strategies that promoted their students’ science learning. Consequentially, the teachers felt empowered to use

their results to advocate for the importance of science education in their district. Relatedly, Taylor and Petit (2007) led masters' level teachers in Namibia to use teacher inquiry to reflect on their assumptions and perspectives, consequently investigating the ways in which their behaviors [related to class and power] impacted others. The teachers' changes in identity could serve to advocate for historically marginalized groups and challenge societal barriers. Although it is a goal for teacher inquiry to empower teachers to speak for issues of power, agency and social justice, Parker, Bush and Yendol-Hoppey (in press) assess that it is "unreasonable to expect that teacher candidates would inherently choose to inquire about such complex topics without explicit scaffolding from teacher educators" (p. 14). However, empowerment to do so is a gradual developing result of using teacher inquiry, as the researchers assess that a few teacher candidates in their study started to find their voice, demonstrating a shift from passive agreement of others' critiques into their practice to purposefully and justifiably articulating their own ideas.

Researchers, including Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) and Smith (2004), reference inquiry as a stance or position that teachers use to problematize "the current arrangements of schooling; the ways knowledge is constructed, evaluated and used; and teachers' individual and collective roles in bringing about change" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, p. 289). Enacting an inquiry stance, according to the researchers, involves continuously reflecting on the fusion of multilayered, complex knowledge of "learners, culture, class, gender, literacies, social issues, institutions, histories, communities, materials, texts and curricula" (p. 291). Because knowledge derived from this multitude of considerations becomes a part of the knower, teachers with an inquiry stance are led to critically evaluate local circumstances reflective of broader community challenges, and assume a role as a change agent to learners, and "a more public educational community" (p. 290). By asking meaningful questions, investigating them, and problem solving,

teachers “make their daily work connect to larger movements for equity and social change,” using their knowledge to drive change concerning the given circumstance (p. 291). Regarding teaching for social change, Cochran-Smith (1999) explains:

...It is located in the dailiness of classroom decisions and actions—in teachers’ interactions with their students and families, in their choices of materials and texts, in their utilization of formal and informal assessments...learning to teach for social justice is as much a matter of learning to construct particular practices as it is learning to theorize those practices. (p. 277)

As a consequence of this complex undertaking, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) argue that knowledge development resulting from an inquiry stance cannot be defined as merely isolated formal knowledge (theoretical knowledge born of texts) or practical knowledge (knowledge derived from everyday experience in the classroom). Throughout this next section, I examine empirical literature to further describe what research tells us about novice teacher learning and inquiry as it pertains to the participants in this study.

II. Novice Teacher Learning

This section begins by describing what is known regarding teachers’ professional learning across career stages from PST to novice teacher. Then, because novice teachers’ dispositions and skills of inquiry are key elements of this study, empirical literature will be explored in these areas.

From preservice teacher to novice teacher: problems they identify. The transition from the role of preservice teacher to novice teacher is often consumed by ambiguity, vulnerability and even often anxiety. Feiman-Nemser (2001) asserts that novice teachers find themselves in an illogical maze by which they must exhibit knowledge and skills in their

teaching that are primarily acquired through the practice of doing what they may not yet fully comprehend. In their new role, they must simultaneously “teach and learn to teach” (p. 1027), all while under the observation and demands of students, parents, colleagues, mentors and administration. McCaughtry, Cothran, Kulinna, Martin, and Faust, (2005) quote this in their study of novice teachers and their mentors, as “quite challenging” and “even frustrating” to the novices (p. 326).

As preservice teachers leave teacher preparation programs and begin to shift learning from theoretical to practical in their first classroom, beginning teachers are confronted by unanticipated challenges. Challenging areas most cited throughout studies include curriculum planning, classroom management and discipline, instructional techniques, access to materials, and working with parents (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000). Burkman’s (2012) study of 142 novice elementary teachers revealed additional challenges as teaching students assessed as emotionally disturbed or overactive (ADHD), or having psychological disorders or special education needs. While the author identifies that informal professional development [whereby teachers seek workshops or experts that can support their needs] is most effective to address these needs, receiving appropriate support requires teachers with knowledge of their own needs and their students’ needs, as well as knowledge of what to ask to respond to them. Novice teachers, unfortunately, most often do not possess these skills; a notion that is further empirically explored below in my explanation of novice teachers’ skills of inquiry (Burkman, 2012; Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2010). Rather, research on teacher’s career cycles indicates their overwhelmed stage of survival as novices work to gain personal acceptance from peers, administrators, and students, while striving to gain control of their new responsibilities and the challenges that accompany them

(Fessler, 1995). Fuller and Bown's (1975) seminal work on career cycles offers that when identifying problems of practice, teachers evolve in their focus from thinking about self, to their teaching tasks, only eventually considering their impact on student learning. This is troublesome considering that the assessed quality of teacher preparation programs is based on novice teachers' impact on student learning (CAEP, 2013).

As novice teachers navigate their new role, researchers note that numerous personal and environmental factors contribute to decision-making in the new context (Fessler, 1995; Clandinin, Connelly & He, 1997). Fessler (1995) offers that personal and environmental factors influence how a teacher handles the challenges presented. Personal factors include family support (or lack thereof), positive critical incidents that offer security including mentors and induction programs, crises, individual dispositions derived from values and experiences, as well as personal interests and life stages. Likewise, influencing environmental factors are the organizational environment, school regulations, the administrators' management style, the public's trust, societal expectations, professional organizations and unions. Darling-Hammond et al., (2002) and DeAngelis, Wall and Che's (2013) studies of novice teachers add to Fessler's (1995) list novice teachers' satisfaction with the quality of their preservice teacher preparation program. DeAngelis, Wall and Che found in their study of 1,159 novices that when overwhelmed, teachers that expressed satisfaction with the "quality of their preparation program" were more willing to rise to the challenges and "least likely to leave teaching after their first year..." (p. 349). This is crucial, as McCaughtry, et al. (2005) cite that "up to 30% of new teachers leave the field within the first five years of teaching" (p. 326); a statistic that CAEP's (2013) latest standards strives to remediate, and that guides this study as I explore the influence

of teacher inquiry as a preparation practice on novice teachers' problem solving dispositions and skills.

Dispositions of inquiry. Empirical discussion regarding the dispositions of inquiry requires defining 'disposition,' in light of various meanings for the term throughout the literature (Nelsen, 2015). Dewey (1988) interchangeably viewed habits as dispositions, stating:

We must bear in mind that the word disposition means predisposition, readiness to act overtly in a specific fashion whenever opportunity is presented, this opportunity consisting in removal of the pressure due to the dominance of some overt habit; and that attitude means some special case of predisposition, the disposition waiting as it were to spring through an opened door. (p. 32)

Drawing from his perspective, Nelsen (2015) offers that dispositions are habits that dictate the precise ways individuals respond to situations given a particular context. Using this understanding, a disposition can show itself via a "set of interrelated habits" (p. 89).

Reflection as a disposition. Studied as a disposition of inquiry, reflection has long been advocated as a means for leading teachers to analyze their beliefs about teaching and learning (Deal & White, 2009; Schön, 1983; 1987). In the 1980's, Schön alleged that through reflective disposition, practitioners could "deconstruct" erroneous beliefs founded upon prior experiences, reconceptualizing them based on current experience to generate new knowledge and understanding of their contextual situation (pp. 28-29). The assessment has evidenced crucial throughout the literature in light of studies indicating that naïve beliefs about teaching and learning derived from experiences as learners, drive beginning teachers' teaching practices (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). Chan and Elliot (2004) for instance found PSTs advocating for traditional lecture-based instructional methods for teaching to support the experience-derived

belief that knowledge was “certain and unambiguous” (p. 828). The researchers advocated for increased reflection in their teacher preparation to support the PSTs to overcome the fallacy. Deal & White (2009) similarly took this research further by requiring reflection in an induction program for literacy PSTs transitioning to novice teachers. As a consequence, the novice teachers revealed their experience-based support for theoretically centered instructional methods, ultimately reconceptualizing those beliefs towards more student-centered methods. A greater focus on elementary students in the reflection focused study led to: increasing flexibility in the strategies employed, taking risks, dedicating time to non-instructional tasks, grouping students flexibly to accommodate their learning, and supporting “learners’ social and emotional needs” (p. 324). The novice teachers’ goals shifted from supporting students learning to read to students reading to learn.

Since studies indicate that novice teachers’ instructional practices often contradict the beliefs they verbalize (Chan & Elliot, 2004; Deal & White, 2009; Onafowara, 2005; Pajares, 1992), Schön’s (1987) notion that reflective dispositions can be exercised in, on, and about action is critical. According to Schön, these forms of reflection guide decisions and generate new knowledge. However, reflection in action occurs within a classroom context during moments of instruction, whilst reflection on action transpires outside teaching moments, thus focusing predominantly on the action rather than the context in which it occurs. When teachers reflect upon the “moral, ethical, political and instrumental issues” that influence their thoughts and instructional approaches, they are reflecting about action (Day, 1999, pp. 28). Moreover, while the reflective disposition may not be necessarily verbalized, Schön (1987) asserts that it must be a “conscious” mindset, whereby practitioners ask themselves “What is this?” and “How

have I been thinking about it?” thus, questioning their espoused platform to better understand problems at hand (pp. 28-29).

Researchers, however, critique that a conscious disposition to reflect is simply not infallible to ensuring that individuals will problematize their situations to guide action and respond appropriately with a deeper understanding. Several factors including the depth of thought, as well as time spent in ongoing reflection, are crucial to characterizing reflection as a habit or disposition of inquiry (Day, 1999). This is problematic as research shows that in their first year, novices’ lack of time and fear of the unfamiliar context consumes their new reality, leading them to often abandon reflection altogether (Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Korthagen & Wubbels, 1995). In a seminal study, Handal & Lauvas (1987) used three levels of reflection as a lens for analyzing Norwegian teachers’ depth of reflective thought, with ‘action’ guiding reflection as the primary level, practical and theoretical reasons on the second level of reflection, and ethical justification as the third and deepest level of reflection. The study found that practitioners reflected on planning “what to do, when to do it, and how to do it” (p. 31). However, reflection was never profound enough to ask questions or analyze practical and theoretical reasons to guide action, much less explore ethical or moral considerations for it. The researchers determined that the intense activity characteristic to the culture of the school limited time for deep reflection, thus encouraging an “incomplete self-reflective spiral” (Handal & Lauvas, p. 31).

Critical learning as a disposition. While Schön’s (1983; 1987) reflection essentially initiated significant discussion regarding dispositions of inquirers, the conversation ended prematurely, leaving questions and gaps in the literature that researchers have yet to comprehensively fill. Critics argue that Schön’s definition of reflection as a disposition of

inquiry fails to acknowledge the critical stance, attitude, and thinking that must guide the reflection (Day, 1999; Smith, 2004; Smith, 2012). Both Day (1999) and Smith (2004) refer to a critical thinking attitude as a necessary disposition for “learning through reflection” (p. 31), with Smith (2004) explaining that the disposition is exercised when one is supported to engage in “a critical analysis of one’s practice” and questions their work (p. 526). Handal and Lauvas (1987) offer that because teachers in their study were not led to develop an “attitude” where knowledge was derived from their problematic situations, “studying critically one’s own practice was not” fostered or valued in the context (p.31), thus teachers reflected on only the most primary level of thought. Contrarily, Smith (2004) found that when led to critically question and reflect about their “particular beliefs, practices, contextual constraints and dilemmas” experienced in schools, prospective teachers heightened their awareness that teaching was a “messy” endeavor requiring of “ongoing and recursive” inquiry to learn and transform practice (p. 531). Thus, Smith offers that for reflection to be transformative, teachers must be supported to develop a disposition to reflect daily for the purpose of critically learning from their practice. As referenced earlier in this study, Smith calls this an “inquiry stance,” stating that it’s an “attitude of openness and acceptance that learning from inquiry” is never ending and continuous (p. 526).

Moreover, in 1987 Brookfield offered, “when we become critical thinkers, we develop an awareness of the assumptions under which we, and others, think and act” (as cited in Day, pp. 32). As such, several researchers define a critical learning disposition in teacher inquiry as a look beyond the self, grounded on “the social and political forces that distort and limit teachers’ educational conduct” as Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest, and as a consideration of issues of “ethics and social justice” relative to teaching values, conceived by Zeichner (1993) (Day, 1999, pp. 29). Zeichner offers, “the political and the critical” challenges of society stand before

teachers within the immediate context of their classrooms and learners, and thus, the decisions they make daily reveal “moral commitments with regard to social continuity and change, whether [they] want to acknowledge it or not” (p. 201). He asserts that teachers cannot position themselves as indifferent or neutral to social circumstances impacting their learners. Zeichner and Gore (1991) indicate teacher inquiry in the U.S. often fails to cultivate this critical lens in professional development and teacher preparation, as teacher educators tend to overlook opportunities to examine “the social conditions of schooling and society” (p. 123). Facilitating this critical perspective in preservice teacher preparation, the researchers use readings and activities to lead students to intentionally inquire into issues of social justice, including gender and racial inequality, present within their field placements. Likewise, employing critical thinking and learning through the use of action research with teachers, Taylor (2000) combated imposed institutional knowledge and power relations in Namibia immediately after the apartheid era, for the purpose of creating a common curriculum framework. The experience created a space for racially divided and marginalized teachers to explore each other’s identity, redefine their own, co-learn, develop knowledge and collaboratively discuss a new educational future despite previous political forces deeming this impossible. Likewise, Halai (2012) found that using a critical learning disposition focused on power relations in teacher inquiry, 20 novice science teachers in Pakistan reconceptualized their traditional role as direct instructors of knowledge fostering rote memorization for passing high stakes exams, to one of facilitator and researcher. They developed a knowledge base for teaching, which contradicted their own experiences as learners, and communicated a deeper personal understanding of why they were doing what they were doing.

Attention to such philosophical underpinnings however, is most often distant to teachers, as research explains that teachers' reflections most often fail to indicate any critical dispositions at all, but rather are guided by unconscious beliefs and intuition about the nature of teaching and learning (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007). Specifically, Stoughton (2007) found that participants in his study "showed a lack of connection between their developing beliefs and the larger cultural context including little problematizing of how the classroom culture intersects with the culture of the school and of the larger society" (p. 1036). To cultivate a critical learning disposition with attention to power relations, Taylor and Petit (2007) advocate in their study of masters level teachers that educators purposefully guide reflection that connects self-awareness, professional development, and the need for social change to be examined within the individuals' daily context. Finally, beneficial to the identification of critical learning dispositions in this study, Brookfield (1987) presents four practices of critical learners as the ability to (1) identify and challenge assumptions, (2) challenge the importance of context, (3) imagine and explore alternatives, and (4) develop reflective skepticism (Day, 1999, pp. 7-9).

Emotional intelligence as a disposition leading to self-regulation. Freire (1996) offers that without acknowledging one's own ignorance, what is not known or has not yet been learned, teaching cannot be clearly accomplished. However, reflecting and confronting one's own practice presents various challenges according to Day (1999). These include the extent to which one can learn from their individual perspective and how well one can self-confront and challenge their personal beliefs. Teacher inquiry attempts to overcome this by encouraging collaboration among learners throughout the inquiry cycle (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1999). In doing so, inquirers must be willing to vulnerably expose and confront their personal challenges in plain

sight, further attributing them to the self rather than to external uncontrollable forces (Day, 1999; Fry, 2009).

Reflection independent of emotional intelligence interferes with individuals' acknowledgment of a need for personal improvement and collaboration with others, which Tait (2008) says is key to success in teaching and learning. Goleman's (2001) work on emotional intelligence defines it as "the abilities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others" (pp. 14), specifying that awareness of our and others' emotions, is as central to this intelligence as knowledge of how to manage them. Studying one's practice is saturated with emotion as teachers risk revealing ineptitude, forcing them to abandon established beliefs for new learning (Day, 1999). In her study of four novice teachers, Tait explains that the emotionally intelligent teachers "...manage feelings, handle stress, confront failure with optimism, [and] persist in the face of difficulty..." (p. 60), allowing them to not only reflect upon their challenges but also to reach out to stakeholders to problem solve, derive learning from experience and regulate their behavior accordingly. Likewise, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) found a strong positive relationship between individuals with emotional intelligence and their ability to critically think in order to reason, establish goals, solve challenges and make decisions, resulting in positive teacher's performance. Given that the authors state that ability to engage "in high quality reasoning (such as critical thinking) entails not only having the cognitive ability, but also the drive or desire to do so," emotional intelligence is key as a disposition of inquiry (p. 40). Accordingly, an individual with "regulation and manipulation of emotional states can pave the way for making reflective and purposeful judgments and decisions" (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, p. 40).

Zimmerman (2010) references such manipulation of judgment by individuals as self-regulation, stating that they are “proactive in their efforts to learn because they are aware of their strengths and limitations and because they are guided by personally set goals and task-related strategies” (p. 65-66). Accordingly, because self-regulation is not a skill, but rather a self-directed motivation to learning driven by emotional intelligence, such individuals purposefully select tailored strategies for learning, given the challenge at hand. As a consequence of emotional intelligence, self-regulation is directly linked to teacher inquiry, as Zimmerman’s parallel description of its “process skills” includes:

- (a) setting specific proximal goals for oneself,
- (b) adopting powerful strategies for attaining the goals,
- (c) monitoring one’s performance selectively for signs of progress,
- (d) restructuring one’s physical and social context to make it compatible with one’s goals,
- (e) managing one’s time use efficiently,
- (f) self-evaluating one’s methods,
- (g) attributing causation to results, and
- (h) adapting future methods. (p. 65)

Pertinent to this study, Vukman and Licardo (2010) studied the link between self-regulation and performance in both children and young adults finding that between the ages of 14-18 there is a decrease in ability to self-regulate with only a gradual increase occurring in the years of undergraduate preparation. As such, to effectively prepare teachers, Kramarski and Michalsky (2009) assessed that seeing teaching in a classroom was not enough, but rather PSTs in their study, necessitated to learn to self-question their teaching and monitor their learning in

order to develop the ability to self-regulate. The authors offer that the development of self-regulation skills served some preservice teachers to reconceptualize preconceived notions regarding their role in the classroom from teacher-centered to learner-centered, slowly realigning their misconceptions of teaching and learning with more accurate concepts. Similarly, Tricarico and Yendol-Hoppey (2012) found that self-regulation served to make novice teachers aware of their developmental milestones in order to drive action. When engaging in teacher inquiry, confronting developmental need begins with a disposition for emotional intelligence, propelling one to purposefully use self-regulation for arriving at the milestones described by the researchers (Day, 1999; Tricarico & Yendol-Hoppey, 2012).

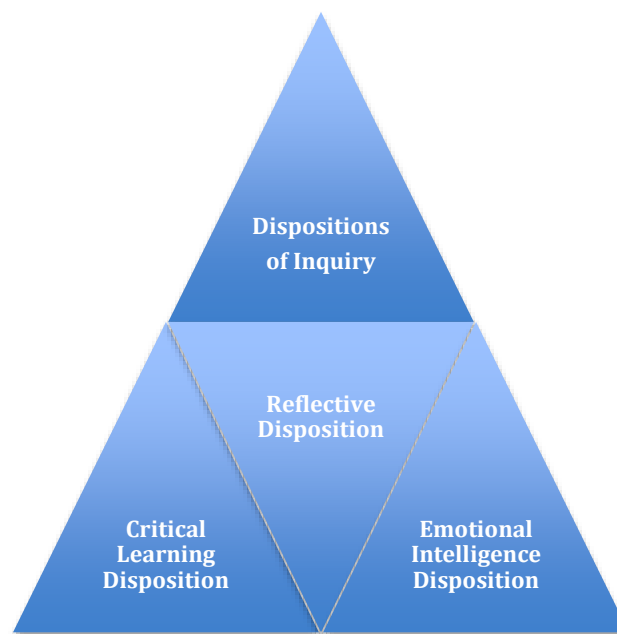


Figure 2.1: Dispositions of inquiry

In summation, because the literature on dispositions of inquiry is widespread and less than comprehensive in defining dispositional characteristics, Figure 2.1 illustrates the relationships among the dispositions of inquiry I identified throughout my review of the literature. Using a pyramid I illustrate that while all dispositions are of equal size, and thus importance to teacher inquiry, they are interdependent. As such, for reflection to be viewed as a disposition of inquiry and thus influencing teachers' practices, it must be supported by a disposition of critical learning and emotional intelligence (Day, 1999). Moreover, in this study, this is the lens I used to examine novice teachers' stories to identify the inquiry dispositions that surfaced as they described solving problems of practice in their first year.

Skills of inquiry. Despite exercising dispositions of inquiry including deep reflection, a critical learning approach to practice and emotional intelligence, Day (1999) explains that using systematic skills of teacher inquiry feels unnatural to teachers in their daily work, and is therefore not consistently embraced as a means for improving practice. Skills of teacher inquiry consist of an individual's ability to identify problems within their practice, ask questions to investigate the identified problems, collect and analyze data to make sense of it, and drive change in practice (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; 2009). In this section, I explore what literature tells us regarding novice teachers and these skills.

Identifying problems of practice. Teacher inquiry requires educators with a student-centered mindset (Fry, 2009), whom understand that their practices in the classroom directly affect students, and thus addressing problems of practice is crucial to student learning. Research indicates that unlike expert teachers whom view connections between their actions and student learning, new teachers are unknowledgeable of how their practices cognitively impact students (Fry, 2009; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). Maloch's et al. study of 28 elementary

novice teachers identified that only 21% reported concern over “how their instructional decisions would affect student learning” (p. 442). Likewise, Fry (2009) found that two of four novice teachers in her study were unable to even grasp how their teaching practices were linked to student success. Instead of seeking to vary instructional practice to accommodate learners, novice teachers in the study critically blamed students’ lack of motivation to learn and emphasized their own “struggles as teachers” (p. 108). Moreover, in this study, novice teachers’ reflections failed to reveal awareness of their role in problem solving students’ learning challenges. This finding confirms previous literature in which teachers’ examination of classroom instruction identifies that novices focus their attention predominantly on the behaviors of the teacher and completely overlook students, while expert teachers divide their attention into teacher’s instructional delivery and its effect on student understanding (Gonzalez & Carter, 1991; Sabers, Cushing & Berlinger, 1991).

Hogan and Rabinowitz (2009) confirm Chi, Feltovich and Glaser’s (1981) work in problem representation, providing insight into how teachers with various levels of expertise define classroom problems. They identify two distinct structural features by which the 98 teachers in their study viewed problematic scenarios presented. Without “instruction and practice” the novice teachers identified problems of practice according to “surface features” related to grade, context, subject matter and setting (p. 160). Expert teachers, however, examined the same scenarios, identifying problems of practice according to deep features that included theoretical underpinnings related to students’ prior knowledge, “instruction, assessment, and diversity/equity issues in the classroom” (p.166). Because expert teachers had experience, they could *critically* reflect on the “principles, concepts and ideas” underpinning the challenges (p. 154). Consequentially, Hogan and Rabinowitz confirm Novick and Bassok’s (2005) findings

that expert teachers are better able to identify problems with greater precision and reason through several possible solutions. Furthermore, they were then capable of seeing the ways a solution could apply to another problem, despite looking like a completely different problem on the surface. The researchers site that novice teachers, however, can be supported to learn to use deeper structures to identify problems of practice with the support of teacher educators.

Asking questions to identify problems of practice. In teacher preparation, teacher educators can be present to support PSTs to expose their espoused platform, challenge their preconceived notions, and lead learners to ask investigative questions to personally experience more complex perceptions of teaching and learning (Abell, Bryan & Anderson, 1998; Nolan & Hoover, 2005; Sergiovanni & Starrat, 2007; Shulman, 1986; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1999). However, the shift in culture from collaboration in PST preparation to isolation during 1st year teaching leads novices to often modify preparation practices including reflecting and asking investigative questions of practice, using them incompletely and only to their partial benefit, or even abandoning them completely (Day, 1999; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2010). Stanulis, Fallona and Pearson (2010) addressed this challenge by providing three novice teachers with a group in an effort to support them after graduation and study the effects of their program grounded in reflection. Novices in the study attest that group meetings provided an opportunity for them to ask questions regarding problems of practice and continue reflective teaching; practices they believed would have been discarded without the group's support. However, data indicates that questions asked by the novices were hardly investigative, but rather focused discussion on the novice teachers' daily experiences with students, management, and instructional delivery. One teacher specified that despite needing help, she simply did not know what to ask. As also supported by Stoughton's (2007) study, the novice

teachers were fixated on questions related to students' behavior and ideas for managing it, congruently substantiating that novices believe that their perceived effectiveness depends on how stakeholders view them in this area, rather than in terms of their instructional impact on student learning.

Moreover, literature identifies that the culture of the collaborative group or school context influences how novice teachers position themselves to ask questions about their practice. Stanulis et al., (2010), found that novice teachers in their study looked to administrators, parents, students and the support group for approval of their practices in order to inform practice, establish their identity, and decipher effectiveness. Thus in this study, novice teachers' questions were continuously around how they compared to experienced colleagues and if they were doing as they were expected to be doing according to school stakeholders. Likewise, Franco (2015) found in her study of three PSTs, that due to school and peer pressure to improve state scores in Math, one PST selected a practice-based investigative question in the subject area, despite a latent desire to study a problem of practice experienced in her science instruction. Her lack of motivation to pursue the investigative question proved evident throughout her study and eventually in her derived learning. Concurrently, Esposito and Smith (2006) found that despite knowing the problems that existed in their own classroom, teachers in their study would not discuss their teacher inquiry project in the collaborative group for fear of judgment regarding their personal effectiveness, as revealed through their investigative question. Instead, participants limited themselves to discussing their daily activity until they felt that the context was safe enough for them to open up. To combat this, researchers suggest that site-based and district administrators view professional educators as collaborative problem solvers and generators of knowledge, fostering a safe community of practice where teachers are encouraged

to question and investigate their problems of practice, making the continuous inquiry and reflection a part of the school culture (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Kang, 2007; Schön, 1983; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). In addition, Nolan and Hoover (2005) identify that because “each teacher is a unique individual,” supervision should ensure differentiated growth opportunities where teachers are encouraged to ask investigative questions most meaningful to addressing their specific needs (p. 8).

Collecting and analyzing data to make sense of it. Most unnatural to the already overwhelming work of teachers is the perception of collecting and analyzing the data collected through teacher inquiry (Day, 1999). A participant in Esposito and Smith’s (2006) study recalls her anxiety-driven reluctance to engage in action research, assimilating the word ‘research’ to ‘statistics’ and ‘variables’ likened to tedious university experiences with traditional quantitative research. The researchers acknowledge teachers’ common feelings that the process has “no relevance to them or their teaching” (p. 47). The facilitator of inquiry in this study was tasked to “debunk” the preconceptions by enabling data collection methods streamlined into the teachers’ regular routine.

Data collection for novice teachers, however, is especially relevant and crucial, as studies of cognition underlying teacher performance indicate that PST and novices experience systematic stages in their focus from concern for survival and a need to obsessively control the classroom environment, to focusing on their ability to plan and teach effective lessons, only then to finally lend attention to students as individuals and their learning needs (Berliner, 1988; Fuller & Bown; 1975). This is confirmed by Tricarico and Yendol-Hoppey (2012) whom observed that it wasn’t until alternatively certified apprentices developed skills of classroom management and

peer collaboration, that they were able to plan lessons and observe differences among students to inform differentiated instruction practices.

Collecting data using teacher inquiry encourages novices to observe and make meaning from students' performance early on, in order to inform and modify their instructional practice (Borko, 2004; Gearheart & Osmundson, 2008; Kagan, 1992; Halai, 2012; Kang, 2007). Halai (2012) and Kang (2007) found that using data collected through teacher inquiry, novice and expert teachers alike, identified a deeper link between the theory and practice of innovative strategies, developing an appreciation for diversified teaching practices that led them to reveal students' prior knowledge, better understand student thinking, and shift science-related misconceptions. From their data, teachers discovered that using a quality hands-on and minds-on approach was more beneficial to students than lecturing or reading from the science text, and reported an increased ability to identify effective from ineffective teaching practices.

As specified above, novice teaching is characterized by isolation, thus presenting a challenge to meaningfully collecting and analyzing data. David (2008) explains that teachers collect data and make sense of it best when working in collaboration. Independently, studies indicate that teachers rely predominantly on intuition, experience and anecdotal notes to collect data and make decisions in their classroom (Bachor & Baer, 1999; Erez & Grant, 2004; Ingram, Louis & Schroeder, 2004). This is of course especially a hindrance for novice teachers, as their intuition and experiences with students, as well as understanding of student learning, is limited and predominantly based on their own experiences as learners (Erez & Grant, 2004; Kagen, 1992). Confirming a study by Kagan and Tippins (1991), Ingram, Louis and Schroeder (2004) found in their study of nine high schools with a documented commitment to continuous improvement, that teachers assessed their effectiveness on student learning based on students'

affect and behaviors in class, rather than systematic data collection methods related to student achievement. When interviewed further, they attributed intuition as a means to drive instructional decisions. Ironically, the same participants noted that when collaboratively collecting data, they were led to reconceptualize their thoughts on problematic situations. Drawing from business education, Erez and Grant (2004) similarly found that novices' independent reliance on intuition was most typically incorrect due to their lack of experiences in the field. The researchers advocated for the use of collaborative and systematic data collection to lead novices to develop evidence-based intuition and experience.

The literature points to the challenge that novices' independent analysis of data is often ambivalent or incorrect, leading them to solely confirm their beliefs rather than challenging them to question their thinking, reconceptualize it and consider alternative perspectives (Erez & Grant, 2004; Stoughton, 2007). Both Stoughton (2007) and Olsher and Kantor (2012) acknowledge that collaborating with beginning teachers to analyze their data in different ways and engaging them through questioning, is crucial to lead them to a deeper and more critical understanding of teaching and learning. Likewise, Smith (2004) found in her study of final interns in mathematics that collaboratively creating posters to represent unified stories of experiences after a teacher inquiry, supported participants to make sense of their data. The teacher educator was essential in encouraging them to repeatedly discuss their experiences and carefully listen to differences and similarities among them, leading to the emergence of common metaphors that represented struggles and milestones in their professional growth. The posters symbolized a synthesis of their experiences; one Wenger (1998) describes as the "reification of understanding that emerged through the negotiation of meaning and the existence of a joint enterprise" (Smith, 2004; p. 527). Likewise, Tricarico and Yendol-Hoppey (2012) found in their study of three alternatively

certified apprentice teachers that when collegial relationships and discussion were fostered, participants were better able to make sense of their challenges, leading them to learn and develop their ability to differentiate instruction.

Driving change in practice. Hall and Smith (2006) offer that to drive change in the context of a natural and dynamic instructional setting requires knowledge of how students will respond to pedagogical practices, and alternative instructional strategies to spontaneously apply to given situations. With limited awareness of students, content and instructional strategy, novice teachers most often fail to respond effectively during unanticipated moments in the classroom (Westerman, 1991). Instead, studies indicate that novice teachers adhere to curriculum guidelines, written lesson plans, and classroom management considerations to maintain control, even when student learning is not evident (Berliner, 1988; Fry, 2009; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). Westerman's (1991) study of five novice teachers found early on that lessons were planned with full attention to curriculum objectives, yet little regard for identifying students' thinking throughout. Consequently, novice teachers in the study admitted to "ignoring students who brought up interesting points for discussion" (p. 299) for fear that as new teachers, they had limited knowledge of the subject and would not know what to do if students did not know the correct answer. Despite cues requiring them to adapt their teaching approach, novices focused predominantly on ensuring that all required material was covered and the classroom environment was under control.

By engaging in reflective practices such as teacher inquiry, Kramarski and Michalsky (2009) assess that though gradual and challenging, teachers can be led to release their preconceived notions for more accurate conceptions of teaching and learning. Their study shows that through the use of such strategies, teacher educators can teach skills of self-regulation,

leading individuals to monitor their students and instructional strategies to drive change. Accordingly, “teachers are self-regulated to the extent that they are metacognitively, motivationally and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process” (p. 161). Tricarico and Yendol-Hoppey (2012) found that self-regulated teachers were more likely to connect to students in order to differentiate instruction. Likewise, once the participants in Esposito and Smith’s (2006) study discovered that through teacher inquiry they could solve classroom problems, they became more in tune with student needs and felt empowered to drive instructional change in practice. Using teacher inquiry, science teachers in Lebak and Tinsley’s (2010) study reconceptualized their instructional roles completely, whereby teachers transformed from direct instructors to facilitators of learning, while learners shifted from passive observers to active participants of inquiry. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) best explain this radical change, substantiating that “Teachers who are actually researching their own practices provide opportunities for their students to become similarly engaged” (p. 318).

Guskey (2002) furthers that when using teacher inquiry to drive change proves visibly beneficial to students, teachers become motivated to continuously engage in the practice. This explains why visible changes in the classroom encouraged participants in Esposito and Smith (2006) to feel inspired to pursue several additional inquiries after their first teacher inquiry study.

In summation, Figure 2.2 illustrates the lens that was used to examine novice teachers’ stories and the inquiry skills that surfaced as they described solving problems of practice in their first year. Crucial to note, however, is that the illustration depicts a modification of teacher inquiry as a systematic practice, whereby each component leads to the next. This is significant to this study, as novices may have employed any individual skill of inquiry learned in teacher preparation without sequentially exhibiting the full cycle of teacher inquiry. For instance, a

preservice teacher may have identified a felt problem of practice and collected data on it without formally asking an investigative question first. In this sense, they employed two of the three inquiry skills learned in their teacher preparation to solve their problem of practice. Missing from this model is a fifth skill, whereby an individual may have used each skill as a building block coherently engaging in the whole and complete systematic inquiry process.

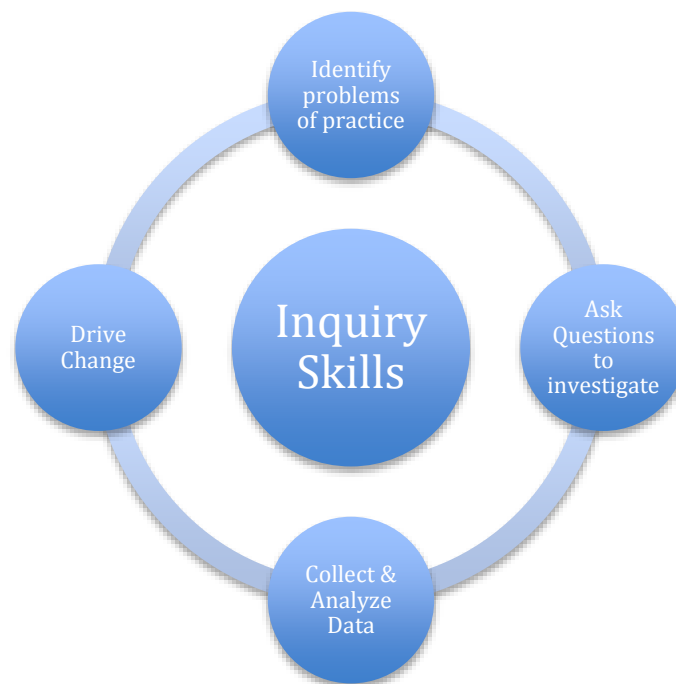


Figure 2.2: Skills of inquiry

Finally, it is important to note that because novice teachers in this study were not engaged in course preparation during their first year in the classroom, they may or may not have had the contextual supports identified throughout the literature for the purposes of promoting the use of inquiry skills and dispositions in problem solving. Thus, additional contextual factors may have served as barriers and facilitators in solving those challenges. To explore these barriers and

facilitators in their stories, Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model of human development was used. This model is described in detail in the third section of this literature review.

III. Additional Theoretical Frameworks

This section introduces Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model of human development as the lens by which I examined novice teachers' stories for the facilitators and barriers to solving problems of practice in their first year.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development. Acknowledging the plethora of unstudied conditions that surround individuals in their stages of development, Bronfenbrenner (1974) developed an ecological model from which researchers could consider empirically the influence of contextual factors on human growth. The model comprised of five concentric subsystems, asserts that to comprehend the ways in which individuals develop, we must lend attention to the individual, the social systems surrounding them, the interactions that occur among social systems influencing the individual directly or indirectly, and the beliefs of the interacting system as a whole (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Conditions within a system serve to potentially enhance or inhibit individual's decision-making.

In terms of teacher education, an individual is most directly influenced by the microsystem comprised of family members, peers, their school and even their church and health services to which they hold strong affiliations. This microsystem maintains the strongest influence, as processes occurring in the context may nurture or inhibit individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

In the second subsystem known as the Mesosystem, the novice teacher is not solely influenced by the primary source, but rather the interaction between two sources, such as home and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). For instance, a chaotic home life in conjunction with a

strongly supportive school may influence a novice teacher to stay late at school planning in avoidance of the home situation, thus advancing his/her planning skills. In contrast, in the Exosystem as the third system, “events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing individual lives” (p. 40). An exosystem indirectly affecting a novice teacher may include stresses from education policies impacting the school administrator’s ability to offer professional development to teachers.

As the fourth subsystem, the Macrosystem defines the Microsystems’ “culture or subculture,” influencing an individual’s beliefs, knowledge, “resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p.40). In the case of a novice teacher’s demonstration of an inquiry stance, he or she may identify herself as a part of a school culture where teachers continuously ask questions and problem solve challenges by reflecting upon student data to make decisions. Within this culture, professional development may be encouraged. Contrarily, novice teachers in a school culture where a strict school-wide behavior plan is followed may select to continuously send challenging students to the office, ensuring that challenges are handled by administration.

Finally, time serves as Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) last element, influencing individuals in the final subsystem, known as the Chronosystem. According to the researcher, attention to the consequential growth that accompanies time within a context is crucial, just as well as the role of the individual’s history in defining the ways they act. As with all subsystems, time may enhance novice teachers’ professional growth resulting from new experiences in the context, or may inhibit them if a circumstance such as a death in the family forces a teacher’s absence. Likewise, a novice teacher with a history as a passive learner may resist embracing innovative teaching methods, influencing the decisions they make in practice.

In alignment with Connelly, Clandinin and He (1997) to comprehend a novice teacher's decisions and selected approaches, Bronfenbrenner (1994) encourages awareness of the influences surrounding the individual. These influences, or subsystems as he defines them, allow researchers a deeper insight into the facilitators and challenges that holistically shape the novice teacher. Thus, Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model served as the framework to analyze the barriers and facilitators underlying how PSTs, after engaging in teacher inquiry throughout their teacher education program, approached problems of practice. Attention was lent to understanding the contextual influences in novices' narratives, per Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, that supported/inhibited their approach to solving problems of practice.

In the next chapter, I describe the specific methods and methodology that drove this study. Specifically, I outline the paradigm, theoretical perspective and epistemology underlying it, as well as the context, participant selection and methods used for collecting and analyzing data. Finally, the chapter culminates with a discussion of the procedures I used to ensure trustworthiness and credibility.

Chapter Three

Methods and Design

Existing literature demonstrates the need for teacher educators to better understand the ways in which preservice teacher (PST) preparation practices support novice teachers in their first classroom. In this study, I identified teacher inquiry as a PST preparation practice, and used novice teachers' stories to understand the ways in which they approached solving problems of practice in their new context. I pursued an understanding of how novice teacher's inquiry skills and dispositions fostered in their teacher preparation program are gleaned from their described approaches to seeking resolution to first year challenges. The research questions guiding this study include:

- a. What stories do novice teachers tell about the problems of practice in their first year?
- b. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
- c. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
- d. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

This chapter begins with a description of the paradigm, theoretical perspective and epistemology that guided the methodological decisions in this study. Following this is a detailed description of the context of the participants' teacher preparation program and my role within it, as well as their new context. An explanation of how participants were selected, as well as data

collection and analysis methods proceed, culminating the chapter with a discussion of the ways in which I ensured trustworthiness and validity throughout this study.

Paradigm, Theoretical Perspective and Epistemology

The study used an interpretive paradigm as it supports the idea that the describer and the described are inseparable (Bochner, 2005). Unlike positivism's search for value-free, detached observation to explain universal characteristics of the world, interpretivism, as Crotty (1998) defines it, is concerned with "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (p. 67). Interpretivism acknowledges that participant's descriptions of their world are implicated by their history, and the natural context in which they are derived, and thus it is interested in the contextually immersed descriptions as a means to deeply interpret the phenomena under study. Given the knowledge that novice teachers overwhelmingly strive to navigate the complexities of their new context, an interpretive paradigm, which allowed me to interpret how a history with teacher inquiry emerged when novice teachers discussed problems of practice experienced in their first classroom setting, appropriately served to situate this study's methodology (Fessler, 1995; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Putnam & Borko, 2000). In this study, participants' personal stories reflect their past experiences, as well as the contextual reality of their first classroom, offering insight into the unique challenges, milestones, and methods used to address or arrive at them; and revealing their personal skills and dispositions, rather than objective facts independent of context.

Attention to interpreting novice teachers' skills and dispositions from stories of how they chose to navigate problems of practice in their context, made use of a constructivist theoretical perspective whereby reality is an individualized result of the interaction between the participant's mind and their world (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivism offers that participants

dynamically make meaning and construct knowledge in consequence to their experienced reality; all while manifesting these constructs in the way they select to act and respond to situations in social settings. Thus, as the inquirer in this study, I lent attention to the problems of practice they identified, as well as if and how PSTs' learned skills and dispositions revealed themselves when, as novice teachers, they told stories of the ways they responded to challenges and made meaning in their new social reality. Paul (2005) recommends use of a "range of inputs" to reveal the dispositions and skills that guided the novice teachers' experiences (p. 46). Therefore, this constructivist perspective served as the theoretical foundation for the data collection and analysis methods I selected as well.

Because an interpretivist paradigm and constructivist perspective privileges stories as a way of knowing how individuals negotiate the world they live in (Bochner, 2005), narrative methodology was best suited for this study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) offer that "experience happens narratively" and as such, "educational experience should be studied narratively" (p. 19). The narratives, or stories told by novice teachers identified problems of practice experienced throughout their first year, how they selected to approach them, and the barriers and facilitators involved in attaining a resolution, with the purpose of providing a comprehensive narrative of their experience as they saw it, and revealing a "plot-line" aligned with the objectives of "narrative theory" (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997, p. 672). Attention to their teaching stories was crucial since teachers' acts reflect the sum of both past learning and most recent contextual experiences, known to narrative inquiry as "continuity" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call these experiences "temporal" (p. 19), explaining that one's described experience cannot be understood from a snapshot, but rather by exploring the meaning attributed to it by participants as part of their involvement in and out of

a larger contextualized setting. Novice teachers' stories are saturated with the meaning they attribute to them as a consequence of their histories and where they are on their continuum of life and career. In telling stories of how they navigated novice teacher challenges in their first classroom, they may [or may not] have revealed the inquiry-related dispositions and/or skills fostered in their past teacher preparation to give meaning to the way they addressed challenges; this, in fact, was the query under study.

Participants served as the main informants of these narratives, as it is they whom told stories of challenges experienced in their first year, thus serving to produce the primary data source used in this study. The novice teachers were also required to select an artifact to substantiate the story of how they approached resolving their identified problem and ignite discussion, though the artifact was not collected or analyzed as a data source. As the researcher, my role was detached, serving primarily as an attentive listener during the data collection process. I did, however, analyze and interpret the data to retell the participants' stories and identify themes that responded to the research questions under study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008).

Context

This study was intentionally aimed at occurring within the first contracted year after preservice teachers (PSTs) in our institution fulfilled university education program requirements, as well as state requirements, meeting the criteria for a Bachelor's degree and certifying them to serve as P-5 teachers in the state. Since its intention to understand how PST's use of teacher inquiry in their preparation program surfaced when they solved problems of practice in their first year as novice teachers, contextual knowledge of their college, department, program and preparation was as pertinent to this study as their most currently experienced classroom context.

Arranged in cohorts for the two-year duration of their education program, PSTs in our department experienced differences in instruction during their preparation, as supervisors moved in and out of cohorts. Thus, I can only provide the details that pertain to the intricate and intentional design of the teaching routines that I employed as a teacher educator. In this section I describe specifically the context that characterized the teacher preparation program, the year and a half teacher inquiry preparation I facilitated prior to PST graduation, and the current contextual status of the program completers in this study.

PSTs' preparation occurred in a large research one public university in the southeast, which boasts a nationally accredited and top ranked college of education. As the 9th largest college of education in the U.S., undergraduate enrollment is greater than 2,500 students with 400 students in the elementary education program alone. At the time in which PSTs in this study were prepared, the college was divided into 13 smaller departments with only a most current reorganization leading it to merge into three larger departments. Housing both masters and doctoral level programs, the Department of Childhood Education and Literacy Studies also served undergraduate students through four-semester elementary education and early childhood programs. These programs were comprised of varied coursework and fieldwork, with students moving through the program at different paces and with regularly changing peers and supervisors. To improve the quality of preparation, the department shifted over the course of the next two years to a cohort model. New students were admitted into groups, and anticipated to remain together throughout intentionally and systematically organized course and field experiences. At the core of the preparation experiences, was the department's mission to communicate through instructional practices the 4 I's of inquiry, innovation, integration, and inclusion. Inquiry served to intellectually engage learners to study and improve their practice,

while innovation empowered them to critically and creatively problem solve the identified challenges. In addition, integration provided for cohesion between course and field experiences, where theory could be transferred to practice through the support of school-university partnerships. Similarly, inclusion ensured opportunities for PSTs to examine their attitudes and beliefs in courses, encouraging them to practice cultural responsiveness and differentiation in their field placements. Graduate assistants with a minimum of three years in the classroom taught 90% of the preservice teacher education program. Among several new graduate assistants with minimal supervision experience and in need of teacher preparation knowledge and skills, I embraced the 4 I's as a lifeline, using inquiry in particular, to guide my instructional practice and decisions.

For a year and a half (semesters including Spring 2013, Fall 2013 and Spring 2014) prior to graduation, the PSTs in our program studied their practice using teacher inquiry throughout their internship field placements in assigned Professional Development Schools (PDS). Professional Development Schools are “institutions formed through partnerships between professional education programs and P-12 schools” (NCATE, 2001, p. 1). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2001) asserts that PDSs’, schools and universities can beneficially merge their resources and expertise to bridge research and practice, preparing “new practitioners...to meet the challenges of 21st century education together...” (p. 2). In developing PDS Standards, NCATE advocates for the “integration of professional and student learning through inquiry” offering it as a crucial means:

- to identify and meet student learning needs;
- to effect candidate learning; and
- to determine their professional development agenda. (p. 4)

According to NCATE's standards, leading PDSs enjoy "sustained collaborative inquiry into improved learning for P-12 students...at the center of the partnership's vision and practices" (p.18). These schools are characterized by their ability to share data, ideas, and practices among all stakeholders involved, for the purpose of influencing curriculum, as well as instructional and institutional practice. Moreover, the larger goal is for results to be shared "with audiences beyond the local PDS partnership" (NCATE, 2001, p. 18).

Organized into cohorts by our department, the 22 PSTs in my cohort were divided into two groups and assigned to one of two PDS partnership schools. I served as the field supervisor for 11 PSTs in one of the two partnership schools, while my colleague supervised the remainder in the other partnership school. Characteristic to PDS partnership schools per NCATE (2001), my assigned elementary school was a challenging setting characterized by teacher turnover, a high rural migrant population, where students spoke only the Mixtec language [native to Mexico], and an academic performance ranking among the lowest 100 schools in the state. As a second year doctoral student, teacher educator and field supervisor, I had no experience preparing PSTs in this context or facilitating teacher inquiry. Thus, I was fully guided by the departments' syllabi, the texts *The Reflective Educators' Guide to Professional Development* (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008) and *The Reflective Educators' Guide to Classroom Research* (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009), and my one mentored research project as a first-time user of teacher inquiry (Franco, 2014).

In the first 15-week semester, PSTs were assigned to an elementary classroom internship for two half days with a one hour per week internship seminar. In this one-hour seminar I used *The Reflective Educators' Guide to Professional Development* (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008) and *The Reflective Educators' Guide to Classroom Research* (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009) to

facilitate their first experience with teacher inquiry, leading them to start by identifying a felt wondering based on a problem in their own practice. All PSTs placed their focus on a classroom management challenge. Wonderings were grouped according to similarities in classroom management topic, creating groups of two to three students, with the intention that they would support each other through discussions during seminars. As a cohort, they learned how to access literature to meaningfully inform their questions, and use the texts to select one data collection method that they felt would best help understand their challenge and provide information to inform their wondering. I served to collect data for them during two formal observations. Post conferences allowed for one-on-one time in which I facilitated data analysis, supporting the PST to use their data to reflect on their problem of practice, and draw conclusions to guide modifications in future practice, as needed. Seminars allowed PST teachers to continually support each other through this process as well, providing a space for collaborative analysis and reflection. During this time they also worked with group members to write one research brief per group, using it to create a poster board representation of their inquiry, which was later presented during our department's first inquiry conference. Finally, online blogs provided a space for weekly reflection on their classroom management challenges, as they shared questions, frustrations and milestones, as well as responded to each other with ideas.

In the following two semesters, I facilitated a similar process with the 11 interns, applying only gradual changes to build upon their experience and needs, with the intent of increasing their comfort and sophistication level. For instance, in the second semester required wonderings were to be more student-centered, and PSTs could now use up to two data collection methods to inform their study. A PST might use video and a struggling student's work to analyze the ways in which he or she facilitated instruction, and the initiated response from the

student under study. Data analysis and reflection might lead the PST to realize instructional strategies that resulted in stronger work from the student, potentially better meeting the student's needs. In addition, two full days per week in the classroom [with a 1-1/2 hour weekly seminar] during this semester, allowed time for peers to observe and collect data for each other, as well as converse about their problems of practice outside of seminars in addition to within. Questions on their online reflection blogs became structured according to the explored inquiry-based topic of the week such as, "Discuss how you are collecting data this week?" or "Describe two things you learned about your student from analyzing your data, and what changes you think you will be making as a result?" Finally, it must be noted that because no department inquiry conference was held this semester, the interns presented their research to collaborating teachers and administrators at the assigned partnership school during a three-hour conference I organized.

In the final semester, the required wonderings were not only student-centered, but content-focused as well. A PST for instance, studied the ways in which her use of higher-order thinking questions throughout Science lessons increased select students' ability to ask high-order questions as well. Seminar inquiry groups were organized according to the subject content area under study, and multiple methods of data collection could be selected as needed. Because PSTs were in classrooms five full days per week with only a one-hour bi-weekly seminar, they compiled abundant amounts of data, and most often selected to analyze it with collaborating teachers or with me after formal observations, rather than during seminars as done previously. Seminars, rather, became a space for them to discuss alternative classroom strategies, share literature and deliberate on findings and implications for their practice modification. Individuals shared their final inquiry presentations once again during the department's inquiry conference. In addition, a group of 11 PSTs from the full cohort of 22 traveled to the National Association of

Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) conference in Las Vegas to share their teacher inquiry on a national level for the first time. The experience supported my ambition to move PSTs to share their learning with an audience beyond the local PDS partnership, as advocated by NCATE (2001).

Crucial to this study, is the knowledge that in the last semester, the district determined final internship placements, resulting in the relocation of four of the PSTs in my cohort section. Consequentially, only seven interns of the original 11 remained assigned to me as their field supervisor. No longer in PDS schools, the four reassigned interns reported that they were not required to use teacher inquiry in their last semester of teacher preparation. However, despite this, one PST expressed continued commitment to the practice, volunteering to contribute to the NAPDS conference paper using her previous semesters' research study, and presenting at the conference in Las Vegas with the original cohort members (Franco & Krause, 2014). This continued expression of commitment, in my opinion, continued to make her a viable candidate for this study.

Currently having completed their first contracted year as elementary classroom teachers, the original 11 PSTs are scattered throughout elementary grade levels including 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th grades, and even serving as site-based resource teachers in the areas of Science and English language learning. Only six of the 11 chose to remain teaching in the district, with two earning employment in the PDS School where their full internship was completed. Finally, it is pertinent to note that this school is no longer affiliated with the university as a PDS partnership school.

Grounded on teacher inquiry, the framework described above underlies the preparation program that served as the instrumental context leading to this study. To understand how PST preparation practices informed teachers in their first year, I studied PSTs beyond completion of

their program and having ended their first year experience in the classroom (CAEP, 2013).

Therefore, participants in this study were individuals that experienced classroom research for the duration of their teacher preparation, and had just completed the first year of teaching in the classroom, making them thus able to provide insight into how 1st year teachers, after engaging in teacher inquiry throughout their preservice teacher education program, solved problems of practice; the problems of practice they identified in their first year; inquiry-related skills and dispositions that emerged when solving challenges; and the barriers and facilitators to resolving their problems of practice.

Participant Selection

Since the goal of this narrative research study was to capture the detailed stories of individuals, it was most conducive to select a fewer number of participants (Creswell, 2013). Two participants were selected utilizing purposeful sampling; from whom I believed the most could be learned from regarding how 1st year teachers, after engaging in teacher inquiry throughout their preservice teacher education program, solved problems of practice (Patton, 2002).

Participants in this study began their first internship the semester I was assigned as their supervisor. Throughout the duration of each of the three semesters prior to graduation, the PSTs engaged in teacher inquiry by selecting a wondering, systematically collecting data and analyzing it, as well as drawing conclusions to inform and modify their future practice. Because this study strived to understand the ways in which the specific PST practice informed novice teachers in their first year, and I could only speak to the quality of my instructional facilitation, participants selected had experienced the teacher inquiry framework described above as a pedagogical practice throughout their teacher preparation program. In addition, because

researchers argue that lack of skill and rigor when using teacher inquiry to derive new knowledge threatens its comprehensive use by teachers and standing as a quality research practice, the selected participants had engaged in multiple quality full teacher inquiry cycles throughout their PST preparation, and exemplified their ability to engage in the inquiry process throughout their preservice teacher preparation (Capobianco & Feldman, 2010). Final research briefs submitted at the end of the preparation program served as archival data to determine participants' proficiency with teacher inquiry, and thus their eligibility to participate in this study. The research briefs document each preservice teacher's inquiry question, rationale for the selected study, review of the literature, data collection and analysis methods, as well as implications for teaching and conclusions. Proficiency was identified using the research brief by first identifying its completeness, and then specifically examining the complexity of each PST's research question, methods used for data collection and analysis, derived learnings from their study, and the ways in which the PST informed/transformed their practice as a result of the experience.

Moreover, the following inclusion criteria was employed:

- Participants selected ended their first contracted year teaching in a *K-5* classroom setting the August immediately prior, since this study focused on novice teachers' experiences in their first elementary classroom.
- As is characteristic to narrative inquiry, participants in this study were willing to share extensive information in the way of stories regarding problems of practice in their first year teaching, and the ways in which they approached resolving those challenges (Creswell, 2013).

- Participants willingly completed and submitted informed consent as an expression of agreement to participate in the study, with the understanding that they could withdraw from the study at any given time.

Of the 11 PSTs, 10 taught in an elementary school but only six taught in the District of Hillsborough County. This is crucial to note, as the four that left to practice out of state were not considered during participant selection for this study primarily due to their distant locations. Of the remaining six, four satisfied all of the inclusion criteria documented above, and thus were invited to participate. Among those that expressed interest, three participants were selected based upon their communication skills and ability to articulate, as Creswell (2013) offers that participants must have willingness and verbal ability to share extensive details in their stories. While data for three participants was collected, this study focused on communicating the stories of only two of the three participants, thus ensuring that data was present in the event a participant was unwilling or unable to continue their participation and chose to withdraw.

Participant Description

Knowledge of the participants is significant to this study, given that individuals make sense of their world based upon past histories, in addition to present context (Clandinin & Connelly; Crotty, 1998). Having met the above criteria, Rachel Jane and Charly Dawson were selected as the participants for this study. At 24 years old, Rachel is a white female raised in a dual parent household located in a small rural community. While the majority of her classmates and teachers in school were white, she notes diversity in terms of gender among her teachers, as many of them were male. Rachel recalls always “loving school,” having done well in all subjects with the exception of math. She is characterized by a warm gregarious personality, and is self-driven and creative. Similarly, Charly is very self-driven and ambitious in both her

personal and professional life. Raised by two parents in a small rural community, the 34-year-old, white female recalls needing to “work very hard” to do well in school. She enjoyed all subject areas but math. Fortunately, Charly’s parents were most often available to help her with math related schoolwork. Given the small community she lived in, students “traveled together” through the same elementary, middle, and high schools. She recalls students and teachers were predominantly white as well, and interaction with people of “other races” was very limited.

Participant Consent

Four participants were initially invited to the study via email to minimize pressure to participate. The potential participants were given up to two weeks to respond to the email with expressed interest, ensuring ample time for consideration. Three participants expressed both interest and availability. They received a copy of the consent form via email, allowing them to examine details of the study independently with minimal pressure, and ask questions as needed. The informed consent described the study's purpose and procedures in writing, as well as risks and benefits (See Appendix A). A call was then made to the three individuals expressing continued interest, in order to respond to any questions regarding the consent. This call allowed me to conduct the consent interview and assess the individual’s understanding of the study before meeting for the first time. Upon continued agreement to participate, the individuals were invited to bring the signed consent form to our first scheduled meeting, where I reviewed once again the study, its purpose and procedures, assessed their understanding, and invited each participant to once again ask any additional questions they had.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews in the summer immediately after their first classroom teaching experience (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997).

In addition, novices were invited to provide an artifact to substantiate their story and serve to ignite discussion regarding their experienced problems of practice. Interviews, which are the most commonly used data collection method for compiling “personal experience stories,” served as the primary data source (Creswell, 2013, p.73). A minimum of four 60-minute semi-structured interviews were administered throughout a two month time period to gather stories or “field texts” that reflected the challenges faced by the novice teachers, and their approaches to resolving those challenges (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.110). While I anticipated that four 60-minute interviews would be necessary with each participant, data for this study was collected until saturation was achieved and no new knowledge was derived. Thus, on various occasions, this meant interviews were longer than 60-minutes as participants relived the intricate details of their stories of problems of practice. In addition, a 5th meeting was arranged to ensure ample time for novice teachers to member check their interview transcripts. Divided into four sections, interview protocols each served a purpose guiding the selection of questions for each session (See Appendix B).

The purpose of the first interview was to gain general insight into how the novice teacher viewed her 1st year in the classroom and her current context, as well as be introduced to stories of problems of practice she had and/or was still experiencing. In this interview, I defined the term problems of practice and led the participant to brainstorm a list of problems of practice they experienced in the first year. I then explained that for each of the following three interviews, we would discuss a different problem of practice experienced from their list, and therefore, they should come to each interview prepared to tell the story of one of the listed problems of practice. At this time, novices were also asked to bring an artifact to each of the following interviews to represent the problem of practice and/or the way they approached solving it, with the purpose of

helping portray the story they desired to tell on that day. As such, we collaboratively brainstormed artifacts for each listed problem of practice, ensuring their clarity for selecting purposeful artifacts that supported the stories they anticipated sharing.

In the second interview, the novice teacher was probed to share a story of one problem of practice experienced and deeply describe the ways in which she approached resolving her identified challenge, why she approached it in this way, what she learned or is learning (if anything) as a result of the approach, and the supporting or inhibiting structures that led to her decisions. Likewise, the third and fourth interviews focused on deeply exploring different problems of practice using a similar semi-structured interview method. Important to note is ‘teacher inquiry’ was not referenced to participants as a part of this study during the first three interviews, and until the second half of the fourth interview. In addition, novices were not informed I was studying their use of inquiry skills or dispositions, but rather solely knew the study focused on learning about their first year problems of practice.

The fourth interview was slightly different from the other three in that at the end of the story telling, I explicitly asked questions to explore concepts in need of deeper discussion from their stories, as well as concepts related to inquiry that directly respond to my research questions. Probes included asking novices to speak of: a time when teacher inquiry skills were used to solve a first year challenge; why teacher inquiry was or was not used; their use of reflection; a time when they critically looked at their teaching practice to improve it; how they confronted failure; and how they felt about exhibiting their professional learning needs to colleagues. These additions specifically aimed to clarify skills or dispositions present in their first year approaches to solving problems of practice, yet not explicitly explored in detail within their stories.

To identify dispositions of inquiry, I particularly focused on the use of reflection in novices' stories; if they positioned themselves as critical learners, studying their problems to solve challenges, rather than blaming external stakeholders; and if they pursued professional development opportunities to confront failure and/or remediate stress. Furthermore, in the fourth and fifth meetings, the novice teachers were invited to member check transcripts to ensure that stories were conveyed as they were intended, and to add to the stories or remove any concepts as desired (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed immediately upon completion, ensuring that I, as the researcher, focused on listening to participants' stories in the moment, and that transcription was accurately representative of what was most recently said (Patton, 2002).

Since interview contexts in terms of "the place, the time of day and the degree of formality established" are crucial to the researcher-participant interaction and consequentially the "ways participants respond and give account of their experience," attention to the conditions in which the novice teachers were interviewed was especially important (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.110). Interviews occurred in the summer upon completion of their first year in the classroom, to encourage the telling of stories that were reflections of the school years past experiences, rather than stories told in the moments in which the teacher potentially needed time to navigate the challenges, and/or speak to stakeholders involved. The decision was also purposefully made to minimize the possibility that the study would interfere with novice teachers' responsibility to respond to the demands of her employment, further making it distracting to tell her story. Most significantly, situating interviews outside of the classroom and away from the school, ensured a neutral context where the novice teacher could speak to personal experiences in her first year, free from guilt or fear of being heard by professional

colleagues or administration. Moreover, the discussion context was informal, to encourage an atmosphere where novice teachers felt free from judgment to share details in their oral stories.

The artifacts novices were required to share were representative of the ways in which they approached their problems of practice. This decision was crucial as the researcher can easily “forget or ignore the existence and relevance of documents,” becoming “so focused on the relationship that the flow of documents that help contextualize the work go unnoticed” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 114). While the artifacts were not collected as a data source, they aided the discussion, serving to “trigger memories” around which the novice teachers’ stories were told, and substantiating their plotline by providing tangible insight (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 114). Furthermore, the artifacts aided in the development of interview questions as these grew out of the related conversations, thus provoking deeper discussion (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). Table 3.1 summarizes the artifacts brought by the participants throughout each of their narratives.

Table 3.1
Summary of Rachel and Charly’s artifacts in narratives

Narrative	Rachel	Charly
1	<i>Text Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children (2003)</i>	District resource evaluation domain handout
2	Copy of email correspondence with Ms. Statuesque	Interactive Reading notebook used to prepare students for state exams
3	Gurian Institute Resource Guide for ways boys and girls learn differently	District LDC text booklet Cards created with guided reading group activities

Data Analysis

In this study, I pursued an understanding of the problems novice teachers identify, the inquiry skills and dispositions illuminated in their stories as they approached resolving problems of practice, and the barriers and facilitators to resolving those problems. Findings from interviews tell participants' individual stories of experiences in their first year. However, while stories are most often characterized by a logical sequence, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that when participants convey them, they are seldom told in chronological order. It is the work of the researcher to transform raw field texts into cohesive stories committed to their storytellers' reality, that speak to their intended audience by "(i) rendering reality, (ii) transforming (as in actually changing) reality, and (iii) picking out and communicating what is considered relevant about that reality to the reader and to the interpretive task at hand" (Bamberg, 2012, p. 19).

Bamberg (2012) identifies three narrative analytic traditions to make sense of field texts and cohesively organize them into a story, as guided by the research questions asked, as well as individual purpose. These include analyzing field texts linguistically for syntax and dialogic structures, examining texts for "cognitive-coherence" based on conceptual structures, or studying it for the underlying motives and situations behind dialogue, known as "interactive-performative orientation" (p. 15). Under the cognitive coherence approach, Labov (1972) offers that storytellers communicate stories in conceptual units or elements, which ultimately structure and inform the "whole story" (Bamberg, 2012, p. 13). These elements consist of:

an (optional) abstract, followed by an orientation (or setting or exposition)
followed by the complication (also called problem or crisis), maybe an action or
action orientation toward a resolution, resulting in the resolution (or occasionally

failure), which then is ultimately followed by a coda (or closure). The orientation takes the listener into the there-and-then where actions take place, and the coda is taking the audience back into the here-and-now of the telling situation. (Bamberg, 2012, p. 14)

This conceptual perspective, according to Bamberg (2012), is best applied to the practice of narrative analysis when it serves to understand the research questions under study. Given this study's research questions and purpose to understand concepts regarding the problems novice teachers identify in their new context, and the means by which they approached attaining a resolution, it was most fitting to analyze interview transcripts according to conceptual structures using this "Cognitive-Coherence" approach to analysis (p. 15). As such, it is crucial to identify that this perspective guided my analytic approach, as it aligned with the goals of my study.

Coding of field texts. In analyzing data, narrative analysts identify the significance of reading and rereading interview transcripts and notes gathered to understand participants' whole story (Bamberg, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). This approach supported me to examine the individually "divided" conceptual units of their stories, relating them to "a larger whole" in order to grasp their role and meaning within the story (Bamberg, p. 15).

Four distinct initial rounds of coding conceptual units in the transcripts for the stories they have to tell, characterized this narrative analysis; every round guided by different "inquiry intention" (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997, p. 132). "Inquiry intention" allowed me, as researcher, to "read field texts in the context of other research and theoretical frameworks" seeking "patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes" that provided insight into this study's research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). In the first round, the transcripts were read and conceptual units of text marked for Labov's (1972) narrative elements of abstract,

orientation (or setting or exposition), complication, action, resolution and closure. For example, conceptual codes marked indicating the orientation/setting of Charly's first narrative with Joshua include, "I didn't really see anything concerning about this particular child at first," and "he was in my second period class." For the orientation/setting in Rachel's third narrative with Pedro, conceptual codes marked include, "he would come in really tired" and "the gang was right there in front of him." Identifying the complication, conceptual codes marked in Rachel's narrative of Pedro include, "dropped on all aspects; syntactic knowledge, vocabulary" and "behavior started getting really out of control..." In Charly's narrative of Ms. Recluse, conceptual codes marked to indicate the complication relate to Ms. Recluse's students' query, "She's never here. Why are you always here?" and "They get Social Studies and we don't. That's not fair." In addition, because as the "character in the story," the novice teacher's "mind and emotions" guided the selected actions towards resolution, thus forming the plot of her story (Bamberg, p. 14). I paid special attention to how she positioned herself, and why the identified problems of practice were approached as they were. For example, in Charly's first narrative with Joshua, conceptual codes marked indicate she positions herself as a learner by critically analyzing her problem. These codes include, "wanted to try to see it from a different lens. I think that's what education is all about," and "their perspectives matter more than my own," as well as "just to understand what was really happening." Similarly, in Rachel's first narrative with Doug, she also positions herself as a learner, as conceptual codes marked illuminate her questions to the school psychologist, "What is he doing for you? What are your strategies?" This round of coding informed me of the structure of the story, what was said, and how the participant was positioned in the story. The first analysis further led me to chronologically organize and retell each

participant's story with a beginning and an end. This chronological reorganization is discussed in greater detail in the following section below.

An iterative process of holistically reading transcripts, highlighting, memoing along margins, conceptual coding, and collapsing codes to identify themes that informed the queries characterized each additional round after the first round of coding (Bamberg, 2012; Riessman; 2008). To begin each round of coding, conceptual units that informed the inquiry intent of each round were highlighted, with memos written alongside the transcripts to reflect language used by the participant. Using participants' language allowed me to remain close to their story throughout this process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These memos were then compared to each other to devise multiple codes that provided insight into the novice teacher's reported experience as it related to the specific query of that round. Codes were then compared throughout the transcripts to collapse them for the purpose of identifying themes that served to explain the novice teachers' specific experience, as it related to the query investigated in the specific round.

In the second round, the transcripts were holistically read and marked for what the participant said regarding the problems of practice identified in her first year, responding to the research question, "What stories do novice teachers tell about the problems of practice in their first year? And what problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories? For example, markings indicated Rachel identified a problem with Doug saying, "I knew there was a problem from his attitude, and he would just shut down during classwork." After she discusses speaking to the social worker, conceptual units marked include, "He had so many problems at home. His mom was sick." In Rachel's second narrative about a colleague, Ms. Statuesque, conceptual units marked include, "the problem ended up being the ESE support teacher..."

Finally, in Rachel's third narrative about Pedro, the conceptual units marked are, "He was actually an active gang member kid. So that was my big problem. How to reach someone who's already at the age of ten, so distant from thinking learning is important." Likewise for the second participant, Charly, conceptual units marked to identify her problems of practice, include, "One of the specific problems that I addressed was with a certain child." Later in the transcripts units marked are, "I really didn't think it was my classroom management because it wasn't everyone" and "it was this particular child." In Charly's second narrative regarding her partner teacher, Ms. Recluse, markings include, "the biggest problem was since we were departmentalized, we shared the same students," while in her third narrative discussing guided reading, a conceptual unit marked was, "A problem that I had as an English Language Teacher was how to have a guided reading group."

In the third round, each participant's transcripts were read to identify inquiry skills and dispositions highlighted in the novice teachers' stories, responding to the research question, "How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?" The literature on inquiry-related skills and dispositions served as a theoretical lens to guide analysis of this inquiry intent. For example, conceptual codes marked indicate when identifying problems of practice, Charly knows her practices impact students. As she says in her narrative with Joshua, "I knew the right thing for my students was to continue to keep doing book studies," and with guided reading she says, "I just want to do what's best for my kids." Further, Charly's ability to ask investigative questions is visible in the conceptual codes, "How exactly should I be teaching it [guided reading]?" and "What should the job of a facilitator be?" as well as, "What is it that I can be doing differently that could make my kids want to learn?" Her ability to drive change with Ms. Recluse is visible in marked

conceptual codes such as, “I decided to make that just part of my daily job” and “I began making sure...her homeroom knew exactly where they should be sitting...” In this same narrative, Charly’s reflective disposition is illuminated by conceptual units such as, “I didn’t want negativity coming into that classroom because the kids feel that,” while in Joshua’s narrative, she says “I had hopes...he’s going to find some type of connection...thinking about his past.”

With Rachel, deep features related to student need when identifying her problem with Doug, are evident in conceptual codes such as, “mom is dying” and “he needed someone gentle.” Conceptual codes indicating the awareness that her practices impact students are, “he doesn’t need another teacher yelling at him,” and “I had to be so gentle.” Moreover, Rachel’s ability to ask investigative questions is indicated by the conceptual unit, “How do I reach someone who’s already at the age of ten so distant from thinking learning is important?” and the investigative statement, “I need to find a way to connect to him [Doug].” In addition, units indicating Rachel’s data collection methods throughout narratives illuminate her ability to collect data, by using “Running Records,” “FAIR tests,” and “DOJOs.” In terms of inquiry dispositions, markings illuminating reflection in her stories include, “really thinking about what was happening” with Doug, and “...he's got a very tough guy appearance,” but “that doesn't work with him though because really he's dealing with so many emotional issues.” Reflection is also visible with Pedro when Rachel states, “I thought I needed to make him feel like he has a true family here and not the family at home.” Per Smith (2004), conceptual codes indicating a critical learning disposition to question what she sees with Pedro and learn from her circumstance, include, “I didn’t want my only gang knowledge to be from movies. I didn’t know exactly what type of stuff... he had been seeing” and “...I wanted to know what’s happening.” With Doug, conceptual codes marked which illuminate critical learning include the admittance, “I had no

idea what I was doing” and “I’m going to go to this training...to help me with things...” In addition, per Zeichner’s (1993) definition that critical learning is identifying issues of “ethics and social justice” in problems of practice (as cited in Day, 1999, pp. 29), the disposition is minimally visible through the conceptual unit, “I knew the school system is set up for girls to succeed, and I want to learn about boys, so I went.”

Similarly, in the fourth round of analysis, conceptual codes marked told of the barriers and facilitators that novices experienced in their contexts as they strived to resolve their problems of practice. Thus, responding to the question, “How do the teachers’ first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?” Bronfenbrenner’s (1972) Ecological Model of Human Development was used as the theoretical lens to guide this fourth analysis. For example, markings such as, “[Ms. Neuron] yelled at him [Doug], and “he’s not one to let a bad mood go,” exemplified Rachel’s belief that peers in the workplace served as a barrier for her to reach Doug. Similarly, the conceptual code, “I was just so worried of hurting her feelings,” indicates the barrier that Rachel did not want to initially confront her challenge with Ms. Statuesque. Likewise, Charly’s belief to be non-confrontational with Ms. Recluse is noted as a barrier by the conceptual code, “I didn’t ever want her to be upset with me and have it impact the kids.” In addition, the conceptual code, “afraid of doing the wrong thing” in the eyes of administration, surfaces as a barrier to resolving her challenge with Joshua by applying a book study strategy. In terms of facilitators, Rachel specifically acknowledges colleagues in the workplace including the “principal,” “assistant principal,” and the “school psychologist,” as supportive when working with Doug. Likewise, Charly identifies the stakeholder, “Ms. Trust” as a facilitator to resolving her problem with Joshua. The mentor helps her collect data on her levels of engagement using district resources.

From field texts to research texts. Labov's (1972) Cognitive-Coherence approach allowed me to string narrative details related to the multiple conceptual units that surfaced together for each independent query, to make meaning from the field texts and coherently retell novice teachers' stories. Because field texts are "close to experience, tend to be descriptive, and are shaped around particular events" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp.132), I used these novice teachers' accounts to seek the answers to my research questions. The individual units and consequential themes brought meaning to each novice teacher's narrative, allowing me to respond to the research questions under study, and supporting the reorganization of the field texts collected into chronological stories or richly detailed "research texts" (Clandinin & Connelly, pp. 130). For example, to examine how Charly's story of Joshua illuminates an emotional intelligence disposition, conceptual units strung together included, "frustration," "step back, stand there and...watch," "a train wreck," "my job to make sure they're engaged," "...always something or someone that knows more than me...and I need to get some piece of advice to learn," and tells the mentor, "I really wanted to focus on...engaging students...so that I could improve..." In accordance with Tait's (2008) definition of emotional intelligence, the conceptual units strung together indicate that in the narrative, Charly is able to "...manage feelings, handle stress, confront failure with optimism, [and] persist in the face of difficulty..." (p. 60), allowing her to not only reflect upon her challenge, but also reach out to Ms. Trust to problem solve and derive learning from the experience. Of course, it is important to note, as mentioned above, contextual narrative details pertaining to each of the conceptual units further support this assertion.

The conceptually coded field texts, guided by Labov's (1972) six elements, informed the creation of a narrative research text for each participant with a beginning and an end.

Reorganized transcripts chronologically tell of each novice teacher's contextual experience with their challenges, providing insight into the nature of the problems of practice they identify, as well as how they approached resolving the problems of practice after engaging in teacher inquiry throughout their teacher education program (Fuller & Bown, 1975). For example, to organize Rachel's story of Doug, markings led me to structure the abstract using the knowledge she had only heard of Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) once in a college classroom, and initially assumed, "ok, I'll just have to be a little tougher on this one." Markings indicate that after learning of Doug's ill mother and difficult father, she wrongly assumed he had "no support at home," and was "below level." The complication of the story is strung together by conceptual units including, "He would squeeze his fists and mutter curse word after curse word to himself," in addition to "shutting down." Further, the units "no change" in behavior after continuously "screaming at Doug," lead the narrative element *action towards resolution*. Among the many *actions towards resolution* conceptually coded are a "special [art] project she invites him to," "giving [him] jobs," and using a "gentle teaching approach." Conceptual codes indicate two results in the narrative. First, Doug appears to connect with Rachel, dedicating a book to her about a "dragon teacher" who teaches a dragon boy "to fly and fight," and second, Rachel calls the problem of practice "definitely ongoing," given her plan to speak with his future teacher to "make sure that...he's supported the same way..."

Conceptual units identifying details regarding inquiry-related skills and dispositions that emerged when each novice strived to solve their problems of practice, were strung together to make meaning of the themes that provided insight into this query. Guided by the literature on inquiry related skills and dispositions as a theoretical lens for field text analysis, research texts were created to tell of the experiences that supported the emerged themes (Ghanizadeh &

Moafian, 2011; Goleman, 2001; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Schön 1983; 1987; Smith, 2004; Smith, 2012; Tait, 2008; Taylor & Petit, 2007). Likewise, using Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) Ecological Model of Human Development as the theoretical lens for analysis, conceptual units identified in field texts were stringed to tell of the barriers and facilitators that surfaced as each novice teacher strived to resolve the challenges in their new context. Table 3.2 outlines the key themes identified throughout the participants’ narratives during each round of analysis.

Table 3.2

Key themes across participants

Analysis Round	Narrative	Rachel	Charly
1	Round did not seek themes. Rather, it sought to chronologically organize narratives according to Labov’s (1972) six elements of abstract, contextual setting, complication, action, resolution and closure		
2 Problems Identified	Narrative 1	Teaching to students’ special needs: “I need to find a way to connect to him [Doug] because I can’t imagine going through that and having this disorder...”	Instructional techniques and teaching to students’ special needs: “What is it that I could be doing differently, that could make my kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom?”
	Narrative 2	Working with stakeholders: How to work with Ms. Statuesque, the ESE teacher	Working with stakeholders: How to work with Ms. Recluse, her partner teacher
	Narrative 3	Teaching to students’ special needs: “How do I reach someone who’s already at the age of ten, so distant from thinking that learning is important?”	Instructional Techniques: “What were the kids supposed to be learning [in guided reading groups]? How exactly should I be teaching it? What should the job of a facilitator be?”

Table 3.2 (continued)

Analysis Round	Narrative	Rachel	Charly
3	Identify	Student need leads deep feature identification; Relationship problem uses surface features with <i>awareness</i> of students; Awareness behavior impacts students	Contextual surface identification with <i>awareness</i> of students; Awareness behavior impacts students; Owns student behavior; Fear of letting kids down
Inquiry Skills	Problems		
	Ask questions	Situation analysis leads to investigative questions and statements; Can ask for support; Unable to ask questions of professional relationship problem	Situation analysis leads to investigative questions; Can ask for support; Unable to ask questions of professional relationship problem
	Collect/ analyze data	From intuition to formal data collection methods across narratives; shift led by inability to improve situation	From intuition to formal data collection with student-related problems; Journaling supports idea reconceptualization
		Independent analysis; Seeks collaborative data analysis and meaning-making	Independent analysis; Seeks collaborative data analysis and meaning-making despite isolation
	Drive change	Drives change across narratives “always having something new up...sleeve”; Uses data to advocate for change in stakeholder problem	Drives change across narratives; Fear of “rocking the boat”; limited strategy selection & effectiveness
Inquiry Dispositions	Reflection	Minimal improvement with tried strategies leads to practical (surface) theoretical, ethical and/or moral considerations for action (deeper); Surface reflection only in Ms. Statuesque’s narrative	Self questioning leads to practical (surface), theoretical, ethical and/or moral considerations for action (deeper); surface reflection only in guided reading narrative

Table 3.2 (continued)

Analysis Round	Narrative	Rachel	Charly
	Critical Learning	Overcomes frustration by positioning self to learn; Asks questions to “figure out how to reach boys”; Critical learning is less visible in narrative with Ms. Statuesque.	Overcomes frustration by positioning self to learn; Asks questions to understand “why”; Confronts own beliefs and practices; Non-confrontation with Ms. Recluse impedes CL
	Emotional Intelligence	Pursues resources; Reveals need openly; Rises to challenges; Confronts failure; Regulates emotions with support from teacher leader and journal for relationship problem	Pursues resources; Reveals need openly; Rises to challenges; Refusal to succumb to not knowing; Regulates emotions with non-confronted relationship problem as exception
4 Barriers	Narrative 1	Peers in the workplace; Interaction between student and colleague	Overarching belief: Fear of appearing non-compliant by administration
	Narrative 2	Overarching belief: Non-confrontational; Peer in the workplace	Overarching belief: Non-confrontational; Lack of “conversational tools”
	Narrative 3	Family; Communication with student’s home; Interaction between school and student’s history there	Interaction between compliance beliefs and district demands; Time
Facilitators	Narrative 1	Principal/ assistant principal; School psychologist; Teacher leader	“Observation tools” acquired in teacher preparation; Interaction between “observation tools” and Ms. Trust in the workplace
	Narrative 2	Teacher leader; Assistant principal	Peers in the workplace

Table 3.2 (continued)

Analysis Round	Narrative	Rachel	Charly
	Narrative 3	Social worker; training; Teacher inquiry	Books and teaching resources highlight “deficiency”

Findings were organized into five chapters total. The first two ‘findings’ chapters are dedicated to the first participant, while the second set represents findings pertaining to the second participant. Each set begins with a chapter telling the novice teacher’s three chronological stories organized using Labov’s (1972) six elements. The second ‘findings’ chapter pertaining to each participant is further divided according to the queries under study by using subtitles. Finally, a fifth ‘findings’ chapter looks across both participants as they relate to each of the research questions, and summarizes the findings along with lessons learned in the study.

Trustworthiness & Credibility

While my history with the participants may have beneficially increased their comfort level, encouraging open expression and the sharing of extensive information that is requisite to narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2013), I was cognizant of the great risk that participants would communicate what they believed I wanted to hear. Consequently, several measures were used to ensure credibility and trustworthiness throughout this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, I maintained a researcher reflexive journal to consciously acknowledge my role and presence as a researcher throughout this study, how past and present experiences potentially shaped my “interpretation of the phenomenon,” and why I deliberately made specific decisions throughout (Creswell, 2013, pp. 216). As a former supervisor, I acknowledge that I value teacher inquiry as a means to solve problems of practice, believing in the systematic approach for overcoming challenges and professional learning.

As detailed in chapter one of this dissertation, in addition to the several cycles of teacher inquiry that I facilitated with preservice teachers, my personal experience using the practice to evolve into a teacher educator has made me a firm believer in its critical role for ensuring effective professional development. I believe that knowledge constructed using teacher inquiry is made meaningful by the individuals' awareness of their circumstance, and thus derived understandings become owned by the inquirer. This ownership, in my opinion, empowers the individual to intentionally transform, resulting in changes to identity, practice and/or proficiency, and leading them to solve problems of practice.

Moreover, I believe that using findings derived from teacher inquiry, novices can advocate for themselves and for our profession from within the walls of their classroom. Thus, I admit that I desired novice teachers to express their use of teacher inquiry as they approached problems of practice in their classrooms. However, I strived to position myself as an outsider in this study working to piece together stories of their first year experiences that are not at all about me, but rather about the ways they navigated the problems of practice in their context, in light of both their present and past history as learners. Use of a reflexive journal served to maintain transparency throughout this research process, allowing me a space to separate my biases and beliefs from the documented experiences expressed by the participants in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Janesick, 2011). Personal reflection documented daily after researcher-participant interactions ensured my thoughts were consciously and consistently acknowledged distinctly from the contextual description observed and documented. Portions of my researcher reflexive journal are shared in this dissertation (See Appendix C).

Further, Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer that member checking is the "most critical technique for establishing credibility (p. 314). Semi-structured interviews were transcribed

immediately upon completion and member checked by the participants to ensure that what was documented accurately represented their account. In addition, using the artifact they provided as a representation of a problem of practice experienced, the interview data was corroborated as the item provided impetus for discussion during interviews, clarified expressed ideas, and supported (or refuted) the novice teacher's stories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Further, I was aware of the risk that despite my desire to serve as a detached researcher, I might see that which I wanted to see in my data, rather than that which the data revealed in actuality. As such, analyst triangulation was used in this study (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). During data analysis, I employed the use of a detached person to critically review my findings and reveal blind spots in my interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). This critical friend served to first analyze the data independently, thus corroborating or refuting my findings, and highlighting different ways to interpret it. As a former doctoral student and internship supervisor, the critical friend had three-years experience facilitating teacher inquiry during field placements, and was thus, familiar with inquiry skills and dispositions. During the analysis process, we met a total of six times. Each visit focused on a different research question, beginning with the problems of practice Rachel identified, then the inquiry skills and dispositions illuminated in her stories, and finally the barriers/facilitators that surfaced in them. The discussion process was similarly repeated to corroborate Charly's findings. In addition, face-to-face discussions were supplemented with ongoing phone conversations focused on data interpretation. During conversations we discussed the meaning of each particular skill or disposition based on literature, and if/how the skill or disposition was visible in the transcripts. On varied occasions, we experienced disagreements. For example, on one instance, we disagreed on whether Charly identified her guided reading

problem of practice based on surface features related to context, or deeper features related to students' needs for small group reading support. Given the different perspective, we went back into the literature review of this dissertation to inform and guide our lens. We found that while novice teachers may identify a problem using its contextual features, the awareness of students, colleagues or parents may serve as motivation for identifying the problem (Fessler, 1995). With Charly, we then agreed the problem was identified using surface contextual features, but identifying the problem was motivated by a need to support students' learning needs.

Limitations

Two different ages were represented among the participants in this study, including one participant with 24 years of age, and the second participant 35 years of age. This presented a limitation to this study, as research using a reflective judgment model indicates a strong positive correlation ($r = .79$) between age and individuals' reflective judgment (Kitchener & King, 1981; Kitchener, King, Wood & Davidson, 1989). According to Kitchener, King, Wood and Davidson (1989), an individual's ability to reflectively represent and solve problems increases with age at least until their mid 30's. Thus, compared to younger counterparts, the older participant in this study may have illuminated stronger reflective dispositions influenced by her age-related ability, rather than past educational experience using teacher inquiry.

Moreover, it is crucial to note that because the participants came from different elementary school settings, characteristics of the respective context in which the novices practiced their first year varied among them. Existing variations in collegial and administrative support may have influenced the ways in which each novice selected to approach a problem of practice (Day, 1999; Esposito & Smith, 2006; Fry, 2009; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Smith, 2004; Stoughton, 2007). For instance, if an administration fostered a competitive climate among

teachers, the novice may not have felt as comfortable inviting colleagues to observe her teaching practices to collect data using peer feedback. On the other hand, if professional development strategies such as lesson studies were regularly used in the school to encourage collaborative reflection and learning, the novice may have been more apt to involve peers to support them in solving their problem of practice.

Finally, while my prior relationship with participants may have served as an advantage to encouraging them to communicate personal details in their stories, I am cognizant that it may have also functioned as a limitation (Creswell, 2013). Novices may have wanted me to view them as effective teachers, and consequently limited their stories to those that only conveyed successful experiences in their first year, or misrepresented their experiences by painting them in a more positive light than occurred in actuality. As such, I remained aware of this potential limitation.

In the next chapter, Charly's elementary school context is described in detail, followed by three narratives describing the problems of practice she experienced in her first year. The narratives are entitled, (1) Engaging the 'Joshuas' of Charly's First Year; (2) Some Problems When it Comes to People that You Just Can't Fix; and (3) When Striking Walls.

Chapter Four

Findings

Charly's Narratives

The music played. The fifth graders danced. It was a think-pair-share Kagan strategy Charly had learned during her teacher preparation program. However, as the novice happily swayed and pivoted, her eyes grew to unexpectedly meet none other than the assistant principal standing tall by the classroom door. “What should I say?” she considered. How might she “justify” this behavior? For a second she could feel her knees weak, only to confirm when he began to “bust a move with everyone else” that he was “casual,” “very friendly,” and most importantly “just knew [she] was always doing what was best for the kids.” She didn’t have to defend herself to him. The principal, however, was a “very different” story... The woman was “kind” and “nice,” yet “all the time down to business.” Her classroom visits made Charly apprehensive, a sentiment she describes with the word “yikes.” However, her presence still could not panic Charly anymore than the expectations she had established for herself. She would wake up “in the middle of the night” thinking about “lesson plans,” “students,” and “district standards.” Driving her practice was the belief “They [the students] put their faith and confidence in me every day,” and “I can’t let them down.” Her words set the landscape for the myriad of emotions that surface throughout the three narratives Charly Dawson shares in this chapter.

The following section describes the school and classroom setting where Charly’s stories of problems of practice occurred. As a reminder, the questions guiding this study are:

1. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
2. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
3. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Following the description of Charly's school and classroom context, a story of her first identified problem of practice is shared. In the story, Charly is challenged by Joshua's disruptive behavior and students' lack of engagement in her instruction. She wonders, "What is it that I could be doing differently that could make my kids want to learn?" The story describes several strategies Charly applies to approach the problem of practice, including using conscious discipline, Kagan strategies and book studies, as well as studying previous evaluations/district resources and journaling. Labov's (1972) narrative elements are used to organize this story. Further, the events of the narrative are chronologically arranged to communicate the way in which Charly describes experiencing them (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).

Contextual Background

Charly eagerly selected the small elementary school of 217 students and 15 grade level teachers, knowing it was home to a low socio-economic, minority population. In this setting, she anticipated being the teacher "students could count on" when their daily lives failed to keep them "safe" or support their needs. Ranked among the lowest achieving schools in the state, the principal forewarned Charly that the elementary school was "more intense and harder" to work at than most. As a result of their low standing, district personnel regularly roamed classrooms unannounced, assessing teacher performance with "checklists and rubrics" in hand. In addition,

the school day was one hour longer than most, allotting students extended reading time (ERT) in an effort to make them better readers.

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) was applied daily, as several data-supported, problem-solving methods were used to academically instruct students by applying individualized interventions. Under the model, all students in the school engaged in the “I-Ready” computer program three days a week and small Response to Intervention (RTI) groups facilitated by teachers. Administrators organized the RTI groups according to students’ assessed “deficiencies” per the I-Ready program, while teachers “drilled the deficient standards” using “scripted” I-Ready resources in the small groups. Charly was continuously surrounded by data, meeting regularly for “data chats” with administration, reading coaches and even I-Ready representatives. During meetings, “students’ growth” was discussed in connection to “if and why learning gains were or were not being made.” When learning gains were not made, Charly was asked to “reflect” upon the situation and “defend” a rationale. In consequence, she had become focused on “teaching to standards” to meet administrative and district demands, and found her “long drive home” as the perfect opportunity to “think about ways to try to do something different in [her] teaching the next day...”

The school also adhered to a “Conscious Discipline” behavior system, limiting Charly’s classroom management plan to “giving kids choices” when they misbehaved. “That was all we were allowed to do,” Charly says of the system that “didn’t really work” for her. Because it had been implemented years prior to her arrival, school-based trainings were limited, leaving Charly to understand the management system as “You may sit here, or you may sit here. You may write or you may read. You may not draw.” If things became “crazy,” she says, “Students were sent to the office.”

Charly recalls advice imparted to her by the principal upon accepting the job... “Learn to rely on yourself as much as you can,” she said, because “there would be no one else on your team other than you” to rely on. Charly imagined this to be true considering she was the only teacher in fifth grade assigned to teach English and Language Arts (ELA). Moreover, the “reading and writing curriculum was new” to the district, and few were well versed in it. The fifth grade team consisted of Charly and one “partner teacher,” Ms. Recluse, whose classroom connected to Charly’s via a narrow pathway with a bathroom. While the teacher preferred to “keep to herself,” departmentalization meant they “shared” 42 fifth graders between them. In the afternoon, Ms. Recluse taught Math and Science to Charly’s 22 students, allowing Charly to teach her 20 students ELA, as well as pull them for RTI groups. Charly called all students “my kids,” as she felt “responsible for” their learning. Varying across ages, backgrounds and ability ranges, the students were between 10 and 13 years old. Some lived in dual or single parent households, while others with friends or relatives “in the neighborhood.” With the “vast majority Hispanic,” few students came from English speaking households, thus presenting Charly with a challenge since she did not speak any Spanish.

Charly “worried about the kids” continuously, from their daily living challenges, to their academic needs and her personal ability to “do what’s best for kids.” She wanted them to see her as a “role model,” “someone to help guide them,” “someone they could rely on and...would help keep them safe.” In her own life, she had chosen to leave school to pursue random jobs, later returning to the university acknowledging, “Without an education, life was hard.” Charly assumed few had sufficient guidance at home, and would “go down the wrong path” without it. Thus, she decided to make time for weekly one-on-one conversation with each student about “life,” believing in her responsibility to “teach the standards...but also the whole child.” It was

her personal goal to “turn out productive members of society, as well as someone that could read and write.”

Despite “transparently” sharing personal stories in an effort to convey her “human” ability to “make mistakes,” students had a different perspective of their teacher. One day after a sub “lost it” in Charly’s room yelling at them to “shut up,” the class retold the experience to her under the delusion that their own teacher “would never do such a thing.” In their eyes, she could “do no wrong ever” and they “couldn’t imagine” she “had ever been in trouble as a kid.” Staring out into the room as she recollects the moment, Charly’s face becomes bright with the first soft smile of our conversation, only to call the perception both “unrealistic,” yet “hilarious.”

Narrative 1: Engaging the ‘Joshuas’ of Charly’s First Year

Abstract and orientation. It was the second day of Charly’s first year when Joshua walked into the school as a new student, and directly into her second period English and Language Arts (ELA) classroom. “Here’s where your seat is going to be,” she recalls saying as she escorted the “African American” boy to it. Everyone and everything felt new, as they were all “still...getting their feet wet.” With a tired grin she reminisces about her first encounter with Joshua noting, there was nothing obviously “concerning about this particular child” on that day. However, by the end of that first week, Joshua’s true manner would rapidly begin to surface, providing Charly with a foreshadowing of her entire school year.

Complication. Arriving to her class on week one, Joshua would take his seat with everyone else. However, no sooner did Charly begin to teach, he would rise “onto his chair” and break out in song, “singing” the national anthem “at the top of his lungs.” Charly recalls how students initially appeared “shocked by that type of behavior,” as if thinking, “What’s going on here?” As the days and weeks progressed, standing on a chair turned into additional

misbehaviors that interfered with learning, teaching and even transitioning between classes. For instance, during transitions Joshua would either shove his peers or “grab something,” taking their belongings. Once he reached over to a girl “wearing a necklace” removing it from her neck, and placing it around his. Charly notes, “he started bothering the kids that were really, really, really quiet that couldn’t speak for themselves.” In class, “he would shout across the room... targeting” individuals, or wait until instruction began to “get up ...and bust out dance routines.” According to Charly, “after a while, the thing you don’t want to have happen” began to occur...the other students would roar in laughter, thus “empowering him to do even more optimal crazy things.” She recalls believing that Joshua began to purposefully misbehave to seek attention from the other students. During regular one on one discussion, Charly would advise him that his method was not effective for making friends. However, he would respond, “I don’t need to make friends. I have everything I need. I don’t need it.” Charly anxiously watched as he “pushed back,” not wanting to let people in... to help him feel wanted.” She admittedly states, “I didn’t know” what to do.

Moreover, Joshua “started trying to push boundaries” directly with Charly. At first, “he would refuse to get things ...signed by” his parents. Then the passive behavior became more “blatant disrespect,” where she might say, “Hey, bud, I see that your book is not open yet. I want to make sure that you join me on page three,” to which he would respond back with a “firing retort.” She recalls that his attendance and academics began “suffering.” Charly immediately found that calling his parents was of no use, as “no one answered the phone.” This, along with his inability to get anything signed, made her feel as though “he would not allow for any sort of parent-teacher interaction.” Despite his troublesome behaviors, she recalls acknowledging the

presence of the problem only when she began to feel “I just couldn’t teach.” He was “taking my right to teach, taking other’s right to learn as his own.”

Action toward resolution. Charly resorted to having him “pulled out time and time again” when his behavior erupted. “First, we started trying to get my assistant principal involved with him because he’s a male and we’re thinking this kid probably needs a male role model.” However, she calls the action “counterproductive,” as he began “causing more trouble in the class” in an effort to be removed. Charly assumes he considered, “What can I do to leave here to go spend time with this guy?” In addition, constant calls to the office for help to manage his disruptive outbursts, left her feeling innately fearful that she would appear to both students and administration as the “teacher that can’t handle” her kids. She began wondering, “When am I going to get in trouble because people have to keep intercepting this child?” “Every time the kid was taken out, I think I lost ground,” she admits believing. She felt that it threatened her stance “as the authority figure” in her own classroom.

The day arrived when Joshua, in his typical rant, started “screaming” at other children “across the room” in the middle of her lesson. Some students laughed loudly while others joined Charly’s stern face of “frustration.” “Please call the office to get him out of here!” she heard some beg. “Lack of better results with anything” previously tried led her to say out loud, “You know guys, I’ve tried that. It’s just not working.” She then, in the heat of the moment, decides to “step back, stand there and actually watch what was happening.” Charly recalls “trying to get out of [her] body to...look at it from an outsider’s perspective.” After all, she says “I had 22 other people in my room other than myself. Their perspectives mattered more than my own...” She began to examine herself, her students, and then Joshua, recognizing “it’s hard to see what’s really going on when I’m the one that’s trying to stop what’s happening. I needed to see it from

their perspective.” And what she saw was disheartening. She describes the vision as “a train wreck” unfolding. She could hear him shouting, others laughingly joining the raucous, and still others “advocating” for themselves. Charly interpreted the few upset faces as “Man, you’re interrupting my chance to try to get this,” and states “it hurt me to my soul to see that frustration and despair.” Charly realized while she had felt all along this was only her problem, it had also become the class’s problem. This was the moment she acknowledged a need to stop herself from “being so quick to...just react...instantaneously.”

Charly began reflecting on her “teaching” and what she had learned in “preparation for teaching,” alongside the ways she was responding to Joshua and the situation at hand. She began questioning herself by thinking, “is it my classroom management? Is it me? What’s going on here?” Charly admits feeling “challenged” to identify the problem. She considered “it wasn’t everyone” she was struggling with, but rather an “isolated” situation, and subsequently reasoned it couldn’t be a classroom management problem. In her thinking, Charly recognized that “Where there’s one problem, there’s always going to be more” and if she honed in on only Joshua, the groups’ “reactions” to future misbehavior would only “empower more bad choices” in others. Because she had many thoughts but no understanding of the actual problem, Charly decided to turn to her “own data to try to figure out what was maybe going on...” Pulling out prior administrative evaluations, she found that while she had scored “accomplished” in management areas, her student “engagement” demonstrated “progressing” ratings. “It’s my job to make sure they’re engaged,” she said. Based on Joshua’s misbehaviors, her students’ reactions and her evaluations, she determined she had a problem of “engagement.” Reminiscing, she notes:

I started thinking about my engagement in the classroom, and maybe there's just something that he's not being able to connect to. He's not feeling that want or need or desire to be engaged in whatever it is that we're doing.

While she primarily thought about Joshua, the evaluative data along with her observations led her to ask a personal question that would in fact address *all* students. She wondered, "What is it that I could be doing differently that could make my kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom?"

Believing she had "enough reasons" to identify her problem of practice, Charly reached out to the school administrator. "After all," she says, "I figure there's always something or someone that knows more than me or has been through more than I have, and I need to get some piece of advice to learn." The principal felt "challenged" by Charly's felt need, believing she was doing well and didn't have a problem. She thus responded, "I'll see what I can try to come up with for you." Unfortunately, Charly found she was too "busy" and never responded to her query.

Still having this unresolved problem, she turned to her district assigned mentor for guidance. Ms. Trust, reminded Charly of her "college of education supervisor." She served as "another set of eyes" in the classroom, focusing on what the novice teacher needed and meeting with her for a minimum of 30 minutes weekly. Charly specified, "I really wanted to focus on...engaging students...so that I could improve my practice and increase student learning." The mentor taught her how to break down the evaluation rubric and access district literature to know "exactly what it looked like for a teacher at the different levels that they were scored on." Charly asserts, the resource allowed "me to pinpoint what it was I was actually doing, and then see where it was that I ultimately wanted to be, and try to start thinking about different strategies

to get myself there.” Ms. Trust would also brainstorm strategies with her for increasing engagement, and offer ideas she had used in her days as a classroom teacher. As Charly employed strategies, the mentor would complete the district rubric during informal observations to assess her students’ engagement.

Despite teaching 5th grade, Charly also turned to the primary teachers at her school. Because of their experience there, she regarded them as a tremendous “resource.” The teachers were “really big on conscious discipline,” as a method for “focusing students on “positive things” over negative behaviors. While Charly did not know a lot about it, she understood conscious discipline strategies could be integrated throughout instruction and within the curriculum guidelines, ensuring it “didn’t take too much away from the curriculum.” Charly gratefully notes “they [the teachers] stayed sometimes with me after school,” teaching her several strategies.

One strategy in particular made a notable difference in her problem. Using “the Mystery Student,” she gave everyone a number that matched a peer at the start of class. Students spied on their assigned classmate throughout the period, briefly jotting down “something great” they had done. While Joshua remained conscious to not let his “guard down” ensuring he would maintain a “tough guy” persona, Charly began to notice the “sparkle in his eye” and “half smile” when peers noted positive performance on his part. She states, “kids became more forgiving of things” he and others would do, focusing on each other’s positive attributes and remaining on task. Charly identified the strategy as “effective” when Joshua’s “outbursts started to be a little bit further in between.” However, admittedly on days when the district would be on school premises, she would not apply the technique, causing “setbacks” in his behavior. Identifying the rationale for not using the strategy on those days, she says, “I didn’t want to have to defend what

it was that I was doing.” She lived in fear that they would disapprove, stating, “I just wanted to try to make everyone happy and try to keep the job, doing what I’m supposed to be doing...”

While tips from Ms. Trust and other teachers were the “biggest” resource, Charly says she “researched” strategies and “tried them out.” Specifically, she explored “Kagan Structures.” Having attended “extensive training” on them during her final internship, she says, “It’s all about engagement.” To her disappointment, students did not respond to them and she continued to “get marked down on engagement” by her mentor. Charly questioned the practice, stating, “...What is going on?” I was told, “This is what you do. This is how they’re engaged.”

To reflect on what worked, Charly notes, “I definitely journaled.” In the journal she would write, “this is what I tried on this day...what could I try the next day?” On days that were “really rough,” journal entries were “really, really long.” At first, she says, it was “an outlet” used therapeutically to get “different feelings and frustrations on paper.” Consequently, on days that were great, Charly would write less, but read more. She started reflecting on her “tough day” entries to see them from “a different lens.” She would tell herself, “Oh, you know, if I wasn’t so frustrated that moment, maybe I could have done this.” Envisioning “different ways to solve different problems,” she also “made lists of different things that [she] could try.” The journal, she notes, served as a strategy to help her understand the problem.

Charly attended several required district trainings throughout the year, including reading and science trainings, as well as CHAMPS for classroom management. Despite the fact she felt they were not directly aligned with her needs, she could strive to “weave different ideas” into addressing her “engagement type” problem. Excitedly she says, “Sometimes these trainings would lead into other things. Even if it was a reading training, it might offer me results in one way or another!” However, upon returning to school to share learnings with colleagues, they

often would say, “Oh, we don’t ever do that here.” Disappointedly, she would think, “Man, back to the drawing board because I can’t do this.” A particular CHAMPS strategy she applied was giving students food when they worked. Assuming they came from an “impoverished situation” Charly says, “It’s amazing what they would do to try to earn that skittle or that animal cracker...” During an in-school, district-led PLC focused on student engagement, she found herself continuously raising her hand to “ask questions.” She recalls, “trying to latch on to anything that they were saying,” believing “I needed to make sure that my kids got the best possible instruction, and... that I’m meeting my own goals for myself.”

Charly did not “want to rock the boat too much and do anything too crazy before testing,” because she felt she didn’t “really know what’s allowed and what’s not.” She obediently adhered to the ELA “sliding scale” criteria of “independent reading, shared reading, guided reading and writing,” using required sources to guide instruction within the “certain timeframe.” One day, Charly was reminded of an instructional strategy teachers had used when she was an elementary student. The method had drastically increased her engagement as a learner, and thus, she felt it could increase her students’ engagement as well. If only she could stray from curriculum resources to read books such as *Number the Stars* and *Charlotte’s Web*, she thought. With a soften expression, she recalls, “Teachers would sit there and have us all listen... I loved that. As a kid, I loved that.” She similarly considered reading the texts aloud, but knew all too well that the daily read-aloud time was most often sacrificed for remediating or reinforcing concepts students found challenging. As such, Charly chose to disregard the idea. She recalls telling herself, “Oh man, I’m tired of this,” but could not allow herself to stray from district and school guidelines.

The fourth quarter of the year finally arrived and testing ended. Charly had continuously tried and tried strategies to no consistent avail, still asking Ms. Trust to observe for student engagement and her improvement using the district rubric. But now Charly needed change. The curriculum calendar specified “historical fiction” as the new genre of focus in reading. She decided to abandon the school’s curriculum text and adopt an entirely new perspective, thinking:

All right, this testing is done. I’m going to do whatever it is I need to do to get these kids engaged and Joshua is going to find himself through literature...I don’t care how I’m going to make this happen, but I’m going to make this happen.

After reading aloud the first chapter of *Number the Stars*, her conscience forced her to halt. She feared disapproval once again, thinking students would take out copies of the book in front of Ms. Trust and she had not consulted anyone on the decision. Seeking consent, Charly asks Ms. Trust, “What do you think about me using another platform to meet the standards of our fifth grade ELA block?” Her “permission” to use a book study was all Charly needed to make her feel unstoppable.

Result. From day one of reading the text, Charly began to experience a different class. They arrived daily, asking “Are we going to read *Number the Stars* today? What’s the plan?” Per the mentors’ documentation, the novice observed “the engagement of the kids” began to increase. Charly, however, was challenged by the fact that she didn’t have enough copies of the book for the entire group. As the book study proceeded she says, the students began “wanting to be right with me, and...moving their desks a little bit closer” until eventually, they had formed a close “circle around” her. It was “amazing to see all of them.” Particularly amazing however, was Joshua who began “raising his hand to answer questions” for the first time in the school year.

One day, Charly lost her voice. Still planning to read the book, she asked, “Who can I get to read this out loud for me?” Looking at Joshua, she says, “Hey, buddy! Do you want to read this chapter out loud today?” In disbelief, Joshua responds, “You want me to do that?” Charly asked him if he felt “comfortable to stand and read.” “I feel great about that!” he replies. Class enthusiasm was at an all-time high, and she felt motivated to teach “across the curriculum” geography and social studies. Students began taking out books on World War II and asking the librarian for “copies of *Number the Stars* to read it” with her. While “observation” served as her primary form of data to assess increase in the students’ engagement, changes began to surface in their assignments as well. Joshua in particular, started to make a change in this area. He no longer stood “on chairs, dancing and singing” and arguing with Charly, “I’m not doing that. That doesn’t matter. I don’t care about that.” Rather, he would “just start doing” his assignments, and turning them in “partially complete,” but nonetheless, showing effort. Charly could not believe how “crazy” their response to the strategy was. She says, “They didn’t want to change classes and could sit there and talk about this forever.”

To her dismay, the book study ended on a Friday. With three weeks left to the school year, Charly scrambled, wondering how she could ever “beat this.” She states, “I knew that the right thing for my students was to continue to keep doing book studies, still meeting the same standards and still doing everything that the district is telling me that I’m supposed to do,” but using her own “platform.” She anxiously began cleaning an old “file cabinet,” coming across a treasure... a folder with the words *Number the Stars*, and the name of her assistant principal. The folder was filled with “lesson plans” and activities. She took a “fold-out” to the assistant principal, asking, “What’s this?” In disbelief, he revealed the folder was from when he “taught fifth grade” and “did that book with” his students. Charly felt the need to defend her decision

stating, “We’re still meeting the standards...but just with a different platform.” In an unexpected response, he said to Charly “I wish you had told me this. I would have totally helped you.” The assistant principal immediately offered, “I always follow it up with the book, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. He began to offer her instructional ideas using student notebooks, vocabulary, and “text-dependent questions.”

Charly had not heard of the book, but by Monday had read the lengthy text cover to cover and was ready to go. Surprised, the assistant principal met with her after school to plan. “I want to be there with you off and on to help you co-teach the book,” he said. He secured copies of the text for all students, and at 8am the next day was in her classroom with the books and a PowerPoint they constructed together to illustrate “what different places looked like in that time period.” Several of Charly’s students were “people of color.” As they observed pictures of segregated schools, doors and even textbooks, they gasped in awe, stating, “You’ve got to be kidding.” She admired the way they “began making connections about their own lives before [they] even started the book.” Charly and the assistant principal read aloud “back and forth” up to 40 pages on that first day. However, when reading time was over, the students objected. Without hesitation, the assistant principal indicated to Charly to just “keep going with the novel.” She reminisces to that day “...my kids never lost that want to learn, that engagement” after that.

Charly had high hopes Joshua, as a black student, would “start thinking about his past before he was even alive and what that meant for him now and his future.” He began bringing “his desk right next to” hers, adhering to only one “hard-covered copy” of the book as his own. When students would talk out of turn, he would say, “everyone hush up. I want to read the book.” Charly describes this time as “amazing.” Close to the end of the book, however, a fifth

grader decided to use racially derogatory language from the text towards his peers. Charly was filled with emotion, questioning her methods and reflecting:

I don't want anyone to feel hurt. I don't want anyone to feel sad. I don't want this to be something that's bringing bad things up from the past to try to bring them into the present. I want us to learn from it, to keep it from happening again.

That day she cried. With tears in her eyes, she told the class they would no longer read the book. "No, no, no, we want to read, we want to read!" they begged. As she "looked around" the room, she was touched by the expression on Joshua's face. "I just looked at the little boy that had been such a troublesome little thing" all year and "saw how much he wanted to read this book," and she just couldn't take it away. He was changing so much from the experience.

After school, Charly took out a piece of paper and wrote Joshua a note. She needed him to know something. In the note, she said, "I've seen such an impressive change" and "maturity" in your "desire to learn." She spoke of how he now showed ability to "accept other people...and education," as well as showed respect for her, their "environment" and others. She ended the note with the words "I believe in you...I'm not going to be there [in 6th grade] but I want you to remember this." The next morning, Charly watched Joshua open the note. "He's reading, he's reading, he's reading," she recalls, and then suddenly he rushes to the classroom's guided reading area, sitting "in a comfy roly chair" to write her back. In tears, Charly reveals the content of his note. It said, "I'm just really sorry that another kid tried to ruin the novel. I would never use those words and I'm just really loving the book."

In that final marking period, Joshua's ELA grade went from a U to a C. Proudly, Charly remarks, "My young man had made substantial growth." On the last day of school, she recalls, "he kept going into the bathroom and crying because he didn't want to leave." It

appeared evident to her this feeling was “something [Joshua] had never gone through in any prior school.”

Closure. Charly adamantly reiterates that her problem wasn’t a classroom management problem, but rather a “student engagement” problem. It was a problem that necessitated her to “change” her instructional practice. She realizes that while “meeting the standards” was a priority, she should have really taken more time to get to know the students’ backgrounds. She believes that reading student “records” early, along with exploring “where they’re coming from and talking to the teachers” in prior grades would have informed her of different ways to engage them using “projects” and “book studies” that appealed to them. The plan is one she anticipates for the following year in her new fourth grade placement.

Furthermore, Charly’s assistant principal led her to the new understanding that while the district “wants you on a calendar,” she could have made some of her own instructional decisions, supporting them by “collecting that data and having those resources to be able to defend whatever it is that you’re doing.” She now reiterates the belief that she “just always [needs to] go with what’s best for kids.”

Narrative 2: Some Problems When it Comes to People that You Just Can’t Fix...

Abstract and orientation. Charly’s time had finally arrived... the big moment she had long awaited. It was July and the 5th grade job offer gave her just enough time to start getting ready for her first year in the classroom. Can “I come in early and start setting things up because I want to take preplanning week and just learn? I don’t want to have to worry about my classroom.” “Excited” that the administrator agreed, Charly began to reach out to the reading and writing resource teachers, letting them know “I’m ready to teach. I don’t know what I’m supposed to teach. Can you help me out?” Charly considered herself “fortunate” that her partner

teacher's classroom connected directly to hers by a short and "narrow hallway," and looked forward to meeting her in the fall. Sharing the same students, she anticipated they would engage in "great" collaboration. She could picture it clearly, stating:

I might do something that works really well that she might want to try, or she might do something that works really well that I might want to try, or it might be a challenge that we're both having with the same student and then maybe we need to get together and have a conversation with that student's parent or with someone.

In Charly's mind she admits believing the mutual collaboration would advance her "professional career," and especially support their kids' learning.

It was preplanning when the partner teacher, Ms. Recluse, strolled into Charly's classroom introducing herself. Her 3rd grade experiences with the same group of students made Charly grateful, as she could provide insight into their "challenges," helping her "mentally prepare" for them. Being new, Charly had prepared "thousands of questions" to ask her. Indeed, Ms. Recluse discussed her challenging history with some of the students at the school, then proceeding to turn around and walk back to her room. Preplanning group meetings occurred with minimal interaction with Ms. Recluse. Taking every opportunity to interact with her, Charly would "pop [her] head into her classroom, trying to have a quick conversation with her and...could tell by her look that she wanted just to be left alone." Disappointedly, preplanning week came and went with missed opportunities to create a "bond" with the colleague.

Complication. As the school year launched, Charly found herself often in need of support. She imagined that by being "super friendly... when there was lunch" she could break the ice. Sometimes questions were simply about a meeting time, to which Ms. Recluse wouldn't

even respond. The problem was, she says, “the reality of our school” was “departmentalization” and as such “We did need to learn to try to work together.” Charly feared that even in the event of a fire drill, “We should have had a plan together about how fire drills were going to be going down, but we did not.” I mean we collaborated about nothing...” Charly decided to establish a bond with the two fourth grade teachers, Ms. Care and Ms. Focus, across the hall. With awe in her voice she admiringly states, “They were a partnership and they are just still amazing.” Immediately taken by Charly, they offered to support her with “anything [she] needed.” Charly specifically admired their work ethic, as they stayed “late after school every day” and arrived early, despite having taught there for ten years. She found some of the collegiality in her 4th grade peers she had hoped to find in her partner teacher. Charly recalls entering their room regularly stating, “You’re not going to believe what just happened today,” and was never more grateful for people that would actually stop to listen, and even often volunteer to “share things about their own experiences...”

While school policy required teachers to arrive at 7:15am, Charly regularly arrived to her room promptly 30 minutes prior. She awaited the students’ dismissal from the cafeteria at 7:30, prepared to start the day. The morning process, however, became quickly concerning when Ms. Recluse would not be in her classroom at 7:30. In fact, she was often nowhere to be found. Without their teacher, the students would turn to Charly’s classroom seeking guidance and leaving her to care for 42 students alone. The frequent occurrence led the children to wonder, “Why doesn’t she have to come here, but you do?” “Confused students” would also observe Ms. Recluse leave early, stating, “She’s never here. Why are you always here?” To which Charly would respond “because I love you guys and I want to see you succeed.”

Already knowing “something wasn’t right,” Charly admits that it became a more evident problem when Ms. Recluse’s personality surfaced a “lackadaisical” instructional style. Students could hear the class next-door “having free time” all morning and would object “Hey! Why are they doing what they are doing, but we have to be doing this?” Likewise, her second period students would argue, “Why it was that they were actually working hard in this classroom?” Charly describes the students as “emotionally torn,” striving to understand the “fairness” of the situation.

Through her words, she relives the “frustration” of experiencing the problem and having to face her students, as she recalls responding, “You know what? In my classroom you will learn. Education is the only way for your success. I’m going to do everything I can to give you guys the best future that you can have.” However, when the morning class persisted to argue, she would break down, offering, “don’t worry about it. You’re going to be over there” later.

Come afternoon, both teachers were tasked with teaching Social Studies for 30 minutes. Proudly, Charly admits that she began to “overlook” her neighbor’s noise, “religiously” engaging students in learning the subject. Consequently, when time arrived for her students to complete the first section of the Literacy Development Collaborative (LDC) tests in Social Studies, they were prepared. The subject-focused reading and writing tasks were comprised of scripted units focused on Social Studies or Science, and took two-weeks to administer. Teachers graded them with the objective of monitoring students’ growth across reading, writing, social studies and science disciplines. Ms. Recluse’s students, however, began to alter their previous argument, revealing a new understanding for the “fairness” of their situation. “It’s not fair that your group...has an easier time with this. They get Social Studies and we don’t. That’s not fair,” they would argue. Ms. Recluse’s students had become aware of their academic “disadvantage.”

Action toward resolution. While the students pleaded with Charly to allow them to “come in [to her room] for Social Studies,” she believed it wasn’t “legally” acceptable for her to “have 42 students in the classroom by” herself. Ironically, Charly advised them, “You need to stand up for yourself and just tell her that you want to learn.” However, she could not find it in her to confront Ms. Recluse regarding her own felt professional challenges either. In response to the students’ request, Charly began to use opportunities when Ms. Recluse requested additional time with Charly’s students, to “try to help build their background knowledge” on the subject.

Charly admits she did not know if she was teaching Social Studies the “right way,” but adhered to what school and district guidelines required. “I want to follow a schedule, I want to do whatever the district has implemented for these kids because the district says that’s what’s best for kids.” Using this as the only compass for navigating the problem left Charly feeling lost and “alone.” “I felt like there was really nothing that I could do.” Despite a strong relationship with the 4th grade teachers and even the writing resource teacher Ms. Lit, she states:

I didn’t really feel like it was my place to tell anyone about it, because I just -- what do I know? I’m the new teacher. Maybe that is normal. What do I know, you know? I don’t want to get anyone in trouble. Also, I’m still going to have to work with this person until the end of the school year, regardless. That could make things even more uncomfortable for me.

As such, Charly became determined to “bear the obstacle as [her] own.” She made Ms. Recluse’s deficiencies her daily responsibility, applying ideas to fill gaps that surfaced in the students’ needs at every given moment. To address Ms. Recluse’s lateness, she devised a plan with students for where they would sit and “what they should be doing when” their teacher would not show up on time. Moreover, when Ms. Recluse began to make a habit of leaving

students alone to make copies, Charly assumed the task of standing “between the two rooms.” Anticipating the need to keep students engaged, she began to plan things her class could do to “run the other classroom smoothly while there wasn’t a person in there.” She notes, along with teaching them, “safety” was her next biggest concern. The responsibility for 42 students meant being more astute to their actions and planning “solutions to things before they even started happening.”

By January, Charly had this down. Despite voluntarily attending several LDC trainings already, she went to another noting, “I wanted to have the best knowledge about what it was that we were going to be doing.” Given the challenging upcoming Science LDC performance task, the district advised teachers to grade them with their content specialized partner teachers. Initially feeling “excited,” she admits thinking “Great! I had yet to score any of them with anyone else anyway and I have 42 of them. Extra help!” While Charly agreed that lack of knowledge regarding her colleague’s Science curriculum necessitated Ms. Recluse’s “perspective” to accurately grade them, she also saw this as a big opportunity to use the professional need to “actually... try to speak to her, kind of indirectly about the situation.” The attempt served to no avail, however. In response, Charly recalls her stating, “That would not be happening...” and “I was well knowledgeable enough in Science to be able to figure that out on my own.” Feeling “totally shut down,” she reached out to the writing resource teacher. Rather than admitting Ms. Recluse’s unwillingness to help, she informed Ms. Lit that she was overwhelmed by the need to conference 1:1 with students, yet continue teaching writing per the curriculum calendar. In reminiscing, Charly recognizes, I “made it look more like it was my problem than her problem,” rationalizing the decision by saying, “Refusing to do [her] job” was “something that could quickly go to the principal.” Charly wanted to “keep things peaceful.”

Moreover, she viewed the opportunity to see Ms. Lit teach while she conferenced, as a professional learning opportunity “to help her practice.”

Now with state testing upon them, Charly’s nerves were at an all-time high. “Man, what if we didn’t cover this?” she’d say to herself after combing through the standards. She feared students would notice things the “district had not asked her to deeply cover,” and assessed test questions as “not fair.” Doing on-line research for remediation strategies, she says she came across an “interactive notebook” idea created by another teacher. Charly focused on various standards, having students learn note-taking and doing activities in the notebooks. Her own student experiences as a “studier” led her to encourage the use of the notebook as a study guide for students the weekend before the state reading test. She requested Ms. Recluse tell students, “Maybe if [you’re] watching TV and the commercials pop up, open the folder and take a look, get [yourselves] to calm down and maybe just do a little bit of studying.” Meeting with the partner teachers’ group one last time, Charly begins to “rally” them up for the test, encouraging them to study “a bit” during the weekend using the notebook. In that moment, she recalls how “students began to raise their hands.” “Well, we don’t really understand why you’ve been doing this?” Bewildered, Charly replies, “What do you mean?” The student transparently states:

You’re telling us that you think that we should bring this home over the weekend and...in some extra time...take a glance at it. *She’s* telling us not to do that at all. She’s telling us that we need to spend this entire weekend playing and having as much fun as possible.

The direct contradiction to her instructional strategy was all Charly could bear. Still with “anger” in her voice and the sharp movement of her right hand, she shares, “She knew

what...and why I was doing it...She is not their ELA teacher and *I've* been with those kids all year for ELA and *I* know what's best for them..."

Striving to "calm down" and get to the bottom of the story, she asks another child for confirmation. Yes, it was true...and Charly had to rectify it. In an adamant voice she recalls stating, "I am sorry that she gave you that information. She is not your reading teacher. *I am* your reading teacher. This is the best way that I know how to prepare you..." Students appeared "confused" by the contradiction.

Result. "Infuriated" Charly then proceeded to step out during dismissal time, and for the first time "call her out." In light of the context, she found herself publically in front of colleagues and students. She said, "Listen... Suzie told me that you told them to just play all weekend and to not do any sort of studying." With a startled face, Ms. Recluse denied the accusation, to which her students responded "No, you said that to us." Charly then turned to the students and said, "I just really hope that you understand how important this test could be for your future." While the two teachers "never spoke of" the incident again, Charly considers the problem with Ms. Recluse was never resolved.

Closure. With regret, Charly now questions, "Why did it have to be that way?" She wanted them to "be partners in this together." For a long while after, she assumed responsibility for what occurred. However, now knowing the situation, her writing resource teacher and 4th grade colleagues began to share Ms. Recluse's unspoken history, as this had "occurred before several times." The teachers began to be more "proactive" sharing teaching strategies and reassuring Charly "this was something she walked into" unknowingly.

Ms. Recluse's history and current behavior did in fact precede her. Charly later learned that after observing their interactions, Ms. Lit spoke early on to administration of the need to get

her a “more competent teacher.” She had witnessed Charly “carrying the grade level...the entire year” and assessed it wasn’t right. Moreover, administration had documented Ms. Recluse’s classroom problems per formal “observations,” and decided not to invite her back the following year.

Charly believes journaling about this “would have brought...more discomfort than anything.” Lamentingly, she reflects, maybe she should have taken a “course” to learn to navigate “professional relationships... or maybe I haven’t been given the tools to try to help myself through these types of confrontational issues. I don’t know.” With sadness on her face and a whispering voice, she states “there are... just some problems when it comes to people that you just can’t fix.”

Narrative 3: When Striking Walls.

Abstract and orientation. Guided reading, guided reading, guided reading. It was all Charly heard mentioned at school since she assumed the responsibility of being the only English and Language Arts (ELA) teacher in 5th grade. While she could not recollect ever experiencing guided reading groups as a learner, she recalled reading research about how it was “essential for the growth of good reader.” She notes, “That’s what they say, so great I’m going to go ahead and believe what they’re saying. I just want to do what’s best for my kids... and help those struggling readers.” However, it wasn’t that simple as district guidelines mandated the distribution of a 120-minute ELA block for “shared reading or stamina shared reading,” independent reading, read-alouds, and finally guided reading. Moreover, Charly had a bigger problem...what exactly was guided reading, “supposed to look like?”

As a low achieving school, district personnel walked through her room regularly unannounced. The visitors’ “stone faces” made Charly anxious. “They say that they’re there to

help,” but it just felt like “people coming to check up on you” with their “reading walkthrough checklists” and “writing walkthrough checklists.” Knowing that they could arrive at any time, Charly kept the checklist requirements on her mind, while feeling, “Man, I just want to focus on doing what’s best for my kids.” Moreover, her sense of responsibility consumed her with fears of especially “letting the kids down” by not being the best teacher possible for their needs.

Complication. When week four of the school year arrived, Charly felt it was time she facilitate guided reading, but admits having no true understanding of what it meant to do it. “I mean in my reading courses in college they were great, but there was nothing specific to just guided reading where they taught me how to teach it,” she recalls. The only background she had was from a third grade internship where the collaborating teacher left a third into the semester, forcing Charly to assume the classroom alongside the substitute teacher. There, she saw guided reading modeled for a short period of time, but recalls it was with younger students, and the teacher never quite stopped to explain, “Hey, this is how you do this.” From her minimal experience, she felt strongly that doing it with fifth grade would have to be different. With third grade struggling readers, she could lead them to read “kindergarten level books,” focusing on “letter sounds or blending.” However, “the sense” she had from “dealing with [her] kids” was they needed help with using reading strategies for comprehension, rather than learning “to get their mouth ready to make a certain sound.” Charly could not envision how to use a guided reading group to meet fifth graders’ needs.

Despite not knowing exactly where her information came from, she had also heard “...guided reading had changed.” “Even though I don’t really necessarily know exactly what it’s supposed to look like, I know that the model that I did see is not what it’s supposed to look like

anymore,” she says. Charly was full of vague ideas driving her confusion. With insecurity in her voice she shares:

A guided reading group is supposed to be a homogenous group of kiddos. And they should be able to well...it used to be that you would have like a below level, on level, above level or maybe some levels in between those levels...the kids would be able to move through if they made gains, if they made regressions or what not and that’s kind of the model that I still did not really feel comfortable with but I had at least seen...

Either way, time was running out for excuses, and because Charly admits, “knowing guided reading is important,” and feeling responsible to the students, she began to “pull groups” using the only model she knew to guide decisions.

Since day one, however, the 15-30 minute guided reading time made Charly panicked and “frustrated.” Insinuating felt pressure from external forces other than her students, she recalls “always feeling rushed through what they’re asking me to do.” Charly knew of the “little leveled readers [she] was supposed to use” to supplement the required text. They sat lifelessly near the guided reading table. She would have to “drop something” to get to them, but could not imagine what. Most importantly to her, she says, “I felt like a failure, because I was letting the kids down.” She believed the group time “wasn’t meaningful” and the kids were not “getting anything out of it.” As she tells the story, she transfers her feelings about the situation to her students, imagining “they felt this way as well.” Between the “time crunch” and “feeling [she] wasn’t doing it right,” Charly felt “frustrated” and decided she had had enough.

Action toward resolution. To seek resolution, Charly first approached the new third grade teacher Ms. Raft, and Ms. Care, the fourth grade veteran teacher. Without fear of

judgment, she specified, “I’m pulling students into groups using the old school model,” but shared the need for help to learn the new model. “How are you pulling your groups?” she queried. Their reply left her with little guidance, however. “You’re pulling groups?” they said bewildered. “I don’t know how you’re possibly even finding any time to pull a group whatsoever with a new curriculum.” The teachers shared they were “not even doing it” and “could not possibly have time to do that.” While Charly found comfort in their words, feeling “a little bit better they were having the exact same problem,” she admits thinking the information was not helpful for her “kid’s sake.”

Still full of questions, Charly turned to the reading coach specifically hoping she could “model” a guided reading lesson. She considers, “I could take notes about the questions” asked and strategies focused on. Ms. Taken was a “wonderfully nice lady” with a job that demanded her continuous attendance at district meetings in an effort to link district expectations to schools. Moreover, because she was assigned to Charly’s “small school,” she was also required to travel among several others, serving as a teacher resource and facilitating whole school professional development across them. Charly observed she “wore multiple hats.” As such, she rarely saw her on site and quickly realized that “finding time to...sit with her was very tricky.” Ultimately, while Ms. Taken made herself available to answer brief questions in passing, she was never able to sit with Charly to address her “overall need.”

With inquiry intent, Charly decided to comb through college textbooks and purchase “some books on guided reading.” She found a “million and one books out there,” describing her selections as the “giant” and “kind of intimidating” ones. She recalls feeling motivated to “dive in,” by thinking, “I’m going to find the secret in here somewhere...” Guiding her search was the desire to understand:

What were the kids supposed to be learning? How exactly should [she] be teaching it? What should the job of a facilitator be? How much should [she] be interacting with the kids? How much is on [her] and how much is on them? Are they supposed to be interacting with each other?

What she found was nothing short of “disappointing” to her. The texts largely focused on guided reading methods for primary classrooms. She would have to imagine the methods in a secondary setting to strive to make them “applicable to fifth graders.” This was something she had already found overtly “challenging.”

The uphill battle proved too much for Charly. She admits “after trying all these methods and taking extra time” to address her problem of practice, she “gave up.” With a new commitment, she told herself “ok, this is what I’m doing. This is how I’m going to do guided reading in my class, and that’s it.” She began circulating and scanning the room during reading lessons to identify students needing individualized support with concepts. Kids that raised their hands “like 12 times in five minutes,” struggled to respond to text-based questions or were simply not “producing,” were pulled into a small group. In addition, when circulating the room Charly found it useful to ask concept-specific questions regarding the shared readings, or simply say “talk to me about what you just read,” to assess students’ needs. She asserts, “You just have to know who they are” to identify their needs this way. In the groups, Charly often asked them to “show” the use of specific skills such as deriving their own questions from text, or modeled strategies using “read-alouds” or “think-alouds.”

Groups varied consistently, depending on the “needs of the select few” and the assignment at hand. When meeting one on one with students, Charly shared their need with the class, inviting others experiencing “the same challenge” to join a small group. She felt on a

mission to find “any type of technique she could” to organize the groups. Finding that students became savvy regarding the classmates that seldom struggled, Charly began randomly inviting “high level” students to the small groups as well. After witnessing the interaction, she realized “kids learned from their peers just as much as they did from their teacher.” In fact, she observed “sometimes another child puts something in... ways an adult just couldn’t... they really help scaffold the learning a lot.” While she continuously questioned her methods and if they were accomplishing guided reading group expectations per the district, she found assurance in that students “left her guided reading groups with a better understanding of something.”

Through the second quarter of the year, Charly regularly pulled guided reading groups three days a week using her own methods. However, by late January testing season was in full swing, and Charly met with the writing resource teacher, Ms. Lit, to focus on reviewing for the tests. Together, they analyzed student data from previous assessments to arrange “study groups.” Lessons were designed to respond to students’ specific “deficiencies with certain standards.” Still not quite knowing how guided reading should look, she offers, this time “it wasn’t really guided reading in the sense that one might think guided reading would look like. But it was still a small group of kids that had a hard time with a certain standard.”

One stressful day, district personnel expectantly walked into the classroom. It was the moment she had long dreaded the most. Charly had just directed the groups to collaboratively focus on a task. Approaching her, a woman from the district outwardly asks, “What are you doing this for?” Nervously, Charly looked down at the data in her hand. She’d been using it on that day “to make sure that [she] was not wasting time by going over standards that they had done well with.” Charly proceeded to indicate to the woman, “Only 3% of the class got this right,” and they need help on this standard. Defending instructional decisions to district

personnel was something she had considered could happen, but had never practiced in actuality. She gratefully states, “I felt that at least I had the data to validate the deficiencies that I was trying to work on in my classroom.” The woman proceeded to “hold” her for 10 minutes to give her advice. Still infuriated by her following suggestion, Charly shares:

Instead of doing exactly what it was that I was doing...she wanted me to put charts up to have the kids in my first period class compete with the next period class on whose stamina was the best.

According to Charly, the problem with the idea was, “she didn’t know my kids.” The method would have “caused conflict,” as her students were often “physically aggressive with each other” and Charly did all she could do to keep them civil. Recognizing the woman’s intention may have been the “best,” she says, “If you don’t know my kids for more than 10 minutes you don’t really know what could happen with implementing some of these things.”

Result. Charly’s problem of practice was never quite resolved. To this day, she says “I still don’t know if I’m doing it right.” However, while she recognizes she does “not yet have a solution,” her story represents “the reality” of what she “faced.” Unfortunately, Charly admits that she did not collect data specific to the guided reading methods she applied. Thus, she cannot “confirm nor deny” the effectiveness of what she was doing. Rather, she was led by “a feeling” to approach it as she did throughout her practice.

In retrospect, Charly says, “I should have had a guided reading binder with notes,” as she would have liked “some data” to compare results of her methods to those attained using the “old school model.” Inspired by the thought, she reveals a new query “someone should do a study on,” stating:

... a teacher could, like, for the first half of the year do it the old school way, and keep all this documentation to track growth.... And then in the second half of the year, do it my way to try to document growth.

Charly shares the belief, by investigating the idea she “would feel more validated as to” her selected instructional practices. “I might be even more excited about guided reading, thinking, ‘yeah this is really making a difference.’”

Closure. A week after the school year, Charly finally came upon a guided reading training facilitated by the district. To her disappointment, the summer opportunity “was full.” However, on the morning of our meeting, “someone had withdrawn” and Charly “scooped up” the available seat. While she feels she could have been more “aggressive” to seek trainings earlier, the multitude of first-year teacher trainings left her feeling “crazy.” Now rather, she feels “just thrilled” with hope that it’s going to really help to solve [her] problem, either reinforcing [her] thinking or making [her] think, ‘Oh, wow, I’m totally off base.’” She anticipates gaining ideas from the training and “asking as many questions” as needed. After the training she says, “I will no longer have reason to not know.”

Coda

Examination of Charly’s narratives in this chapter illuminates three key points worth noting. First, Charly’s story of guided reading evidences the incomplete use of the systematic teacher inquiry cycle cited in the literature (Day, 1999; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2010). Researchers offer a shortened inquiry cycle that is often in consequence to the intense activity of the school culture, which prevents teachers from deeply investigating and learning from their circumstance. Charly confirms this when regarding *time* as a barrier to researching her guided reading problem, all while needing to tend to students’ needs

and school/district demands. Charly's situation exemplifies the problem that novice teachers are expected to be learners in their new context. However, schools are most often not designed to provide the time and space necessary for personally meaningful, systematic learning by teachers. District demands and accountability measures communicate there is no room for error, while school demands communicate there is no time for teachers to study, learn and improve their practice.

In addition to lack of time and space for learning in her context, Charly's school was not designed to provide the support necessary to systematically investigate her problems and improve her practice using teacher inquiry. While she identifies problems in all three narratives, and explicitly asks questions in her narrative with Joshua and guided reading, Charly only collects and analyzes data in her narrative with Joshua. I would have liked to see her collect and analyze data throughout all three narratives. However, Charly could not imagine ways to do so with her problem with Ms. Recluse, and only considered collecting/analyzing data to approach her guided reading problem after the school year ended. In my opinion, Charly needed the support of a collaborative community of teachers also investigating their problems of practice, to lead her to think of ways of collecting data and making meaning from her challenges. Moreover, lacking a collaborative community of teacher inquirers also meant that Charly did not have a platform to publically share her findings after investigating her problem with Joshua and engagement. Not seeing her supported to do this is disappointing, given Charly articulates the understanding, "Inquiry is definitely not something that you just keep to yourself." As a teacher inquiring into her own practice, Charly was completely unsupported to investigate and improve on her problems.

As a third key point, it is crucial to note that when working with Joshua, Charly engages the African American student using the text *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, driven by the moral/ethical consideration he might feel motivated to learn from past ancestors in the story, and consider a better future for himself. The use of the text supports researchers' assertion that through the selection of materials and practices in the classroom, teachers position themselves as change agents to address social injustices and inequalities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Zeichner, 1993). However, in accordance with Zeichner (1993), who indicates teacher inquiry in the U.S. often overlooks this critical perspective, I admit that Charly's preparation did not cultivate this stance. For this reason, I also admit feeling surprised by Charly's instructional decision. Dana and Yendol-Hoppey's *Reflective Educator's Guide to Professional Development* (2008) and *Reflective Educator's Guide to Classroom Research* (2009), which I primarily used to facilitate teacher inquiry with preservice teachers, failed to provide opportunities within the process of inquiry to examine "the social conditions of schooling and society," advocated by Zeichner and Gore (1991, p. 123). Lack of attention in preparation to addressing equity as a problem of practice may present Charly with a long-term challenge, given the realities of her current contextual population and classroom challenges. I now believe, when facilitating the cycle of teacher inquiry with preservice teachers, I must provide opportunities for them to examine problems of practice related to social injustice and inequality in their classrooms, and support them to consider their role in addressing such challenges.

In the next chapter, Charly's three stories of problems of practice are conceptually analyzed for insight into this study's research questions (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). The chapter responds to the questions:

1. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
2. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
3. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Chapter Five

Findings in Charly's Narratives

In this chapter, Charly's transcripts were conceptually analyzed with inquiry intention to attain insight into the research questions underlying this study (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). "Inquiry intention" allowed me, as researcher, to analyze Charly's narratives "in the context of other research and theoretical frameworks" seeking "patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes" that provided insight into this study's research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133). This section will respond to the questions:

1. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
2. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
3. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Exploring the Research Questions

Charly's identified problems of practice. Charly shares three distinct stories to identify problems of practice experienced in her first year. In the first narrative, she initially identifies her problem with Joshua's "disrespect" as a classroom management problem, indicative of early stages of development according to Fuller and Bown (1975). It is evident that the student was standing on chairs, and dancing and singing loudly during lessons, in addition to disrespecting Charly and other students by harassing them. "He was taking other's right to learn and even

stealing his own right to learn,” she says. However, she resists identifying the challenge as “classroom management,” reiterating on four separate occasions that the problem was something else. As a rationale, she says, “I really didn’t think that it was my classroom management because it wasn’t everyone. It was just this isolated incidence. It was this particular child.” Rather than accepting the initial perception evidenced by his behavior, as common among novice teachers, Charly speaks of an innate need to “challenge” herself to “really figure out what it was” (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009; Novick & Bassok, 2005).

When having Joshua removed from the classroom was “not working,” Charly suspects “He’s not feeling that want or need or desire to be engaged in whatever it is that we’re doing.” Examining her “frustrated” response to Joshua, administrative evaluations, and students’ reactions to him, she identifies the problem as “student engagement,” believing she is failing to inspire him and others to want to learn. The identified problem reveals that Charly pushes herself to think beyond her own classroom management to focus on instructional methods and teaching students with needs. Per the literature, Charly’s assessment places her beyond beginning teachers and alongside more experienced teachers in terms of the problem she identifies (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Burkman, 2012; Fuller & Bowman, 1975; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000). Moreover, it reflects Charly’s desire to impact learning by focusing on supporting students’ need for engagement (Fuller & Bown, 1975).

While like more experienced teachers Charly questions her “practice” to identify the problem, it is crucial to note in accordance with Fessler’s (1995) work on novices, the driving force to identify the problem is Charly’s desire to gain “administrator” and “student” approval. With administration, she fears beings “seen as that teacher that can’t handle” her students.

Likewise, she believes she “loses something as the authority figure” in the eyes of her students every time she called the office to have Joshua removed. This desire for approval is characteristic to novices.

In the second narrative, Charly identifies a challenge with Ms. Recluse, her only 5th grade partner teacher. As in the first narrative, this problem of practice is initially identified by a desire for acceptance from her peer (Fessler, 1995). She explains:

I was just really hoping that since they were going to be my work partner for the next 180 days that they would want to be really great friends with me. I don't really know anyone that doesn't get along with me.

However, because the grade was “departmentalized” the identified problem evolves into a necessity to collaboratively work to support the 42 learners between them. She observes, “The biggest problem was since we were departmentalized, we shared the same students. So it's important to collaborate with your partner when you're sharing the same kids...” When Charly witnesses the students arrive to Ms. Recluse's classroom without the presence of a teacher, as well as complain they feel unprepared for their Social Studies LDCs (because she decides not to teach the subject), Charly determines to “bear that obstacle as [her] own.” The evolution of the identified problem from Charly's need to work well with a peer to then needing to compensate for the partner teachers' inability to support her students' learning needs, demonstrates a shift in mindset from the characteristic novice focus on self to a more experienced teachers' focus on students and impact on their learning (Fuller & Bown, 1975). Moreover, according to the literature, the identified problem shows Charly identifying problems slightly beyond the more commonly noted novice challenges of managing the classroom, accessing materials, and curriculum planning, to working with others and teaching students (Andrews & Quinn, 2005;

Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Burkman, 2012; Fuller & Bowman, 1975; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000).

The identified problem in the third narrative also demonstrates a developing Charly. Here, attention to self begins to shift to a preoccupation with teaching tasks and instructional techniques, thus appearing beyond novice expectations, yet falling short of the veteran teachers' central focus on impacting student learning (Fuller & Bown, 1975). Charly identifies not knowing what guided reading should "look like" as her problem of practice. Guiding the search for resolution are task-focused questions including:

- What were the kids supposed to be learning?
- How exactly should I be teaching it?
- What should the job of a facilitator be?
- How much should I be interacting with the kids?
- How much is on me, and how much is on them?
- Are they supposed to be interacting with each other?

Consequently, strategies applied to seeking resolution include reflecting on teacher preparation experiences, asking teachers, reading literature, and seeking training.

Most interestingly, however, Charly's motivation for identifying the problem of practice appears to be the desire to impact student learning. She highlights a personal belief in the importance of guided reading by broadly stating "research" indicates "guided reading is essential for the growth of good readers," and she is "sure there's lots of truth to that." This suggests, while her focus is on instructional tasks, Charly is at the very least conscious of the goal to overcome the problem to support student learning, a perspective less visible among novice teachers per the literature (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Fessler, 1995;

Fuller & Bown, 1975; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000). As a second crucial point to note, Charly also explains the need to satisfy district demands according to “walkthrough checklists” and “rubrics.” A need for district approval, is her characteristically novice motivation to learn to facilitate guided reading. This would not be surprising, considering the need for student, administrative, and peer approval she demonstrates with the previous two problems of practice. However, this latter motivation is not presented equal to that of supporting student learning, but rather juxtaposed to it, as she communicates district demands interfere with the greater goal at hand. Charly states:

So it’s like you’ve got this checklist in your mind and the rubric and everything and at the same time you’re just like man, I just want to be doing what’s best for kids. So it’s just time and knowing that there’s always people coming to check up on you.

Table 5.1 summarizes the problems of practice Charly identifies throughout her narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.1

Summary of problems of practice identified in Charly’s narratives

Narrative	Charly
1	Instructional techniques and teaching to students’ special needs: “What is it that I could be doing differently, that could make my kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom?”
2	Working with stakeholders: How to work with Ms. Recluse, her partner teacher
3	Instructional techniques: “What were the kids supposed to be learning [in guided reading groups]? How exactly should I be teaching it? What should the job of a facilitator be?”

In summation, Charly's stories of problems of practice demonstrate that, like novices, she initially identified her first problem of practice as a classroom management problem. However, led by a personal need to continuously analyze and "question" herself, she comes to a deeper understanding of the problem, identifying it as her need to better engage students rather than solely manage and discipline them. Likewise, with Ms. Recluse, continual analysis of the situation leads her to identify the problem beyond its impact on herself, and in terms of its impact on the partner teachers' students. With the last problem of practice, her focus on instructional tasks is less characteristic to an experienced teacher, yet appears motivated by the desire to support student learning.

Finally, at varying moments throughout the three narratives, Charly is influenced to identify the problems according to the need to gain personal approval from external stakeholders as she strives to gain control of the challenges. In the first narrative, the administrator and students' perspectives motivate her to analyze her response to Joshua's behavior, while in the second problem, she is motivated by a desire to be "liked" by her partner teacher. In the third narrative, the desire to do "what is right" per district demands influence how she approaches the problem, though she is motivated to identify and address it, believing in her responsibility to support students' "growth" through guided reading. Such influence from external stakeholders in problem identification is characteristic to novice teachers (Fessler, 1995).

The following sections respond to the research question. "How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?"

Inquiry skills illuminated in Charly's stories. Four skills of inquiry are identified throughout the literature and serve to distinguish the skills illuminated in Charly's stories of approaching problems of practice. These skills include: (1) identifying problems of practice, (2)

asking questions to investigate, (3) collecting and analyzing data, and (4) driving change (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; 2009). As a fifth skill, an inquirer may use each skill as a building block, engaging in the complete systematic inquiry process to respond to their problem of practice.

Skill 1: Identifying problems of practice. In accordance with Hogan and Rabinowitz's (2009) work in problem representation, Charly's problem identification skills are predominantly in the novice teacher's phase of development, whereby she identifies problems according to "surface features" such as grade, context, subject matter and setting (p. 160), but is beginning to demonstrate ability to identify problems according to deeper theoretical structures. It is crucial to note that while this shift is one the researchers encourage teacher educators support novices with, in this study Charly is demonstrating the shift independently of such support. When identifying guided reading facilitation as her challenge, she recognized it a problem because she did not know how it should look in a fifth grade classroom setting, and felt that if the reading coach "modeled a guided reading group," she could learn what to ask students and the "concepts" to focus on. Theoretical rationale for what and why guided reading is significant to her teaching is never queried. Rather, she says, "they say" it's important, "so, great I'm going to go ahead and believe what they're saying." Likewise, with Ms. Recluse, the identified problem was the partner teacher's inability to collaborate and support students' needs given the departmentalized context. Charly never pursued an understanding of the teacher's "background" that characterized the problem in order to better identify it. Instead, she says, "What do I know? I'm the new teacher. Maybe this is normal." With the challenge with Joshua, however, we see a greater depth in Charly's problem identification skills, according to Hogan and Rabinowitz. While she doesn't pursue the underpinnings behind Joshua's misbehavior, analysis allows her to

explore deeper structures in the situation such as her background knowledge in teacher “preparation” compared to her prior responses to the situation, teacher evaluations and even select students’ desire to learn as they “begged” her to make him stop. This analysis is responsible for her ability to identify the challenge as a need to better engage all learners, rather than to simply better manage the context.

While literature identifies novice teachers are unknowledgeable about how their practices cognitively impact students (Fry, 2009; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991), Charly’s actions throughout the narratives indicate otherwise. She determines Joshua and other’s misbehavior is due to her own inability to engage the students in learning, thus leading her to seek strategies for getting their “buy-in.” Of using book studies as an instructional “platform” to engage them, she says, “...After doing *Number the Stars* and seeing how well that engaged their learning, I knew that the right thing for my students was to continue to keep doing book studies.” In the second narrative, Charly’s belief that her practices cognitively impact students also surfaces when she implements an “interactive notebook” strategy before state testing. She tells students, “This is the best way I know how to prepare you on your own free time to get you to do the best that you possibly can on this exam.” Unlike novices in Maloch’s et al. study, she demonstrates great concern over “how...instructional decisions would affect student learning” (p. 442). For instance, not knowing how to facilitate guided reading groups makes her feel she “could be letting the kids down.” She states, “I just want to do what’s best for my kids, and if they’re struggling, those small groups are a really good time to try to help.”

When identifying her problem in narrative one, Charly demonstrates an uncharacteristic ability to intentionally stop from reacting during a moment described as a “train wreck,” to observe Joshua’s misbehavior and the situation from a “different perspective.” She describes the

moment as “trying to get out of [her] own body and take a look at it...” as an “outsider.” She wanted to “understand what was really happening.” Stopping to look at her students and then herself within the challenging situation defies the novice teacher tendency to predominantly limit their view to the behaviors of the teacher, thus completely overlooking the students (Gonzalez & Carter, 1991; Sabers, Cushing & Berlinger, 1991). Charly, similarly, does this when she decides not to confront Ms. Recluse about her behaviors, seeing it from the students’ perspectives and imagining that a confrontation would make Ms. Recluse angry enough to behave in ways that would “impact the kids negatively.” “That’s not fair to them,” she decides. “They don’t need that.” Table 5.2 summarizes Charly’s problem identification levels, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.2

Summary of Charly’s problem identification levels

Inquiry Skill	Charly
Identifying Problems	Novice to advancing development stage based on predominant surface feature “context” in problem identification (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009) Varied expressed <i>awareness</i> of student needs in narratives 2 with Ms. Recluse and 3 with guided reading

Skill 2: Asking questions to identify problems of practice. Despite feeling overwhelmed in the setting, as indicated by the moment Charly acknowledges sending Joshua to the office is “just not working,” she demonstrates her ability to regroup in order to question the situation. This skill is unusual given her context, as research specifies novices overwhelming situation leads them to abandon questions or use them incompletely (Handal & Lauvas, 1987;

Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2010). When working with Joshua, she recalls, “I really did start to question, is it my classroom management? Is it me? What is it that I’m doing wrong...?”

According to Charly, these initial questions led to more questions, as she ultimately asked, “What is it that I could be doing differently that could make my kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom?” Unlike the initial questions, this final question is investigative in nature, implying there are strategies she could try to change her situation.

Likewise, when seeking to understand how guided reading groups were “supposed to look like,” Charly specifically asks:

What were the kids supposed to be learning? How exactly should I be teaching it? What should the job of a facilitator be? How much should I be interacting with the kids? How much is on me, and how much is on them? Are they supposed to be interacting with each other?

While these questions seek responses to surface features, per Hogan and Rabanowitz (2009), they demonstrate that Charly, in fact, knows how to ask questions to investigate her problems of practice. This is crucial given two reasons. First, research indicates despite needing help, novices often don’t know what to ask (Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson 2010). It is evident this is not a challenge for Charly. Second, Stanulis, Fallona and Pearson (2010) found that questions novice teachers asked in their study were hardly investigative, but rather focused discussion on the novice teachers’ daily experiences. Charly’s questions are, in actuality, questions she could and did investigate.

Moreover, while the investigative question, “What is it that I could be doing differently that could make my kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom?” appears to at least partially support Stoughton’s (2007) finding that novices’

questions are primarily fixated on student behavior, Charly would argue otherwise. According to Charly, the question is particularly focused on “engaging students in learning”; a problem she considers resolved when they become “so into book studies,” rather than when they are quietly seated and on task. Similarly, Charly’s investigative questions on learning to facilitate guided reading contradict Stoughton’s (2007) notion as well, since they are not focused on student behavior. Table 5.3 summarizes Charly’s use of investigative questions, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.3

Summary of Charly’s use of investigative questions in narratives

Inquiry Skill	Charly
Asking questions	Investigative question in narrative 1 with Joshua and engagement: “What is it that I could be doing differently, that could make my kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom?”
	Unable to ask investigative questions in narrative 2 with Ms. Recluse
	Investigative questions in narrative 3 with guided reading: “What were the kids supposed to be learning? How exactly should I be teaching it? What should the job of a facilitator be?”

A final critical note that must be observed is Charly’s inability to ask investigative questions to resolve her problem of practice with Ms. Recluse. She admits feeling lost and “alone,” stating, “I felt like there was really nothing that I could do. Most poignant is Charly’s admission, “maybe I haven’t been given the tools to try to help myself through these types of confrontational issues.” And, in fact, I can only observe based on findings, that while asking

investigative questions surfaces as an inquiry skill when Charly navigates challenges with students, strives to impact student learning, and even pursues her own professional development, she is unable to use the skill to navigate the social context of this professional relationship. In accordance with Stanulis, Fallona and Pearson (2010) this is the one instance where Charly does not know what to ask.

Skill 3: Collecting and Analyzing Data. As cited by Ingram, Louis and Schroeder (2004) who found teachers assess their effectiveness on student learning using their affect and behaviors, rather than systematic data collection, Charly determines the *mystery student* strategy effective when feeling Joshua's "outbursts started to be a little bit further in between." Similarly, she uses intuition to determine the effectiveness of the guided reading groups initially pulled, saying "I started trying to pull groups...at first and I just didn't really feel like the kids were getting anything out of it." Thus, she discontinues the practice, believing "it wasn't meaningful." Such derived decisions can be misguided, as Erez and Grant (2004) observe that novices' independent reliance on intuition is most typically incorrect due to lack of experiences in the field. Later in the narrative, Charly identifies students in need of guided reading group instruction by doing a "quick scan" of the room to examine affect and behavior during and after lessons. She chooses students that raise their hands "like 12 times in 5 minutes," should "be writing something and their pencil hasn't even moved," or were not "producing."

Unlike novices, however, Charly combines her perceptions with formal data collection methods as well. She speaks of using data collection to substantiate instructional decisions throughout her narratives; first in her problem with Joshua's engagement, and then with guided reading. She says, "If you keep collecting data and have those resources, you'll be able to defend whatever it is that you're doing and just always go with what's best for kids." For

instance, she asks Ms. Trust to use the district rubric to collect data on her effectiveness “levels” of engagement per the document. The two collaboratively analyze it to determine “what it is [she] was actually doing... and where it was that [she] ultimately wanted to be. In addition, Charly invites “first grade teachers” to informally observe her engagement strategies and “what all the kids were doing” in response, encouraging the teachers to critique her methods and share ideas. Such collaboration is crucial in data collection and analysis, as literature identifies it provides novices support to reconceptualize their thoughts on problematic situations (Ingram, Louis and Schroeder, 2004; Smith, 2004). Reconceptualization is particularly visible when the writing resource teacher, Ms. Lit, supports Charly to analyze student data to organize “study groups” and design lessons to address “deficiencies with certain standards.” The method is one Charly had not independently applied when organizing her guided reading groups.

Moreover, to aid in reconceptualization when challenged by engaging her students, Charly keeps a journal documenting strategies she tries, as well as the ways in which she responds to related challenges. Analyzing the journal entries “a day later or a day that was going really great” allowed her to “see situations from a different lens.” While time constraints make the use of journaling as a data collection and analysis method uncommon among novices, research encourages it, indicating it leads them to observe and make meaning from students’ performance early on, in order to inform and modify their instructional practice (Borko, 2004; Gearheart & Osmundson, 2008; Halai, 2012; Kagan, 1992; Kang, 2007). In accordance, Charly says “it [journaling] just led me to different ways to solve different problems.” “I could have done this” instead of that, she recalls thinking.

Table 5.4 summarizes Charly’s data collection and analysis methods, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.4

Summary of Charly’s data collection and analysis methods

Inquiry Skill	Charly
Data Collection	Begins year with observation of student affect to measure effectiveness in narratives with engagement and guided reading. Shifts to formal data collection in only narrative 1 with engagement, using journal writing and district rubric
Data Analysis	Combination of Independent & Collaborative meaning-making with district mentor, 1 st grade teachers, and writing resource teacher is visible in narratives with engagement and guided reading

Skill 4: Driving Change. When Charly is first confronted by problems of practice with engagement, she is initially overwhelmed, experiencing “survival” as characteristic to novice teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). After determining the ineffectiveness of her chosen survival strategy to remove Joshua, Charly does something uncharacteristic to novices. She links practice to theory by thinking about “the things I [she] was doing” and her “preparation for teaching.” She admits:

I didn’t go ahead and write up a giant brief...but the strategies that I used were that of teacher inquiry; and I use them because that’s all I knew how to solve problems. That’s all I knew, that’s what I was taught in college and that’s all I really knew.

The connection encouraged her to explore diversified instructional practices for driving change; a finding also cited by Halai (2012) and Kang (2007) who studied teachers using teacher inquiry. The challenge is, however, like most novices throughout the literature, Charly is very

uncomfortable with applying change that drives her away from curriculum guidelines; even when she believes using a “different” instructional platform such as “book studies” for instance, could have ignited student engagement and solved her problem (Berliner, 1988; Fry, 2009; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). She admits, “I just want to try to make everyone happy and try to keep the job, doing what I’m supposed to be doing.” Thus, in striving to drive change using “all things that didn’t take too much away from the curriculum,” she selects “techniques” such as *the mystery student*, ensuring students’ complement each other to encourage “positive” behavior, and a learned CHAMPS strategy of giving students “animal crackers” and “skittles” in exchange for working. The techniques do not drive change towards engagement, but rather address the challenge Charly says is not her own...classroom management.

Consequently, continuous use of strategies misaligned to her query leave Charly feeling weary and stating, “I’ve done X, Y and Z, and I really feel like I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing. I’m trying different methods. I’m looking different things up.” However, it wasn’t until after testing when she becomes determined to implement book studies against her own fears, that she sees “big” changes in Joshua and his classmates’ engagement. This leads to the conclusion that like novices, who fear straying from curriculum to drive change, Charly was led to an incorrect course of action for responding to her ‘engagement’ problem throughout the greater portion of her first year narrative (Berliner, 1988; Fry, 2009; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991).

Interestingly, when addressing her challenge with guided reading, Charly defies research that points to novices’ inability to drive change given the natural and dynamic instructional setting that requires knowledge of how students respond to alternative instructional strategies

(Hall & Smith, 2006). In Charly's room, groups varied consistently, depending on the "needs of the select few" and the assignment at hand. She decides to pull small groups by circulating and scanning the room to identify students needing individualized support, per their cues. While several cues, as discussed above, are unreliable based on observation of behavior and affect, she also chooses to ask concept-specific questions and probe regarding shared readings to assess students' needs. This is unusual, given literature stating that despite cues requiring instructional adaptation, novices focus predominantly on material coverage and classroom control (Berliner, 1988; Fry, 2009; Westerman, 1991). Westerman (1991) offers that with limited awareness of students, content and instructional strategy, novice teachers most often fail to respond effectively. The novice, however, agrees with this sentiment, asserting that to identify their needs as she did, "You just have to know who they are." Additional change applied as she learned to navigate guided reading groups, including inviting others with similar needs to join a small group, and randomly inviting "high level" students to the small groups so that peers could "scaffold the learning."

Finally, with Ms. Recluse, Charly drove change as well. As students complained of their teacher arriving late and not teaching social studies, Charly assumed responsibility for the students' needs, compensating for Ms. Recluse's deficiencies. She explains:

I just kind of decided to...make that just part of my daily job. You know, just kind of making sure that in the morning time, her homeroom knew exactly where they should be sitting and what they should be doing when she doesn't show up on time.

Moreover, despite being Ms. Recluse's obligation, Charly began to use her students' Social Studies texts to "build their background knowledge," thus academically helping to "pick up any

sort of slack for any of the kids that might not have gotten something whenever” she could step in. Because the students struggled with the Social Studies LDC, she observed, “That group of kids was so far disadvantaged...” Charly felt empowered to drive change when in fact it wasn’t her direct responsibility. This is significant to note, as Esposito and Smith (2006) found that such empowerment is in consequence to experience solving problems using teacher inquiry.

Table 5.5 summarizes Charly’s ability to drive change across narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.5

Summary of Charly’s ability to drive change across narratives

Inquiry Skill	Charly
Driving change	<p data-bbox="597 953 1339 1024">Drives change in narrative 1 with Joshua, by applying Champs and Kagan strategies, as well as book studies.</p> <p data-bbox="597 1066 1339 1203">Drives change in narrative 2 with Ms. Recluse, by secretly teaching the partner teacher’s students social studies, and preparing students with a plan for when their teacher arrived late to school.</p> <p data-bbox="597 1245 1339 1350">Drives change in narrative 3 with guided reading, by pulling small groups based on needs’ assessed when scanning the room during an assignment.</p>
<p data-bbox="203 1360 1339 1461">* Note: In her narrative of engagement, Charly feels responsible to adhere to curriculum guidelines until after state testing, thus driving change with minimal improvement in problem of practice.</p>	

Inquiry dispositions illuminated in Charly’s stories. The literature identifies three dispositions of inquiry that serve as a lens to distinguish the dispositions illuminated in Charly’s stories of approaching problems of practice. These include: (1) reflective dispositions, (2) critical learning dispositions, and (3) emotional intelligence dispositions (Chan & Elliot, 2004;

Day, 1999; Deal & White, 2009; Ghanizadh & Moafian, 2011; Goleman, 2001; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Schön, 1983; Smith, 2004; Smith, 2012; Taylor, 2000; Tait, 2008).

Disposition 1: Reflective dispositions. As characteristic to novice teachers, throughout each of Charly's narratives, "surface reflection" is most visible early in the school year and as she "tries" new ideas, finding herself consumed with logistical questions regarding "what to do, when to do it, and how to do it" (Handal & Lauvas, 1987, p. 31). In her narrative of engagement, Charly calls herself initially "reactive" to Joshua, focusing on what to do to "make him stop," rather than striving to understand practical or theoretical considerations for his behavior. Moreover, as characteristic to novices, responses to him are based on unfounded assumptions rather than reflection; for instance, involving the assistant principal under the belief Joshua "probably needs a male role model" (Chan & Elliot, 2004; Deal & White, 2009; Schön, 1983; 1987). However, a shift becomes visible in the story when Charly describes an "out of body experience" amid Joshua's outburst, leading her to reflect on the situation to gain a "different perspective." She begins to question the group's reactions, asking herself, "how engaged could they possibly be if they're thinking that whatever type of nonsense he is doing is funny?" and "What is it that I could be doing differently that could make my kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom?" This purposeful thinking taps into a deeper level of reflection according to Handal and Lauvas (1987), and is indicative of Schön's (1987) perspective that reflection must be a "conscious" mindset, whereby practitioners ask themselves "What is this?" and "How have I been thinking about it?" thus, questioning themselves to better understand the problem (pp. 28-29).

Likewise, surface reflection is seen when Charly initially journals about the problem, "making different lists" of strategies to try. The reflection deepens as she uses the journal to

write about her “tough days” and rereads past entries to question her “frustrated” reactions, as well as ways she “could have done” things differently. It appears her lists of ideas evolve into strategies with purpose. For instance, when considering the book study on *Number the Stars*, Charly contemplates a practical reason for the decision stating, “this book opens the door to go across the curriculum and talk about geography, and history. I have so many places I can go with this.” Similarly, when deciding to use food to motivate students to work, she comes to the realization that due to their daily “impoverished situation,” students “would want to do” anything for it. Interestingly though, while this instructional decision leads her to reflect on such practical considerations, Charly is never led to deeper levels of reflection by questioning the ethical considerations underlying it (Handal & Lauvas, 1987). She does, however, intentionally reflect on the ethical use of the book *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, worrying that using the text would introduce racial discrimination and vocabulary students might feel is “ok... to use.”

When navigating her problem of practice with Ms. Recluse, reflection across Handal and Lauvas’ (1987) levels is apparent, though unlike the first narrative, Charly’s reflection is not written in a journal. While she doesn’t clarify why, she shares that journaling would have brought her “more discomfort than anything.” Recalling her reflective moments, she discusses the initial thought that the “work partner” relationship would ensure collaboration and “professional growth.” She imagined, “I might do something that works really well that she might want to try, or she might do something that works really well that I might want to try.” Learning Ms. Recluse did not “have the same viewpoints,” Charly reflects on practical considerations for why the collaborative relationship was necessary, including their “departmentalized” arrangement required “sharing the same kids.” Moreover, she offers a moral rationale for her non-confrontational approach, stating, “I just didn’t want any sort of negativity

coming into that classroom because the kids feel that.” When responding to the situation, Handal and Lauvas’ (1987) deeper level of ethical reflection surfaces, as she decides to support the students through their “disadvantage,” and keeps her actions quiet, believing it “isn’t right” for the principal to learn from her that Ms. Recluse was “refusing to do her job.” (Table 5.6 summarizes Charly’s levels of reflection throughout narratives, as discussed in this section.)

Table 5.6

Summary of Charly’s levels of reflection throughout narratives

Inquiry Disposition	Charly
Reflection	Reflection is evident across narratives (Schön, 1987)
	Shifts from surface reflection to deeper reflection with theoretical, moral or ethical considerations present in narratives 1 with engagement and 2 with Ms. Recluse (Handal and Lauvas, 1987)
	Only surface reflection is visible throughout narrative 3 with guided reading

In her guided reading narrative, Charly’s reflection is predominantly surface reflection, as the narrative is consistently guided by the logistical query of what guided reading should “look like.” Turning to professional colleagues, she asks, “How are you finding time to do this? How are you pulling your groups?” She never explores theoretical considerations for the practice except when saying, “research out there...says...guided reading is essential for the growth of good readers.” Uncharacteristically (to novices), Charly does not abandon reflection altogether despite the “time” constraints, lack of knowledge for the practice of guided reading, and awareness that other teachers are not doing it (Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Korthagen & Wubbels,

1995). The moral consideration that she is not going to “let the kids down” leads Charly to pull groups, reflecting on students’ individual needs to arrange them daily.

Disposition 2: Critical learning dispositions. Charly embraces a critical learning attitude in practice, articulating the personal belief it “helps in your career to make you over the top.” In accordance with Brookfield’s (1987) reflective skepticism, she believes education is all about “trying to see different things from a different perspective.” In the context of Joshua’s outburst, Charly asserts personal involvement made it “hard to see what was really going on.” To critically learn from the situation, she positioned herself as the “spectator of the show.” Moreover, in accordance with Smith (2004), the novice reflects and questions what she sees to learn from it; a practice made evident when she formulates her engagement query and investigates it.

While novices’ reflection is most often guided by unconscious beliefs and intuition about teaching rather than critically learning from problems, Charly refuses to be guided by her previous understanding of guided reading (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009; Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007). In her reflection, she confronts her beliefs through self-questioning, discrediting them and the experiences with guided reading that they are founded on. She believes, rather, the experiences are not applicable and even inaccurate. Acknowledging that despite having seen guided reading in the third grade classroom, she is uncertain of how it should look when supporting fifth graders to develop comprehension skills. Charly notes, “some of the third graders I had seen partake in a guided reading group...were struggling to read kindergarten level books,” but “the biggest concern for me in fifth grade was really more comprehension related.” Moreover she says, “Even though I don’t really necessarily know exactly what it’s supposed to look like, I know that the model that I did see is not what it’s

supposed to look like anymore.” In contrast to novices, Charly’s independent confrontation of her beliefs propels an “on-going and recursive” mission to use teacher inquiry to learn about the problem (Smith, 2004, p. 531). She “dives” into exploring sources including books, teacher preparation notes, and professional colleagues, desperately seeking insight to inform practice. Likewise, when supporting Ms. Recluse’s students to “build their background knowledge” in Social Studies, she admits questioning her teaching methods, not knowing if she was doing it the “right way,” but doing her best given the district resources and curriculum guidelines.

Throughout the narratives, Charly demonstrates the “attitude of openness and acceptance that learning from inquiry” is continuous; an attitude Smith (2004) calls an “inquiry stance” (p. 526). This is seen when she questions her engagement practices, seeking strategies and reading district rubric descriptions to improve engagement levels, as well as when she asks Ms. Trust to use the rubric to continually assess student engagement as she applies the strategies. With guided reading, the inquiry stance is visible when she “imagines and explores alternative” methods for pulling groups; a characteristic Brookfield (1987) says is indicative of critical thinking also (as cited in Day, pp. 7-9). Interestingly, however, in this circumstance Charly admits she “didn’t keep explicit notes about how well” her method for pulling groups worked, but rather relied on “a feeling.” In retrospect, she says, “I should have had a guided reading binder with notes,” as she would now like to “see some data” on how it compares to the “old school model.” In discussion, she outlines a possible teacher inquiry study, stating:

... a teacher could like, for the first half of the year, do it the old school way and keep all this documentation to track growth....
And then in the second half of the year, do it my way to try to document growth.

Charly believes, by investigating the query, she “would feel more validated as to” her selected instructional practices. “I might be even more excited about guided reading, thinking, ‘yeah, this is really making a difference.’”

On two occasions, Charly demonstrates an ability to connect reflection to self-awareness and professional development strategies, for the purpose of addressing social change in her context, as advocated by Taylor and Petit (2007). When she reads *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* with students, she recalls thinking:

Joshua is an African-American student, and I had hopes maybe something was going to happen and he’s going to find some type of connection that he is of the same race as the people in this novel; and be able to start thinking about his past before he was even alive, and what that means for him now and his future.

Similarly, when another student selects to use derogatory vocabulary from the novel towards peers, she uses reflection to question her practice and connect it to a need for social change, stating:

I had to start thinking to myself, ‘Man, am I going to keep going on with this book or not? I don’t want anyone to feel hurt.... I don’t want this to be something that’s bringing bad things up from the past to try to bring them into the present. I want us to learn from it, to keep it from happening again.’

Finally, “critical analysis” of Charly’s own practice is most evident in a short story she shares of scoring “progressing on a classroom environment” domain, during a formal “Friday afternoon” observation (Smith, 2004, p. 526). In her usual manner, Charly combs through the

observer's notes for an "explanation" of "why" she received the rating. However, "nothing" on the document provided insight. Feeling anxious, she recalls thinking, "I didn't want my kids to have a 'progressing' classroom environment. They needed the best I could give them."

Knowing Saturday school would be held the next day, Charly was up early at the school door waiting to be "let into that building." Without "any sort of direction as to why" her classroom environment was 'progressing,' she spends the next "three to four hours... moving things around, trying different sitting arrangements" and analyzing it for the best learning environment. Walking into the classroom, a suspicious assistant principal (not responsible for the rating) questions her, remarking, "I've had you pegged since the first day of school." Using a baseball analogy, he says:

You're the type of person that goes up to bat five times and hits four home runs out of five times...And then if you get thrown out or strike out, that's all you're going to think about. You're not even going to recognize the fact that you hit four home runs. All you're going to think about is why you got out that one time and how to prevent it from happening again.

And indeed he was right, as Charly proves highly critical of her own practice.

Table 5.7 summarizes the visibility of Charly's critical learning disposition throughout her narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.7

Summary of Charly’s critical learning disposition in narratives

Inquiry Disposition	Charly
Critical Learning	Reflection is primarily guided by critical learning throughout narratives with engagement and guided reading.
	Critical learning not apparent in narrative 2 with Ms. Recluse (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007).

Disposition 3: Emotional intelligence dispositions. Despite a warning by the principal to “learn to rely” on herself, a partner she felt “worked better on her own,” and a “small school” which minimized the reading coach’s availability as she wore “multiple hats,” Charly demonstrates emotional intelligence by intentionally seeking professional support from stakeholders, thus willingly exposing her problems of practice in plain sight (Day, 1999; Fry, 2009; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1999; Tait, 2008). Tait (2008) explains, emotional intelligent individuals acknowledge need for personal improvement, and openly reveal their challenges to others in order to collaborate and learn from them. This unusual practice for a novice is seen particularly in her challenges with engagement and guided reading group facilitation. In her first story, she invites the first grade teachers to observe Joshua’s engagement as she teaches, and remains with them afterschool to learn conscious discipline strategies. In addition, she initiates collaboration with Ms. Trust by saying, “I really want to focus on engaging students in learning...so that I could improve my practice...” Likewise, when facilitating guided reading, she turns to the 3rd and 4th grade teachers, openly revealing she was “pulling students into groups using the old school model” but wanted to learn the new model. As a rationale for reaching out,

she articulates, “Inquiry is definitely not something that you just keep to yourself. You definitely are supposed to be facilitating conversation with others.”

Moreover, unlike novices who attribute challenges to external uncontrollable forces such as students’ personal life or lack of motivation, Charly looks to herself throughout all three narratives (Day, 1999; Fry, 2009). Calling Joshua’s outbursts a problem of ‘engagement,’ empowered her to look at what she was doing to improve the situation. With guided reading, she sought to improve the ways she supported “struggling” readers; but because she didn’t attain resolution by the end of the year, she maintains, “man, maybe if I had done write ups... maybe if I had reflected a little bit more instead of being frustrated, maybe it would have turned out differently.” Similarly, turned away by Ms. Recluse as she asked for science LDC grading support, Charly told Ms. Lit she feared falling behind on the writing “calendar” as she conferenced one on one with each of the 42 students. In doing so, she admits, “I made it more look like it was my problem than her [Ms. Recluse’s] problem.” Charly assumed personal responsibility for each of the partner teacher’s deficiencies, even embracing the “responsibility” to support her learners in social studies.

Despite the anger and “confusion” Charly felt towards Ms. Recluse’s actions, it appears consistently that she demonstrates emotional intelligence throughout the majority of the year in the way she chooses to manage her “feelings, handle stress [and] persist in the face of difficulty...” (Tait, 2008, p. 60). She rises with grace to each challenge presented, often including managing 42 students alone. However, upon reflection, the novice decides to keep the situation “peaceful,” using the belief that Ms. Recluse should not be confronted, but rather “protected” from “getting in trouble” for refusing to do her job. Guiding reflection using this belief prevents the use of her critical learning disposition, failing to lead Charly to confront the

problem to learn from it (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007). In the end, it is evident the decision gets the best of Charly, whom in anger publically “calls her [Ms. Recluse] out.” The occurrence illustrates that while Charly demonstrates emotional intelligence throughout her narratives, lack of a critical learning disposition to support the emotional intelligence in this circumstance makes her unable to self-regulate it. The finding illustrates the multi-directional symbiotic relationship between reflection, emotional intelligence, and critical learning (See Figure 5.1). Thus, while literature indicates critical learning and emotional intelligence must support reflection, reflection and critical learning, must too, support emotional intelligence (Day, 1999; Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011; Goleman, 2001; Kramarski & Michalsky, 2009; Tait, 2008; Tricarico & Yendol-Hoppey, 2012).

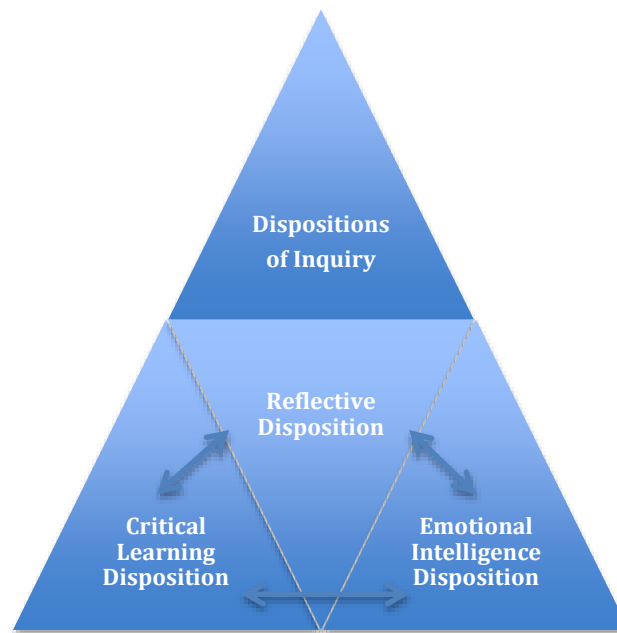


Figure 5.1: Dispositions of inquiry

Table 5.8 summarizes the visibility of Charly’s emotional intelligence throughout narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.8

Summary of Charly’s emotional intelligence across narratives

Inquiry Disposition	Charly
Emotional Intelligence	Exhibits emotional intelligence across narratives by rising to challenges. * Seeks support from stakeholders and regulates emotions consistently throughout in narratives 1 with engagement and 3 with guided reading (Tait, 2008)
	Openly reveals professional needs in narrative 1 and narrative 3 (Tait, 2008).
	Seeks resources including colleagues and books

*Note: Emotional intelligence is threatened by inability to critically learn from the situation over concealing its reality in narrative 2 with Ms. Recluse.

Barriers and facilitators to resolving problems of practice. For this section, Charly’s transcripts were conceptually analyzed with inquiry intention to explore and respond to the research question how do the teachers’ first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them? (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). “Inquiry intention” allowed me, as researcher, to read the “field texts in the context of other research and theoretical frameworks” seeking “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes” that provided insight into this study’s research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133).

Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) ecological model of human development serves as a lens to examine novice teachers’ stories for the facilitators and barriers to solving problems of practice in their first year. Among the most influential factors on teachers, the researcher identifies family members, peers, school and even church and health services. In a second subsystem, influencing

factors may be the interaction between two primary sources, such as home and school, while in the third, factors affecting novices may be indirect, such as stress from education policies impacting the school and administrator's ability to offer professional development to teachers. In the fourth subsystem, beliefs and values may affect a teacher, while in the final subsystem, time may serve as a facilitator or barrier to resolving challenges.

Barriers to resolving problems of practice. Throughout all three narratives, Bronfenbrenner's (1974) fourth subsystem influence, overarching beliefs and values, surfaces as Charly's primary barrier to resolving problems of practice. Interestingly, while novices are often not independently aware of the ways this interferes with their actions, Charly is both cognizant and open to discussing it (Abell, Bryan & Anderson, 1998; Shulman, 1986; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1999). For instance, she calls the selection of strategies for overcoming the 'engagement' problem of practice "tricky," and admits, "I'm always afraid of doing the wrong thing, and that's a barrier that I've had with this life." Despite feeling that she knows "what's best for kids," a desire for the "bosses'" approval prevents her from using the ideas and strategies she believes in. Charly feels unable to say, "I'm just going to go ahead and do that" but rather, feels the need to seek "permission" to act freely. It's "a need to please too many people" she recognizes, and "I need to just understand that whatever I'm doing is what's best for kids, and that's that."

Charly states the "biggest barrier" in resolving her challenge with Ms. Recluse was her own "non-confrontational" nature. Despite reflecting on potential ways she could have approached her during meetings, Charly maintains, it required "confrontation" and so "I just would've continued to keep doing what I was doing." In addition, she considers the potential second subsystem interaction between an "upset" partner teacher and "the kids" a barrier,

imagining that “feelings” would be hurt and she “was always just trying to protect everyone’s feelings.” With meekness in her voice, she says, “it’s a really tricky job... to even protect your own, and then protect the feelings of all of your kids and then your colleagues...I don’t know.”

As an additional barrier, Charly considers her teacher preparation, believing:

Everyone should take a course or something about...I don’t know... talking through professional relationships or something. Maybe I haven’t been given the tools to try to help myself through these types of confrontational issues.

This observation is critical, given DeAngelis, Wall and Che’s (2013) finding that novices most satisfied with their preparation rise to challenges, rather than selecting to “leave teaching after their first year...” (p. 349). According to Charly, the “tools” referenced are “simple conversational tools” to “stand up for what [she] knows is right.” While not specifying how or why, she believes such tools are “different” than using the “inquiry based strategies” to work with students. “When it’s working with another adult...It’s just...” different.

Charly’s communicated barriers to resolving her problem of practice with guided reading in the third narrative are most complex of all. Personal, overarching beliefs and values remind her continuously, “I just want to be doing what’s best for kids.” However, as Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) second subsystem influence, this belief interacts with “district demands” and expectations, causing Charly internal conflict. She says:

We have these checklists that say ‘Elementary Reading Walkthrough Checklist’ and ‘Elementary Writing Walkthrough Checklist,’ and these things that the district people are looking for that you’re doing in your room. So it’s like you’ve got this checklist in your mind and the rubric and everything and at the same time you’re just like man, I just want to be doing what’s best for kids.

Moreover, she states, they “come in to check up on you” under the pretense that “they’re there to help.” However, their stoic faces and moving pens reinforce Charly’s belief, “it just doesn’t seem like help.” Rather, she feels the need to be ready to “defend” her instructional decisions at any given moment.

In addition, Charly adds Bronfenbrenner’s fifth subsystem, influence of “time,” to her list of barriers for resolving this problem. One hundred and twenty minutes for shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, and read-alouds is simply not enough, given particularly the “significantly more difficult” readings introduced in the second quarter of the year. Charly admits sometimes the “kids... weren’t really [developmentally] ready.” Likewise, she felt the “time crunch” left her feeling unprepared, as she read through the “million in one different books” she found in the bookstore to learn about her challenge. Accordingly, she says:

The problem was you’ve already got a problem right, and you’re already trying to spend all this time fixing this problem and trying all these different methods and taking extra time to be fixing this problem. Sometimes reading these books and not finding the answers in them is just taking out more time...and then trying to speak to different teachers in the school...

In addition, time challenged Charly’s ability to participate in guided reading training, as required first year professional development took precedence. Now, signed up for a four-hour summer training, she anticipates it will offer her the “solution” she has long awaited.

Table 5.9 summarizes the barriers Charly identifies throughout her narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.9

Summary of Charly’s barriers illuminated throughout narratives

Narrative	Charly’s Barriers
1	Overarching belief and value: Fear of non-compliance perception by administration
2	Overarching belief and value: Non-confrontational
3	Considers lack of “conversational tools” not provided in teacher preparation Interaction between compliance beliefs and district demands (Bronfenbrenner, 1974)
	Time

Facilitators to resolving problems of practice. In the first narrative Charly alludes to teacher preparation as the facilitator for resolving her problem of practice with engagement, calling it “my own observation tools” that allowed for “looking at what it was I was struggling with as a teacher.” She knew how to use the “district rubrics” and checklists to assess her “level of engagement,” and modify practices to improve her impact on student learning. As this first subsystem influence directly facilitated her ability to seek resolution, the interaction between the two factors “observation tools” and “peers” in the workplace located in Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) second subsystem, did as well. Charly recalls “learning that even veteran teachers were still having trouble with that exact domain” on the observation rubric, making her “feel a little bit better” about needing to improve, and thus encouraging her.

Within her workplace, Charly cites “people,” including the writing resource teacher and “the ladies across the hall,” as the facilitators to helping her through the challenge with Ms. Recluse. Of this first subsystem influence, she says “I slowly let people figure out what was

going on,” and then allowed “myself to open up a little bit about it” after Ms. Recluse contradicted her instructional decision to encourage student studying for ELA state tests. In reality, because Charly did not reach out to people to help facilitate the problem as it was occurring, their insight rather served primarily to comfort her *after* experiencing it. For instance, when feeling as though she “must have done something wrong” to bring this on herself, Charly recalls Ms. Focus and Ms. Care’s words, “This is not anything that you have created. This is something that you have walked into.” Likewise, Ms. Lit comforted Charly saying, “I see how hard you are working in here every single day. I don’t want you to think that you have done anything in this situation. Every teacher that has been her partner has had the same problem.”

In her third narrative, Charly offers one critical facilitator to providing insight into her problem of practice with guided reading; the books and teaching resources she explores in the story. What is most interesting about this first level subsystem influence is her open acknowledgement “they didn’t necessarily help” her resolve the problem. However, Charly regards them a facilitator, noting, “Reading” them “reinforced that I didn’t really understand what it was that I was supposed to be doing.” While she could simply resort to the “excuse” that it was a “school” challenge everyone was facing, she views the resources as the support needed to understand “there was a deficiency” in need of her remediation. The perception intriguingly suggests that Charly independently seeks resources that lead to further questioning her thinking, thus supporting her to reconceptualize it and consider alternative perspectives, rather than solely confirming her chosen methods (Erez & Grant, 2004; Stoughton, 2007). In confirmation, Charly says with a warm smile, “I figure there’s always something or someone that knows more than me or has been through more than I have, and I need to get some piece of advice to learn.”

Table 5.10 summarizes the facilitators Charly identifies throughout her narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 5.10

Summary of Charly’s facilitators illuminated in narratives

Narrative	Charly’s Facilitators
1	<p>“Observation tools” acquired in teacher preparation</p> <p>Interaction between “observation tools” and Ms. Trust in the workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).</p>
2	Fourth grade peers in the workplace*
3	Books and teaching resources*

*Note 1: Facilitator in narrative 2 was accessed to comfort her *after* experiencing problem, rather than to support seeking resolution.

*Note 2: Facilitator in narrative 3 did not aid in problem resolution, rather it made participant aware “there was a deficiency” in need of remediation

In the next chapter, Rachel’s elementary school context is described in detail, followed by three narratives describing the problems of practice she experienced in her first year. The narratives are entitled, (1) Rachel’s 1st Student Diagnosed with ODD; (2) Teaching Exceptional Student Education (ESE); and (3) Reaching from Beyond the Gang.

Chapter Six

Findings

Rachel's Narratives

As far as Rachel could tell, the “giant yellow bookcase” sat between her classroom door and desk since the beginning of time. It blocked visibility of those entering and exiting her classroom. While aware school rules dictated she “could not move furniture,” the cabinet in the classroom entrance could not be ignored. “I just couldn’t have that yellow thing there anymore,” she admits; and to her surprise, administration couldn’t either. “Oh, thank God. We hate that thing there, but no one’s ever moved it,” they said. Jumping at the chance to help, both the principal and assistant principal “helped her lift it,” ripping up tiles and destroying the predictable floor pattern... yet they were ever so grateful for the long overdue change.

This is the story of Rachel Jane and her first year in the classroom. It is marked by her experiences with unpredictable change, growth, and much support. The following section describes the context of her school and classroom, providing a holistic picture from which to comprehend three independent stories that tell of the problems of practice she identifies in her first year. The questions guiding this study are:

1. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
2. How do the teachers’ first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
3. How do the teachers’ first-year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Following the description of Rachel's school and classroom context, a story of her first identified problem of practice is shared. In the story, Rachel is challenged by Doug's behavior, as the student with an ill mother who is also diagnosed with Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), cusses at her and "shuts down during classwork." Rachel wonders how "to connect with a student with ODD whose mother was on her deathbed." The story describes several strategies she applies to approach the problem of practice, including using gentle teaching, assigning Doug jobs, and appealing to his interest in art, as well as reading the book, *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*. Like the accounts in Chapter Four, this narrative is organized according to Labov's (1972) narrative elements. Further, the events of the narrative are chronologically arranged to represent the way in which Rachel experienced the described events (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000).

Contextual Background

Rachel felt "lucky" to return to her internship placement for her first year teaching. While she was a "new teacher" among only five of 42 teachers, she was a familiar face in the school. She described her administrators as "positive, supportive, helpful and just great," as they "backed up" her ideas and encouraged anything she wanted to try. She often invited them to watch her teach informally for "feedback." They would leave her a list of "pros and cons" from which she could later decide, "this is what I can do differently." Rachel felt a sense of "respect" during faculty meetings, where she could "give an opinion and they would listen." However, to her 4th grade team, she was, and would, always feel a need to "seem super professional" and "prove" herself.

Rachel's last college internship had been in 4th grade as well. However, she was joining a team of three veterans she described as "intimidating" and even "scary." The Science teacher,

Ms. Neuron, had moved from 3rd grade, while Ms. Strict had just recently arrived from Middle School. Rachel's students would go to Ms. Strict, the "very serious" Math teacher, daily to learn Math, while Ms. Strict's students would learn Reading and Writing with Rachel. Likewise, Rachel's students switched classes daily to attend Ms. Neuron's Science class. Ms. Text served as a second English and Language Arts (ELA) teacher in 4th grade, having taught for 15 years. She was "nice, helpful but very scattered" and joked of her excitement "to have a Type A" personality like Rachel in the group, as she was in need of organizational help. Rachel feared the need to help Ms. Text, as she felt she "didn't know what to do" for herself.

Besides a shared grade level classroom management procedure, Rachel's classroom ran unlike any other in her grade level. All 4th grade students received a sheet of paper weekly, referenced as a "DOJO," listing days of the week and grade level expectations. They carried the "DOJO" throughout the day and a tally mark was placed next to any expectations not met. "The record sheet was signed by parents over the weekend and returned each Monday for a new one." However, multiple flaws including getting "ripped, thrown away, and lost" characterized the management system. Most importantly, Rachel knew students did not fear receiving a tally, and thus the system was not allowing her to correct misbehaviors. Reaching out to the school's "teacher leader" Ms. Joy, Rachel borrowed an iPod camera with an attached microphone, secretly positioning it to capture all students. She intently watched videos of her lessons to "catch behaviors." She found misbehaviors predominantly occurred during transitional moments, as she was giving directions without visuals for students to recall them. The finding led her to create a fill-in chart for systematically listing procedures for students to follow. Ideas such as these were not welcomed by her teammates, as they would ask "is this what they teach you in college these days?" Among her colleagues, Ms. Strict, the Math teacher, regularly

complained to administration that leaving on time meant Rachel wasn't doing her job well as a first-year teacher. Likewise, Ms. Neuron publically argued that Rachel should "not expect much" from "these" students as she had them the previous year and did not write for her... but "perhaps," she would say, "they could be motivated by" her "youth" and "looks." Rachel knew she had a lot to prove in their eyes.

Classrooms were departmentalized, but Rachel described students in all classes she saw daily as "my students." In all, she taught 47 "rambunctious" children. Her homeroom class was comprised of 23 students with 16 boys and 7 girls. However "goofy, fun, and excited to learn" they were, they were also particularly "needy" of Rachel's energy and dedication to keep them focused. The second group had 12 boys and 12 girls, with three of the girls labeled "gifted." While they were predominantly "quiet and serious," she could rely on their ongoing "drama."

Amongst Rachel's two groups, six students qualified for an Exceptional Student Education (ESE). While this was certainly more than the "one ESE student" she'd been told in college she "might get," it was not unusual for her school, which ranks as a Title I school, among the lowest performing schools in the state. The school largely serves children of migrant workers, fluctuating in attendance between 649 and 800 students, depending on the crop season and local employment opportunities. With 89% of the student population of Hispanic and Latino decent, the most common languages spoken include Spanish, the Mayan language "Mam," and "Mixteco" from Mexico; none of which Rachel speaks.

Rachel excitedly described her classroom as "open" and "inviting," characterized by shifting desks where children moved into "groups, pilot/co-pilot, u-shapes, or even island-shaped" arrangements at any given time. The guided reading table near the classroom entrance allowed visitors to "see learning going on all the time," while her "student spot" in the back of

the room was filled with “pencils, post-it notes, a binder with news, sharpener and a drop box” for students to secretly leave her notes. To the left of the entrance, her desk was attached to two student desks, ensuring available space for children to work one-on-one with her, or visitors to comfortably sit. This was where she kept her “computer” and any “data” so that it was accessible when working with students. In addition, she took pride in the “donated library” sitting next to a rotating rack of National Geographic magazines.

In letters to future fourth graders, students described their teacher as “fun,” “will always help,” and “has a mean side.” With satisfaction, Rachel speaks of how “worried” she was when told by a troubling student as she disciplined him “I just can’t take you seriously when you yell at me.” She “had to really work on being mean” she says, because “I’m just naturally really smiley and happy. But in the end, they love me and I love them;” a statement that becomes evident throughout Rachel’s stories.

Narrative 1: Rachel’s 1st Student Diagnosed with ODD

Abstract and orientation. Rachel had heard about Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) for “5 minutes” in her ESE class in college, but never experienced it first-hand. Yet, this was no consideration when Doug was assigned to her second reading and writing class of the day...every day. The fourth grader was well-versed in the curriculum, as he had spent much of the 3rd grade in an intermediate classroom setting, having been continuously removed from class for “giving his teachers such a hard time.” Rachel’s first instinct was “ok, I’ll just have to be a little tougher on this one.” The school social worker, Ms. Hardt, informed Rachel that he had multiple problems at home including a mom on her deathbed and an immigrant dad that pressured him saying, “I came to this country and you need to make something of yourself.” Rachel assumed he had “no support at home.” Moreover, she imagined he was below academic

level as a result of his history, and decided to do a running record on him. With surprise in her eyes, she says, “He would read a 60 beautifully and was actually above level in all aspects. He would write beautiful cursive and long stories...beautiful writing, beautiful reading...”

Complication. Rachel describes her daily encounter with Doug as a “nervous” moment in her day. He was assigned to Ms. Strict’s homeroom, but would arrive to ELA class directly from a chaotic lunchroom with only two adults overseeing up to 300 students at any given time. Doug often appeared “freaked out” from his latest fight and confrontation in the context. “He repeatedly would scream at me F--- this. You’re a C--- word. He didn’t even respect me.” “I think maybe for the first couple of months, he saw me as young” she rationalizes. While this certainly presented Rachel with a challenge, she only identified a problem when he started “shutting down during class work” and refused to perform. After lunch, Literacy Development Collaborative (LDC) tasks would start. The subject-focused writing tasks were intended to improve student outcomes- a process Rachel describes as “really important to their grade.” Often times, Rachel says, he became “infuriated” by the need to complete the work, ripping up his booklet and pages from the textbooks. She motions ripping with her hands, as she stares into space envisioning his moments of rage and describing, “he would get really red. He would squeeze his fists and mutter curse word after curse word to himself.” While Rachel initially believed he was frustrated with the content, working one-on-one with him led her to understand that he simply could not handle the pressure of the tasks, let alone those of school. She notes that her verbal acknowledgement of the importance of LDC’s would “throw him off the deep end,” yet she simply had to inform other students of their significance in order “to hold them accountable.” Other students began to exhibit his similar behaviors, refusing to work and

cussing, leading her to believe that “for the sake of the classroom, and the safety of the other kids,” she needed to do something extreme to stop him.

Action toward resolution. For the first three months, Rachel screamed at him for every little thing and took him to the principal’s office. She describes herself as the “mean teacher” during this time. However, “no change” in his behavior resulting from this action led her to reach out. Speaking with the school principal, Rachel learned of her personal bond with Doug and his family. She had visited the home multiple times, and shared background information, igniting sympathy from Rachel towards his home life and the challenges he faced daily in consequence to the disorder.

Rachel decided she had to make an effort to “connect” with Doug. She spoke with his specialist teachers and discovered his love for music, PE and art. Approaching him during his most troublesome period, lunchtime, she invited him to class to work on a “special project.” Doug initially resisted, but she would not give up. Trips back to the classroom were filled with opportunities for him to research artists like Van Gogh, Picasso and others, and print out/draw pictures. He revealed that dad had thrown his drawing notebooks away, and so Rachel equipped him with “five new ones,” ensuring he always had a “back up.” She says, “He would start drawing a lot and things really changed.” She gave him a binder for his artwork and would even draw pictures for him as well. For a few weeks, “there was an increase in his productivity, but then we went back down again.” One day he angrily flipped his desk, and she realized “I have this system...and now it seems like it’s run its course.”

Rachel then chose to turn to other teachers with ODD students, disappointedly learning of their lack of interest for “reaching out” to them. Ms. Neuron, the science teacher described as “a screamer,” served as his homeroom teacher and argued that he only disrespected Rachel because

she was trying to be his “young friend,” but that he would never disrespect her because she was like an older “grandma” to him. With similar remarks and no help from colleagues, Rachel turned to Ms. Joy in November, telling her “I don't want to give him N's or U's when he doesn't deserve those. He's an above-level kid. I can give him an above-level U, but I don't know what to do.” The teacher resource responded with a book titled, *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*. Rachel invited colleagues to join her in a book study. However, they declined her request. Consequently, Rachel and Ms. Joy collaboratively read and discussed the text. The book study taught her strategies including: “giving jobs” and using a “gentle teaching approach.”

Giving Doug jobs became Rachel's “saving grace.” She gave him jobs for everything—often up to five per class period. He would keep score during activities, pass out papers, and even rearrange desks in new ways around the classroom. This became especially true on days when new activities or group work was scheduled, as he resisted change and would “shut down.” Rachel soon began tying the jobs he enjoyed to learning tasks, stating “I can't let you help me with these special jobs if you don't do your LDC.” She admits, “Thinking of the jobs became really difficult.”

In the meantime, she went to the school counselor and school psychologist whom worked with Doug regularly. She wanted to learn any “strategies they used with him.” Together, they designed a behavior management system to track the strategies that worked and when they worked. On it, she wrote days of the week, weekly jobs and behaviors exhibited. Behaviors exhibited most often included cursing, hitting, violent behavior, and not doing work. Both the guidance counselor and psychologist used the system to guide session discussions, while Rachel used it to identify the relationship between classroom context and the student's behavior “across the data overtime.” She started learning his triggers, “seeing trends before breaks when he didn't

want to be at home for long periods of time” or “in testing season when he knew I would say this is a big deal.” She noted his comments such as “These breaks! Oh, darn! Why do we have these weeks off?” or “do you teach summer school?” He felt pressure when there was instability in his schedule or when something was approached as really important, leading him to act up.

Informed by the monitoring system and the text *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*, Rachel learned the need to apply a gentle teaching approach to her interactions with Doug. She realizes:

Even though I'm the teacher and everyone needs to respect me, that doesn't mean I need to be the tough guy every time. Sometimes I need to let the kids win. Sometimes he would let curse words slip where he didn't mean to.

Purposefully selecting her battles, she learned to say "Okay. I'm not going to write you up for this. I'm not going to mark you on your Dojo for that. Sometimes you slip." She learned from the text that boys bond by being physical and so she monitored her response to situations by asking, "Okay, is he being violent? Is he cursing to be defiant?" Consequently, she became intentional about what she would be “mad about and how” to show her anger. Reflecting she'd say, “I'm going to show that I'm angry, and I can't show I'm angry. I can show that I'm disappointed in your action and we're going to find a way to change it.”

From her reading and the school psychologist, Rachel learned that Doug's disorder prevented him from understanding and articulating “emotions.” Anger was all he understood, and as such, he “automatically” returned to anger when confused. Rachel came to realize “he's not just some angry kid. He just doesn't know how to identify emotions.” She “had to find things to make him feel other emotions.” She notes having to trigger emotions of happiness and

excitement so that he would learn to understand “good emotions.” She set up a box in the back of the room with paper, pencils and a sharpener where students could write down their thoughts and anonymously deliver them to her. The strategy was one she recalls learning in college. Doug would make sure she could see him adding notes to the box- often the only one in the day. He would write “thank you for teaching or “today was awesome.” It “gave him a chance to just tell things that he didn’t know how to say” she believes.

While their blooming friendship made space to support him in experiencing different emotions, it also proved confusing to him. On one instance, he confided to the school principal, “I really like Ms. Jane. I want to work hard for her. It’s just sometimes I get mad and sometimes she’s stupid at this work.” Rachel would analyze his remarks to mean “He didn’t want to shut down because he didn’t want to do that to me, but had this ODD telling him ‘no, I’m not going to work.’” Rachel’s eyes drop, as she recalls his tears and the administrator’s statement that he didn’t want to let her down but couldn’t help it. “Heartbreaking...” she says in all her recollection.

In January, Rachel volunteered to attend a weekend-long training at the Gurian Institute for learning to teach boys. Experience had led her to believe that the “school system was set up for girls to succeed,” but she needed insight on how to support her boys. Along with six colleagues assigned to other grade levels, she signed up. They each chose to attend among 20 different sessions and presented the knowledge to each other upon returning to school. At Rachel’s sessions, they compared boys’ brain scans with girls, and taught ways boys “connect with emotion and learning.” While she confirmed that boys enjoy jobs, create emotional bonds by rough housing with peers, and learn best through competition, she was discriminant in the takeaways, considering how they specifically “applied to him.” For instance, she would reflect,

“Okay, that might be true, but Doug doesn't like competition. He's not like that and he would shut down.” As a strategy learned from the training, she placed a sign up by her door that stated:

If no one tells you they love you today, I do and I always will.

If no one told you they care about you today, I do and I always will.

And if no one told you how special you are, I think you are and I always will.

Rachel recalls Doug was first to notice the sign. He silently read it, but never said a word.

Result. At the end of the year, Rachel and the other ELA teachers in the school encouraged students to write stories, binding them into hard-covered books. Doug secretly reached out to an unfamiliar ELA teacher, requesting the opportunity to go to her room daily during his lunch to work on a book. There he illustrated and wrote in cursive a story about a “family of dragons where the mother dragon dies.” The dragon goes to a “dragon school” and is taught by his “dragon teacher to fly and fight.” One late afternoon he placed it on Rachel’s desk and went home for the day without a word. On the first page, Doug dedicated the story to Rachel, leaving her “bawling” at first sight. The next day, the book was gone... With a smile on her face she regretfully reminisces, “I wish I had kept it...It was the best thing.”

When asked how the problem with Doug was ultimately resolved, her response was “It’s definitely ongoing.” She views it from the perspective of his life, rather than hers, admitting:

He’s had a whole summer off, no structure. I don't know what’s happened with Mom. She possibly has passed away already, so he could come in next year being completely different. When we had our meeting about where our kids will be placed, I really wanted him placed with a woman or a female teacher whose very kind... he needs someone kind... that's what worked for him.

Closure. Rachel articulates plans to continue advocating for Doug in the ‘here and now’ by stating:

Next year, when I find out where he's placed, I'm going and sitting down with that teacher and giving her that same courtesy; letting her know about this book, letting her know about his art binder, what we would do. I'll probably tell her... "The psychologist really helped me. Go to her, and make sure that when he goes into his 5th Grade classroom that he's supported the same way..."

She fully believes that provided with similar “structures” as those she applied to working with him, problems with Doug could “continue to get better rather than” starting him from the beginning again. She alleges, “That would stink for him,” and adamantly hopes he goes “where that structure is going to be there and he feels good.”

Narrative 2: Teaching Exceptional Student Education (ESE)

Abstract and orientation. There they were...before Rachel was the first class of students she had long trained, prepared for, and awaited. Her first students ever! Of the 23, six were diagnosed as requiring ESE services and had an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Remembering her one and only ESE college class, she was immediately overcome with nerves. How was she to know “what would be best” for them? Investigation into the students’ background led Rachel to former third grade teachers who informed her of the ESE resource teacher responsible for their Reading, Writing, and Math learning during the school year. The tenured veteran teacher, Ms. Statuesque was a tall, slender woman in her 60’s, with much history and experience in the school as an ESE resource teacher. Her warm smile and reassuring words communicated, “I know all of their accommodations and you have nothing to worry about”--

exactly what Rachel needed to hear. Rachel thought “Oh great! Yay! I teach ESE, but I don’t really have to because she’s in my room!” For the first few weeks, Ms. Statuesque sat in the classroom to observe the students and their new switching schedule, whereby they would leave for Math to the neighboring classroom. They soon began the routine. Daily from 8:15-9:30, during Rachel’s shared reading time, Ms. Statuesque pulled her small group to support their required accommodations in Reading and Writing. In addition, Rachel was well aware Ms. Statuesque’s job was to support her to administer Literacy Designed Collaborative (LDC) assessments completed throughout the school year. The districts’ consumable workbooks required children to independently grapple with Science and Social Studies concepts, employing reading and writing strategies to measure learning gains in September, November, March and April. Administered for two weeks at a time, LDC’s represented a large report card grade for students, and as such training was provided for teachers two weeks prior to each round of administration.

Complication. In the first weeks of pullouts, Rachel’s classroom was interrupted by the loud voice of Ms. Statuesque, whom had decided to sit at a table in the back of the room to teach her small group. Rachel quietly approached Ms. Statuesque, informing her “you’re just talking a little loud with your group and it’s distracting to me and the class.” Angrily, Ms. Statuesque rounded her group and moved to the hallway for their sessions. Upon stepping out of the classroom, Rachel began noticing that the resource teacher was teaching something completely different. As such, she began sharing her lesson plans to provide her with detailed guidance.

In September, when LDCs began, Rachel walked out into the hallway again to discover that Ms. Statuesque had selected not to do the LDCs with the students. Moreover, once asked to administer them, she began reading the full articles to students and answering the related

questions so students could copy her responses into their books. While Rachel had administered the LDCs to other classes during her internship, she knew expectations and methods had most recently changed based on teachers' latest feedback to the district. Accordingly, she volunteered to attend the optional trainings provided throughout the year. From training sessions, she confirmed that the process was "student-centered," allowing them to text code, examine primary and secondary sources and use the information to document explanations. However, "that was not what she [Ms. Statuesque] was doing."

The recent incident with Ms. Statuesque made Rachel hesitant to ask her directly if her chosen methods were "part of the students' accommodations" or if she had "attended LDC training." Instead, she went to the assistant principal to find out if Ms. Statuesque's records indicated attendance at the district trainings. Because it was evident she had not attended, the assistant principal spoke with Ms. Statuesque, thus infuriating her. This led to retaliation against Rachel as she told colleagues, Rachel "was unfit to teach...treated her like a paraprofessional and didn't care about ESE kids" as she never asked to see their individualized education plans (IEPs). Without experience teaching ESE students, Rachel admits, "I just didn't know that that was something. I didn't know that I had to go look at IEPs, as inexperienced as that makes me sound-- I didn't know that there was all this important stuff I need to look at." She went to Ms. Statuesque and asked for the IEPs, but she refused to share them, saying "Oh, that's not necessary. You don't need to look at those."

Feeling sheepish and "embarrassed" to approach anyone else, as it was already October and Rachel had not looked at the documents, she "humbled" herself to the assistant principal whom had started the ESE Department in the school, and led it for 13 years prior. She feared the ESE department was "small" and if she spoke to another ESE resource person that would

“seem...not right.” “I don’t know how to do this” and “I’m having a problem and I don’t know how to handle it” Rachel confided to the assistant principal. The AP welcomed Rachel’s inquiry, detailing step-by-step what to look for in the documents.

Once having read the IEPs, Rachel reached out to Ms. Statuesque to discuss students’ specific accommodations. She also requested that Ms. Statuesque “not read the articles to them” by stating, “We’re collecting data, and I want them to be making gains.” While Ms. Statuesque’s running records showed the six students were making learning gains, Rachel’s personal experience with them and their continued academic struggles, made her question the data’s validity. She decided to collect her own data. As she conducted the running records, students began to question Rachel’s test administration methods, asking her “Why do you do running records different than Ms. Statuesque?” They revealed that Ms. Statuesque was reading the test to the students, rather than asking them to read it to her, as prescribed. According to Rachel, this was not an accommodation in their IEPs. Moreover, her most recent data collected showed the students were “below level,” substantiating Rachel’s intuition, and leading her to believe Ms. Statuesque’s methods were harming the students, rather than helping them improve. “They were suffering.”

Action toward resolution. Rachel started doing guided reading groups with the six learners, and weekly running records independently of Ms. Statuesque in an effort to “help them catch up.” In addition, she heeded the assistant principal’s advice, and kept private folders for each student to monitor their growth over time. When November arrived, it was time for the second LDC. This time, Rachel began to document her interactions with Ms. Statuesque using email, and blind carbon copying the assistant principal. She began by inviting Ms. Statuesque to the LDC training, an invitation the resource teacher blatantly denied. Next, Rachel emailed her

notes from the training along with her lesson plans and an explicit request to keep students in the classroom. “Maybe you can monitor them while they’re working. You know, if you see one struggling, you can pull them aside,” the email read. Disregarding the request, Ms. Statuesque pulled the students out during the weeks of LDCs. When Rachel opened the six students’ LDC books, she witnessed her “Beautiful handwriting” throughout the entire “essay portion of the kid’s book.” Ms. Statuesque was personally completing the students’ work.

In an effort to “file data” on her problem, Rachel photocopied the text and shared it with her teacher resource, Ms. Joy. “I wanted to be professional in my interactions and began to speak with my mentor prior to making decisions” for fear that “I might respond unprofessionally, given my anger,” Rachel rationalizes. Ms. Joy’s conversations with the assistant principal resulted in the idea that teachers attend a co-teaching training. While Rachel immediately replied, “Tell the principal yes, I’m down,” Ms. Statuesque once again refused the invite.

Before Winter break, Rachel began to plan for several IEP meetings scheduled with parents and professional colleagues. However, emails received from Ms. Statuesque unexpectedly indicated date changes to those meetings. Arriving on the revised dates, Rachel began to find, that the sessions had been held on the original days. Mortified by her unprofessional impression on parents, she printed Ms. Statuesque’s emails and shared them with a very upset principal. For a full month after, Ms. Statuesque did not return to her classroom. This gave Rachel time to reflect upon the situation; a fearful time Rachel recalls, “So then, I was thinking, well, now, I’m breaking the law. Now these kids aren’t going to get any ESE support.”

With the next LDC in March centered on test skills, Rachel rationalized “You know what? There’s no way that she can mess teaching test taking skills. Little did I know....” she admits. The students proved “brutally honest,” revealing to Rachel that Ms. Statuesque was

using LDC time to do their math homework for them. Rachel recalls thinking, "Well...I can't trust what the kids are saying. I need to see." Rachel turned to the Math teacher, Ms. Strict, to communicate her suspicion, learning that she, too, was experiencing a challenge with the teacher. One afternoon, Ms. Strict stepped out into the hallway to discover Ms. Statuesque with a completed copy of the math homework, allowing the learners to copy her work. The teachers were uncertain how to approach her about the problem, and thus decided to call a meeting with the assistant principal and Ms. Statuesque. During the meeting, the teachers shared Math data, pointing out that strangely students were excelling on Math homework, but failing Math exams. Ms. Statuesque argued that her students had "math anxiety," and denied her role in providing the answers to homework assignments. At this point Rachel admits, "We didn't know what to do." However, in the moment she chimed in with "Well, I noticed that if they do have that test anxiety, we're going over really good test taking strategies and maybe they should stay in the classroom." The administrator verbally agreed. Once in the classroom, students began noticing Ms. Statuesque rudely ignore Rachel. Their interaction became limited to Ms. Statuesque's occasional utterances including "whatever you think is best." Rachel admits "It was like having an enemy in the classroom." Students began to ask if they were mad at each other, leading Rachel to feel, "Now, it's affecting the children."

The next LDC was focused on Social Studies, and students were scheduled to do part with Rachel and part of it in their Science class. This time, Rachel chose to take copies of the students' work and data from the past LDC cycles to the assistant principal. She used it to argue that Ms. Statuesque should be "completely uninvolved" in the new LDC cycle, evidencing the lack of student learning gains in the previous cycles. Rachel specified to her assistant principal, "I want her in the room and she can monitor and she can do a catch and release but I don't want

her pulling the group." Rachel confidently admits that she knew what was best for the kids. "It was made for the kids to struggle; and I knew that based on the trainings, I was doing it the way it was made to be taught, even with ESE students." In an email to Ms. Statuesque and the assistant principal, she specified her instructions, noting, "We can offer them their accommodations, but sparingly. We're going to really try to see what they can produce, because the other two, you've helped them a lot and they need to be prepared for fifth grade." As the students requested help the following days, Ms. Statuesque responded "your teacher doesn't want me to help you anymore." The students would turn to Rachel, asking her "why don't you want her to help us?" Rachel admits fearing that in "doing right by" her students, angry parents would call to complain to administration for her lack of support. Consequently, she spoke to both the principal and assistant principal, who advised Rachel to email Ms. Statuesque. The email, however, was not taken well, as she privately responded "I wish you came to me woman to woman to tell me what was bothering you instead of involving administration."

Because the administrating teacher was tasked with grading the LDC, Rachel considered her own "bias" in scoring the six students' tests and potential accusations of "giving them higher scores because I think I did a better job." Consequently, she asked the writing resource teacher and the assistant principal to also grade the students' work. Rachel then combined the scores with running record scores to inform and organize new writing and guided reading groups. She states, "I noticed where there was growth happening and there was some growth that still wasn't happening."

In the following months, Ms. Statuesque's offenses towards Rachel continued, including writing resource sheets with incorrect definitions for students to use on LDCs, and even yelling at non-ESE students in Rachel's class in defense of her ESE students. Rachel reminded Ms.

Statuesque of procedures and the DOJO as a classroom management response system, while continuing to document every interaction with dates and times and blind carbon copying all emails. In addition, her anger had escalated, and leaning on her teacher leader and assistant principal to ensure emails and responses remained professional became most important. She ensured that her written claims “had professional things” to back them and could be “archived” by the assistant principal. When necessary, her teacher leader, Ms. Joy, would offer, “She’s just doing that to get a reaction. Don’t bring it up.”

By April, students began using the knowledge that Ms. Statuesque gave ESE students the answers, against each other. One student demanded his friend’s notebook stating, “Let me see. I know Ms. Statuesque gives you all the answers.” Another student refused to work and despite Rachel’s request that Ms. Statuesque leave him be, she publically responded, “I know how hard it is in your class to catch up...so I’m going to help him.” As she began “to write everything on his paper for him,” Rachel recalls the student sat “there, and stared [at her] with a big smile on his face suddenly.” Experiencing the same challenge in her class, the math teacher and Rachel marched to administration to request another meeting. They brought “files of things she’d done and things written down.” The assistant principal immediately agreed, stating “it’s that time where we all need to sit down.”

Result. Rachel was “shaking like a leaf” believing that this was the big moment; “this had to be the next step for anything to change.” She knew with certainty “there’s nothing else that I could possibly do.” As Ms. Statuesque joined them, Rachel anxiously anticipated the need to state her case. However, commencing the meeting, the assistant principal began to pull a list of Rachel’s requests for Ms. Statuesque, stating “on this date you did this and Rachel asked you to do this, and here you did this and... You need to be doing what she asks you to do!” Ms.

Statuesque immediately appeared floored and defensive by the evidence against her. She proceeded to defend herself, stating “Well, you know, Ms. Strict just provides me much more explicit instruction with what she wants me to do, and Ms. Jane just kind of treats me like an aide and doesn’t give me any instruction.” Rachel nervously considered it was her turn to speak, but once again the assistant principal unexpectedly “pulled out an entire folder” with the lesson plans and instructions Rachel had sent to Ms. Statuesque throughout the year. As she shared the records, she insistently asked her “So I’m going to ask you...Ms. Statuesque, what is the difference?” To which Ms. Statuesque mumbled, “I guess there is no difference.” Unbeknownst to Rachel, the assistant principal was also aware of rumors doubting Rachel’s competence as a “first-year teacher.” Thus, the assistant principal surprised Rachel, stating ““And you need to stop making inappropriate comments to other professionals about Rachel being a first-year teacher, because she is one of the best first-year teachers we’ve ever had.” Rachel could not have felt more “supported and vindicated” in that moment.

The last LDC took place soon after. Rachel states, “Everything I’d ever asked her to do, she did; only catch and releases, [and] came with my lesson plans printed out.” Rachel considered “If only we could have had this meeting in October.” On the last LDC, the students did very well. Ms. Statuesque pulled her group of six and said to them, “I want to let you know that Ms. Jane does want me to help you. We’re just preparing you for fifth grade.” While Rachel admits to many tears throughout the journey, she recalls that in the moments after the big meeting, “Everything was magically changed. It was a very bumpy road to get there,” but the problem had finally been resolved.

Closure. For the following year, Ms. Statuesque will be moved to a primary grade level. Additionally, Rachel was complimented for her work with the ESE learners, but informed that

she was due for a much-deserved break from working with them and would not be assigned to any the next year. Rachel reminisces, “I feel like all of the data groups I did, the running records I did, will help them for fifth grade. They can now go to fifth grade, and they’re not going to get that handholding.” She also acknowledges the belief that from the occurrence, she learned to address situations the right way. She specifies, “Making sure everything is documented was a big thing. Emails can always be printed.” Learned strategies important to addressing similar future challenges include documenting times and dates of interactions, as well as ensuring the “response to everything is professional and that I let administration know right away because ultimately, they’re on your side if they agree with you.”

Looking forward, Rachel feels confident that now knowing how to look at IEP’s she will be ready to have professional conversations with the ESE teachers about how to service her students. She plans to set up ESE meetings during pre-planning to specify, “So these are the accommodations. How do you see this working in an ELA classroom?” She asserts that not having worked together on a schedule and model beforehand, the students “suffered.” This was a challenge she now plans to proactively address early on.

Narrative 3: Reaching from Beyond the Gang.

Abstract and orientation. While no two days are alike in a teachers’ classroom, there was a daily reminder of this fact in Rachel’s 4th grade reality. Navigating her first student diagnosed with Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) and an incompetent ESE resource teacher, all while learning to ‘be a teacher’ in the eyes of students, parents and colleagues, was simply not enough of a learning curve for Rachel’s first year. Pedro would arrive to school exhausted from riding his bike through the neighborhood at 3 am, covered in bruises and begging Rachel for just one thing...an opportunity to lay down if just “for a little bit.” Banned from

Dollar General and Family Dollar for shoplifting, he had learned to barter to make ends meet. On these days, he anxiously bartered work for sleep, saying "Promise I'll do this reading program online for a couple of hours after" though he loathed doing it. His home was no place for sleeping, as it served as the "headquarters" for a local gang. They had taken the house when realizing Pedro's 87-year old grandmother was no match for them.

With a mother and father in jail, and a seventh grade brother expelled from school and in need of sneaking onto Pedro's elementary school cafeteria to steal food, Pedro was alone to raise and care for himself. Along with the revolving door of approximately 15-gang members, grandma continued to live in the home. While her age may have slowed her down, she remained dedicated to her life-long work as a migrant worker, now deemed trustworthy enough for the responsibility of paying the employees.

Rachel knew from regular visits with the police department, that this was a critical time in Pedro's life. At 10-years-old, this was the appropriate time for starting gang initiation; a right of passage marked by daily beatings where he served as a punching bag, engaged in drug use, stealing, and most significantly, the expectation that he break a broomstick and stab his grandmother. Rachel believed early on that "*this* was the time to reach him before he fell completely in." She confirmed, "I felt very compelled to get him, you know, make that difference before..." Her voice drifts off as if to shutter the possibilities.

Complication. In the beginning, Rachel was aware that he was "a troublemaker kid, class-clownish, but he was in every subject on level." She worried about his home life, but based on in-class assessments, "knew he had the capabilities" to perform well in school, and so she chose her battles with him. Meeting for "data chats," the administration identified that with intense work, Pedro could move from "tier two to tier one," requiring less support to achieve

required standards. Come November however, Rachel began to notice a shift in Pedro. “The year was well on its way and all the strategies were in place. We had the structure down, but around that time we started to have big school breaks” including a week for Thanksgiving and “you come back for three weeks and then you have winter break.” The structure was “gone.” It was at this time when “things really started breaking down,” Rachel observes. Pedro started missing school days and not turning in assignments. “Everything he knew how to do, he just stopped doing!” She found it particularly bothersome that “this kid wasn’t acting this way because he didn’t get it or because it was hard for him,” but rather, because he was living a tumultuous life.

By the time he completed his second Fair test in late November, he had “dropped on all aspects; syntactic knowledge, vocabulary.” She recalls, “It was like he was just clicking whatever he wanted to on the computer, basically.” Rachel specifies, she “wanted to look at those resources to know what’s happening to him as a student, and then try to make connections to...his home life, like what I know about what’s going on at home.” She “thought there was a significant correlation between the two.” Because “he had more time off, more time at home,” the school began “visiting his home more often for violent matters.” She recalls specifically “I was looking at this data and seeing that as home life insecurity increased, school life was decreasing. It was hand-in-hand over the course of the year. His behavior started getting really out of control...”

One day at dismissal, Pedro got into the school bus as usual. As the bus began “pulling away, he jumped out of the window and ran.” Teachers chased him through the school campus surrendering the off-premises pursuit to police officers. He led officers to a four-way highway, where he stood in the middle of traffic jumping in front of cars. Rachel recalls going home after

that “really hard” day and reflecting, “why would you do that when you’re on your way home? Why? You would think he would do that on his way to school?” After the occurrence, officers became tasked with picking him up from school, and then taking him home when he resisted the assistant principal’s ride. It wasn’t long before the school administration and even police officers had given up on him. His opposition and multiple missed school days supported their decision; “We’re not picking him up anymore. He is not going to school. We’re not going to make him.”

It became increasingly challenging for Rachel to care for him and encourage him to do well also. He would say “Shut up! You don’t care about me.” “He had this internal struggle where he didn’t think he needed to learn anymore, as school wasn’t going to be important to who he planned on becoming.” Consequently, Pedro would refuse to go to science and math classes, or produce any work for months at a time. Initially, Rachel commanded him “to go to class.” In response to aggression, he would “run or find small sharp objects and hold on to them.” One day, Rachel recalls he went “underneath my desk and banged his head on the side over and over and over again.” The next day, he returned to school “happy, wanting to work with everybody” and responding to every question correctly. She found it “emotionally draining” to figure out “which Pedro” she could expect daily.

Rachel could see that despite the façade, he felt a “deep connection” with her. He “only worked if he could be right next” to her. He sat where “his elbow touched her.” One morning upon returning from three days held in truancy for trying to stab his grandmother, he walked into the classroom nonchalantly. He approached Rachel’s desk without word or expression, picked up a scissor and immediately cut a lock of her hair. Rachel was “stunned.” He brought it to his nose and said “I missed the smell of your hair while I was in there.” She found herself without

words, asking, “Oh, what should I even do? I mean, I can’t move your clip over something like this.” Rachel began to feel “uncomfortable,” describing his behaviors towards her as “inappropriate” and “weird.” She had decided that she wanted him out of her classroom.

Action toward resolution. Rachel first approached the school counselor for advice, but found that as a consequence of previous history with him and his brother, she had no suggestions and had even “given up” on Pedro. “It’s really hard to help a kid when everyone else has given up on him, and she was over him” Rachel found. She felt desperate need for someone that had not given up and was educated “with a special degree in *that* to help...” The social worker met the exact requirements. Ms. Hardt met with him once monthly, and as such, Rachel began reaching out. The social worker taught Rachel “that he didn’t know how to express emotion, and by showing him love and care” she could model unfamiliar expressions. Rachel admits once she “really thought about how he doesn’t have this home life and how he doesn’t know how to show emotions,” she felt he wasn’t being malicious at all. She convinced herself, “I don’t need him to be removed from my classroom. I don’t need to be afraid of him. I need to help him.” Despite still finding him “creepy” and not knowing “when he was going to cut [her] hair again or do something,” her attitude towards him began to change. She admits, “After that, I was never cross, never raised my voice...really calm and really caring.” Her actions became guided by the question, “how do I reach someone who’s already at the age of ten so distant from thinking that learning is important?” She felt determined by the fact that “even though he was just one kid, he was *my* kid who is falling behind and has so much potential.” She admits having “to really reach into every corner and find anything that would work... I love him but he was hard, he was really hard.”

When Pedro's grades began to spiral between November and December, she visited Ms. Hardt remarking, "I don't know if you're interested in the academic part, but this is what's happening in the classroom. I'm seeing these big drops." The social worker began to regularly meet with her before Pedro's sessions and use the data to guide their private discussions regarding his emotions. In addition, she taught Rachel how to display specific mannerisms that he needed to witness first hand. Rachel reflects, "It was kind of like team work, where we were both working on the same issues."

Knowing that what worked one-day "wouldn't necessarily work the next," Rachel heeded the social worker's teachings for reading Pedro's facial expressions and body language every morning. She intently observed him "the minute he walked in" to determine "the type of mood he was going to be in on that day." She might say, "Today, I'm not going to joke around with him or force him to work with people." On occasions, he arrived only to sit and stare at the wall all day long. By connecting behaviors to his visible disposition, she learned to determine "the days he was going to either run or do something." As such, she realized when he came in that way, not to push him, but rather to allow him to sit by her and serve as a helper "stapling papers."

In January, she volunteered for training organized by the Gurian Institute for teaching boys, where a principal from a "rough school in Detroit" served as a guest speaker. He taught her the importance of telling Pedro she loved and cared for him daily, despite his eye rolling, and boys are "emotional centers." Consequently, Rachel started to view his "fake punching" as a sign of striving to "communicate and emotionally connect" with other boys, rather than aggression. She describes the new knowledge as "eye opening," gradually realizing that Pedro's "sworn enemy for the whole half of the year" was "actually his best friend." The institute also

taught her that boys enjoyed competition, and despite feeling nervous about applying competition for fear that he would get “scary angry,” she set up homework teams whereby students held team members accountable for bringing in assignments to earn points. She encouraged a team of boys to select Pedro for their team. After four months of submitting no work, he immediately began to submit “amazing” homework, indicating to her the strategy worked.

During the training, a panel of students from the affiliated all boys’ and all girls’ schools were invited to speak to teachers in attendance. Rachel could see how one boy’s story with a “rough home” and “neighborhood gangs” shared major similarities to Pedro’s life. Feeling nervous to ask a question, Rachel approached the boy and asked, “What about going here really made you start caring about school, because you said before that you used to hate school and you would be up all night and you didn’t care?” His response was to completely alter her teaching approach. He replied, “I felt like everyone cared about me and everyone was a brother and we had this creed. Everything felt really important.” Leaving flabbergasted, Rachel realized that she needed to “make Pedro feel like he had a true family.” She focused her energy on creating what she defined as a “family unit,” for Pedro at school. While one of her coworkers adamantly refused to be a “mother figure to him,” the Math teacher welcomed it. She strived to connect with him through humor, while Rachel connected with him through caring questions such as “What do you want to do today? Do you want to help me do this?” Rachel assesses that “the Math teacher became like the dad” and “she was like the mom.” His math grades began to soar, as the math teacher watched dumbfounded by the results.

Reading the ODD book to help Doug also proved valuable for working with Pedro. While he wasn’t ODD, Rachel could see similarities in their need for an emotional connection

with someone. As such, she would also give Pedro jobs and ask him to come up to have lunch with her. She learned that he enjoyed music and dancing, and began using lunchtime to research appropriate songs for dancing. At days end she cleared desks to make room for Pedro to break dance for his peers. “It was fantastic.” Rachel consciously “tried to make him look at everything in the future.” The dancing conversations led to discussions about his future where he admitted a desire to become “an air force pilot.” They began researching aircraft flight positions and the qualifications for becoming a pilot. She would say, “It says here you have to pass high school, and be really good in math and science. You’re really good in math, but if you don’t start going to science, you’re really not going to go towards this goal.” Despite “hating” science class, he began to attend and do well. Reflecting on the situation, Rachel assumes that Pedro’s decision to join the military was his way of being “part of this family” he longed for.

In his lunch period, Pedro learned to occasionally confide in Rachel. He shared stories of running away from home and having helicopters and dogs looking for him. “I just didn’t want to go back home,” he would say. Having tried his brother’s drugs, he would ask Rachel what she knew about Marijuana. Rachel took the opportunity to show him graphic pictures of smokers and drug abusers, educating him on the consequences. She monitored the impact had on him based on his responses. For instance, he told her that while the gang members told him he didn’t know what he was talking about, his reply was, he’s “not allowed to do that in the Air Force.” The other boys couldn’t argue with that.

Rachel admits that her only knowledge about gangs came “from movies,” and she had a desire to “know about them and what’s happening.” Reaching out to the campus police, she attended a gang training with four colleagues. There, she learned about the major two gangs in the school and how elementary school students were in “full training” and initiation stages,

which forced them to exhibit required behaviors to join. They would inquire, “where do our kids live, and what activities the members had been arrested for.” She also learned the “gang colors,” so when Pedro would come in wearing red with a “rosary on or a handkerchief hanging on his pocket, or even socks,” she would say “no. Go change. You’re not wearing them again.” The school maintained a closet of white clothing for “gang days” in which all students involved would wear their specific gang colors. Rachel recalls the last “gang day” whereby 27 students as young as 2nd grade, were given alternate clothing. Asking the police officer, Rachel learned that the colors signified unity within the gang family and support. Children with different colors would fight each other, because “that’s what they had been trained to do.”

One day Pedro arrived at school with “hundreds of dollars in his pocket.” He showed them to Rachel but told her he didn’t know where they had come from. Immediately reporting the cash to the social workers and police, he was removed from the classroom. The social worker revealed that grandma had arrived in tears accusing him of having “stolen from the hard workers” she paid on the farm. After such occurrences Pedro would be absent from school for up to a week. Rachel assumed such long absences were an indication that Pedro was “mad” at her and didn’t want to “be near.” She believes he knew of her “responsibility to tell” and desires to “protect him,” as he would even say, “I know you’re reporting this.” His responses indicated to Rachel that he was saying “I did something really bad and I didn’t want to do this to my grandma, take care of it.” After a full week, Pedro returned to school with no words on the incident. On weeks when he would disappear, Rachel admits crying at night and “feeling sick to her stomach worried about what he was doing.” Her fiancé would question her feelings asking, “Why are you even worried about him? He’s going to make those decisions.” Her response was always the same...”I took on that role of being the one who cares about him.”

She admits “placing so much emotionally into this student that when he would check out or shut off, I felt like I was failing. It was definitely hard.”

It was in the spring, between January and March when it happened. Rachel gave him “lunch detention for not doing homework, and he “was going to do his homework even if it was six weeks in a row.” During lunch with her teammates “he turned to face her. “The Science teacher said, ‘Turn around. I don’t want to see your face.’ While he turned, anger boiled within him. Later in the day, he brought her a picture. She asked, “What is this?” A picture of you and Andy, he replied. Rachel inquired “but what are we doing?” “Kissing” he said. And “oh, he’s stabbing you.” Rachel quietly reflects and mumbles, “I made him angry and he was letting me know he was angry.”

Result. By April, Pedro had learned the ways Rachel cared for him and began responding. She became the only woman he willingly hugged. “He would reach up and touch her hair and put his hand down.” While she was nervous when he touched her hair, she rationalized “I put myself in the position where you don’t have a mom or a dad or anybody that shows you how to hug someone casually, like to do those simple things that show you care. So I think he was struggling trying to learn them, but it worked.”

Then May arrived. For Mother’s Day, Pedro admitted to Rachel during a class activity that he did not know who to make his Mother’s Day card for. Rachel was aware that the large population of students at the school struggled with such holidays, because parents most often had abandoned them. Disregarding the suggestion to make it for grandma, he replied “Well, I may as well just make it for you because you’re the only woman who loves me.” That moment Rachel “confirmed” all of her hard work. She had reached her goal, but most importantly, she had reached him.

Recognizing the multitude of his challenges, Rachel admits that he is an unresolved, ongoing challenge. Because they couldn't expel him in the school, Rachel angrily communicates that his grandmother has been "pushed to send him somewhere else for 5th grade." The school has said, "We can't have him here next year." She believes that if he were in the school, "he could come" to her to talk. With her, "he would really open up." She believes that taking away the tools he's learned to use, to cope with his challenging life, will developmentally move him backwards. It will "hurt him" she assesses.

Closure. Rachel admits "every day was a learning experience with this one, finding a strategy that worked, reading his body language, reading his facial expression." Given another experience such as this, she "would probably start looking up research earlier, looking up more trainings." She doesn't believe that the things that worked for him would necessarily work for someone else. She feels that she could have searched for solutions to addressing "gang activities." Her school, where she anticipates remaining for years to come, is plagued by gang activity and she is "not afraid," as it is their reality. She believes there are ways to reach them "and... you can't always depend on people to be on your side." Sometimes good people "make up their minds" on them, she says. Her desire to learn more is expressed as a barrier to this situation, when she admits, "When you look up a lot of how to teach kids in that situation, it's for higher education. I'm really trying to find something for elementary age."

Coda

Like Charly, one of Rachel's narratives highlights the incomplete use of the teacher inquiry cycle when approaching her problem of practice. In Rachel's second narrative, time is not her barrier to using the full cycle (as with Charly); but rather, Rachel does not ask investigative questions, potentially given the nature of her circumstance with Ms. Statuesque.

Specifically, Rachel says, “I had no patience for Ms. Statuesque, like I did for the kids... she should know better. She’s an adult,” and “problems with adults are different” than problems of practice with students. In truth, Rachel may be correct in this assessment. This is still to be seen. Research does not tell us if the systematic investigational cycle of teacher inquiry is appropriate for addressing professional relationship problems of practice. Given the current departmentalization structure of schools and the many stakeholders invested in each student’s learning, we can anticipate such problems will inevitably surface for our novice teachers. Lacking understanding of strategies for preparing them to rise to these challenges is a significant problem that must be addressed in teacher preparation.

Though Rachel does not explicitly ask investigative questions to approach her problem with Ms. Statuesque, stories of Doug and Pedro illuminate the use of *all* inquiry skills, including identifying her problems of practice, asking investigative questions, collecting and analyzing data, and driving change. Nothing could have surprised me more. Particularly since Rachel’s context illustrates lack of support from her grade level colleagues. As she applied strategies, one colleague would say, “Oh, is that what they teach you in college now to do?” The problem is, like Charly, Rachel needed a community of teachers to support her to systematically study and learn from her problems, rather than mock her. Rachel’s school was not designed to support her in this way. Thus, she persistently and intentionally pursues insight from various stakeholders, especially after administration and colleagues “give up” on Pedro. It is unlikely, in my opinion, that many novice teachers would turn to other stakeholders for support after learning administration has given up on a student, or after being mocked for using strategies, as research indicates. Most novices are often more concerned with gaining acceptance from colleagues than supporting students’ needs (Fessler, 1995). This is a challenge for novice teachers inquiring into

their practice, as they can anticipate having little support from their schools to learn from their problems with students. In addition, not having a community of teachers to support inquiry into her problems of practice at school, prevented her from having a platform to share findings publically, regarding ways to reach Doug and Pedro. This is a disservice, particularly to Doug, since he was expected to return to the school the following year, and work with a new teacher unfamiliar with strategies that worked well for him.

Finally, Rachel's problems of practice with Doug and Pedro are indicative of social circumstances in their daily lives, which impede their opportunities to learn. Rachel positions herself to enact change by supporting their individualized assessed needs. The problem is that like Charly, Rachel's preparation did not cultivate a critical perspective within the inquiry process to support her to connect students' needs "to larger movements for equity and social change," as advocated by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999). This critical lens was missing from resources I used to facilitate her preparation (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; 2009). Thus, lack of understanding her role within a broader community context may inhibit Rachel from practicing a "moral commitment" to equity and social justice beyond the confines of her classroom (Zeichner, 1993, p. 201). This leads me to realize that I, as a teacher educator, must facilitate within the teacher inquiry cycle analysis of problems of practice related to equity and social justice, and support preservice teachers to examine their role to enact change beyond the classroom context.

In the next chapter Rachel's three stories of problems of practice are conceptually analyzed for insight into this study's research questions (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). The chapter responds to the questions:

1. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?

2. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
3. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Chapter Seven

Findings in Rachel's Narratives

In this chapter, Rachel's transcripts were conceptually analyzed with inquiry intention to explore the research questions underlying this study (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). "Inquiry intention" allowed me, as researcher, to analyze Rachel's narratives "in the context of other research and theoretical frameworks" seeking "patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes" that provided insight into this study's research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 133).

This section will respond to the questions:

1. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
2. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
3. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Exploring the Research Questions

Rachel's identified problems of practice. Rachel tells stories of her first-year experience navigating three distinct problems of practice. In the first story, she speaks of Doug, an on-level student diagnosed with Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD). Rachel was first challenged by his "attitude," particularly when he cussed at her, and "just shut down during classwork" due to the feeling "pressure was on." Her initial identification of the problem reveals a lens, characteristic to novices as per Fuller and Bown (1975), whereby the problem was

identified as a management and discipline problem with a focus on “self,” believing that Doug’s behavior was due to her “young” appearance, and the fact that he “didn’t even respect” her. A colleague confirmed this notion, expressing “he didn’t do that” with her because she was “older” and didn’t “tolerate it.” However, Rachel’s personal decision to “dig into it a little bit with the social worker at...school” drastically alters her identification of the problem. Once she learns about Doug’s dying mother and pushy, yet hard-working immigrant father, she begins to sympathize, stating, “I can’t imagine going through that and having this disorder that he had.” The new knowledge leads her to redefine the problem as a “need to find a way to connect to” Doug, a student with Oppositional Defiance Disorder, whose mother was “on her deathbed.” Triggered by her initiative to learn more, Rachel’s revised definition of the problem is less characteristic to novices and more aligned with veteran teachers’ perspectives, as they identify problems of practice that relate to teaching students with special needs, and focus on their impact on student learning (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Burkman, 2012; Fuller & Bowman, 1975; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000).

In her second narrative, Rachel identifies a problem working with “ESE support groups and the teacher,” Ms. Statuesque. While the students were “supposed to be learning how to text code... look at primary, secondary sources...take information and come out with words...that’s not what she [Ms. Statuesque] was doing.” Rachel was troubled by the knowledge that LDC district requirements called for “student-centered” activity, but her ESE resource teacher “wouldn’t be doing the LDC with them” or “was reading the whole articles to them.... telling them what’s the text scope, and then...writing in their LDC books...and telling them what to copy down.” Having attended LDC district trainings, Rachel identified this as a problem, stating, “I mean, you can’t do that.” She collects her own running records to determine students’

reading levels, substantiating that students were “suffering” as a result of Ms. Statuesque’s methods. Rachel’s identification of this problem contradicts literature, which states that as novices gain control of their responsibilities, they seek personal acceptance from peers (Fessler, 1995). Rather than seeking Ms. Statuesque’s acceptance, she questions the tenured teachers’ instructional methods with students, asking, “Is this part of their IEP? Is this part of their accommodations?” “Has she taken any of the trainings for LDC?” In addition, across the continuum of problems novices identify, Rachel demonstrates that she is beyond thinking about her own classroom management, access to materials, and curriculum planning, but rather is focused on instructional methods, working with others, and teaching students with special needs, thus placing her alongside more experienced teachers in terms of the problems she identifies (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Burkman, 2012; Fuller & Bowman, 1975; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000). Moreover, her collection of data, which she later uses to inform the arrangement of ESE reading and writing groups, exemplifies a focus on impacting student learning (Fuller and Bown, 1975).

For her third story, Rachel tells of the challenges of reaching out to a student involved in gang activity. She specifically identifies the problem as, “How to reach someone who is already at the age of ten, so distant from thinking that learning is important.” In identifying the problem, she explains, “it was a problem because he’s a student of mine and I can see him struggling.” The “on-level student” according to Rachel, had an “internal struggle where he didn’t think he needed to learn anymore,” as learning wasn’t “going to be important to who” he wanted to “become.” She identified this as *her* problem, stating, “I want to make sure that I’m reaching all my kids” and “he’s still my kid who’s really falling behind and he has so much potential.” This story illustrates Rachel’s focus on her impact to student learning, a focus unique and rare among

novices as per Fuller and Bown (1975). Moreover, despite the notion that the administration and colleagues had “given up” on reaching Pedro, Rachel was less concerned with their acceptance than supporting his needs, and thus goes out of her way to seek a stakeholder interested and capable of helping her learn about the problem (Fessler, 1995). Finally, her focus on teaching Pedro, a student with many special needs, places her once again, alongside more experienced teachers in terms of the problems of practice she is capable of identifying.

Table 7.1 summarizes the problems of practice Rachel identifies throughout her narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.1

Summary of problems of practice identified in Rachel’s narratives

Narrative	Rachel
1	Teaching to students’ special needs: “I need to find a way to connect to him [Doug] because I can’t imagine going through that and having this disorder...”
2	Working with stakeholders: How to work with Ms. Statuesque the ESE teacher
3	Teaching to students’ special needs: “How do I reach someone who’s already at the age of ten, so distant from thinking that learning is important?”

In summation, Rachel’s stories of problems of practice indicate that, like novices, her first instinct was to identify problems at the basic management level, which served to support her own needs. This is especially evident in her first narrative. However, Rachel’s tendency to ask questions to inform and “dig” into identifying her problems, consistently led her to reconceptualize them, thus ultimately identifying each problem as a need to ensure appropriate

support for her students and impact their learning. Moreover, unlike novices, she is less concerned with gaining acceptance from peers and colleagues, than identifying her problems of practice (Fessler, 1995). Consequently, when confronted with peers who attribute problems of practice to her “youth” and inexperience, refuse to act in ways that best support student learning, or have “just given up” on students, Rachel continues to ask questions and seek stakeholders that can support her to inform the identification of her problems. These findings contradict that, which literature reveals about novice teachers and the problems they identify (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Burkman, 2012; Fuller & Bowman, 1975; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000).

The following sections respond to the research question, “How do the teachers’ first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?”

Inquiry skills illuminated in Rachel’s stories. The literature identifies four skills of inquiry that serve to distinguish the skills illuminated in Rachel’s stories of approaching problems of practice. These skills include: (1) identifying problems of practice, (2) asking questions to investigate, (3) collecting and analyzing data, and (4) driving change (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; 2009). As a fifth skill, an inquirer may use each skill as a building block, engaging in the complete systematic inquiry process to respond to their problem of practice.

Skill 1: Identifying problems of practice. Rachel began the year “raising” her voice to Doug in response to his misbehavior. However, she claims it “really backfired,” as she witnessed him become “much more aggressive” and “defiant.” Rachel’s communication of the connection between Doug’s defiance and aggressiveness in consequence to her reaction is indicative that unlike novices, she is aware her instructional decisions impact students (Fry, 2009; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). In identifying the problem, Rachel does not

blame Doug or claim it is his problem to change, but rather plans to problem solve the challenge by striving to “build a relationship” with him, engage in “gentle teaching,” and “assign him jobs” during group work in response to his dislike for engaging in it. She specifies “to get him to perform in the classroom...everything had a job attached to it, and that’s how I got him to do his work, by giving him those jobs.” In addition, she gives up her lunchtime to “have him come from lunch every single day” believing “if he sees respect, hopefully he’ll give that respect.” Likewise, when Rachel critically questioned Ms. Statuesque’s behavior, she wondered “how can students be making gains, if they’re having articles read to them? In a third example of Rachel’s innate belief that instructional behaviors directly impact student learning, she reveals that with Pedro, “I had to really reach into every corner and find anything that would work for this kid...”

In accordance with Hogan and Rabinowitz’s (2009) work in problem representation, Rachel’s problem identification skills are in more advanced stages of development compared to novice teachers who predominantly identify problems according to “surface features” such as grade, context, subject matter and setting. She identifies problems of practice based on “deeper features,” which include students’ needs. The story involving her challenge with the ESE resource teacher is only one of the three stories where the problem of practice is identified according to its contextual features; for instance, ensuring Ms. Statuesque correctly administers LDCs or pulls students out of Rachel’s classroom to avoid loud distracting talking. However, even in this story, Rachel reminds readers that at the heart of the problem are deep features related to “instruction, assessment, and diversity/equity issues in the classroom (p. 166). For example, after Rachel administers running records to the ESE students and learns Ms. Statuesque has been incorrectly reading the text to them, she identifies “it’s November and you’re still having these same [academic] issues...if you were in class and not pulled out...for an hour and a

half, maybe you wouldn't be having these issues.” As such, she decides to create separate groups to help the six ESE students “catch up.”

Rachel's stories of working with Doug and Pedro reveal problems identified according to the students' diverse needs and issues. For Doug, the challenge is in reaching a student with Oppositional Defiance Disorder and a dying mother, while for Pedro it is reaching a student that is unmotivated to learn due to his upbringing with a local gang. Thus, Rachel's challenges are identified per their deep features, which include students' needs; a skill researchers advocate teacher educators support novices to learn (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009; Novick & Bassock, 2005). Table 7.2 summarizes Rachel's problem identification levels, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.2

Summary of Rachel's problem identification levels

Inquiry Skill	Rachel
Identifying Problems	Advanced development stage based on “deep features” of “students' need” in problem identification (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009)
	Some reference to surface features in narrative 2 with Ms. Statuesque

Skill 2: Asking questions to identify problems of practice. While Stanulis, Fallona and Pearson (2010) empirically illustrate novices' questions are hardly investigative, but rather focus on discussion of daily experiences, Rachel's stories indicate that she *is* able to ask investigative questions. This is seen in her third narrative with Pedro, where she inquires, “How do I reach someone who's already at the age of ten so distant from thinking that learning is important?” However, in her first narrative with Doug, Rachel uses an investigative *statement*, rather than a formal investigative question to pave the way, stating, “I need to find a way to

connect to him [Doug] because I can't imagine going through that and having this disorder..." This may be indicative of the "incomplete...spiral" that shortens formal use of teacher inquiry skills, as a result of intense activity and limited time in the classroom noted by Handal and Lauvas (1987, p. 31) and Day (1999).

Unlike novices in Stanulis, Fallona and Pearson's (2010) study who admit that despite needing help as novice teachers, they simply didn't know what to ask, Rachel demonstrates an ability to know what and how to ask. When reaching out to the school psychologist about Doug, she specifies, "What is he doing for you? What are your strategies?" Likewise, she approaches the assistant principal asking to be taught how to read students' individualized education plans (IEPs), and speaks to the social worker about Pedro, admitting "I didn't know if it was in her job description to be informed of the academic part, but I didn't know where else to go. I was seeing these big drops [in Fair data]." "Here's the academic part, now you tell me some of the emotional parts," she would say.

A crucial finding to note is that Rachel is capable of inquiring into problems based on deep features that examine theoretical underpinnings and directly impact specific students, such as Pedro and Doug. She can pinpoint the problem and knows what to ask. However, when navigating an issue identified using contextual features, such as how to work with Ms. Statuesque or respond to her unprofessional behavior, Rachel's questions are more aligned with the typical novice fixation on managing the situation (Stoughton, 2007). She simply asks others to teach her what she needs to know to engage in professional discussion *around* the problem (such as how to read IEPs or if Ms. Statuesque has attended training), but cannot ask questions to manage the actual problem. This suggests two possibilities; one that problems based on surface features lend themselves less to investigative questions; or two, teacher inquiry prepares novices

to inquire about deep features, but focuses minimally on studying contextual issues such as navigating instructional relationships and communication differences with key stakeholders in the learning environment. Nonetheless, this finding suggests that Rachel knows how to ask investigative questions that impact student learning, but is a true inexperienced novice when navigating the social context and its surface features. Table 7.3 summarizes Rachel’s use of investigative questions, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.3

Summary of Rachel’s use of investigative questions in narratives

Inquiry Skill	Rachel
Asking questions	Investigative statement in narrative 1 with Doug: “I need to find a way to connect to him [Doug] because I can’t imagine going through that and having this disorder...”
	Unable to ask investigative questions in narrative 2 with Ms. Statuesque
	Investigative question in narrative 3 with Pedro: “How do I reach someone who’s already at the age of ten, so distant from thinking that learning is important?”

Skill 3: Collecting and analyzing data. As characteristic to novice teachers, Rachel started her year measuring the effectiveness of her practices by observing students’ affect and behaviors in class, rather than using formal data collection methods (Ingram, Louis & Schroeder, 2004). For instance, she might scold Pedro to “go to class. You need to switch!” Observing Pedro “banging his head on the side of” her desk “over and over again” served as her indicator that her methods were too aggressive to meet his actual needs. Likewise, she believes that if she said something was critically significant to Doug’s grade, he would “shut down” and not work.

However, between October and November a change occurred in all three stories. The inability to improve her situations using observations and intuition led her to seek strategies. She began asking, “What will be most effective right away with the boys? What’s going to help now with her [Ms. Statuesque]?”

For both boys, Rachel looked at FAIR data and running records to explore her intuition, determine fluctuations in their work and draw conclusions about their lives and needs. With Pedro, it was intuition that drove her to examine the data. She believed “there was a significant correlation between” his schoolwork and home life. She admits going into the data to understand the problem better. “That’s when I was looking at this data and seeing that as home life insecurity increased, school life was decreasing. It was hand-in-hand over the course of the year.” Likewise, with Doug, she used a “special DOJO behavior tracking thing” where she listed Monday through Friday in columns and the behaviors “cursing, hitting, violent behavior and not doing my homework.” Week-by-week she “marked” what she saw. With Ms. Statuesque, she completed running records of students to examine her belief that despite the ESE teacher’s data, the students were not “on-level” as she claimed. “I would do a running record because I didn’t trust her scores, and they would be significantly below.” Additional data collection methods that documented the problem included printed emails, lesson plans, ESE students’ workbook pages, grades on LDCs, and a journal she kept to reflect upon daily occurrences.

Rachel exercises a combination of independent and collaborative meaning making and data analysis methods. This is crucial as researchers acknowledge the ambivalent conclusions derived from sole independent analysis, confirming beliefs rather than reconceptualizing them (Erez & Grant, 2004; Stoughton, 2007). When selecting “made up” strategies to address challenges, including establishing competitive homework teams for Pedro while documenting

completion on a class chart, or building a relationship with Doug over his love for art, she intuitively analyzes resulting behavior to conclude effectiveness. She would say, “So I think it really helped. I mean his homework became amazing.” However, formal “data chats” every Tuesday during PLCs served as an opportunity for Rachel to analyze data with teammates and administration. There, they established goals to move each student forward, or examined why they were regressing. It was in this way that Doug’s close relationship with the assistant principal came to light, helping her understand the domestic challenges influencing his classroom behaviors, and thus reconceptualizing how she viewed the problem.

Additionally, Rachel turned to the school psychologist to analyze data weekly from the DOJO, and began to discover Doug’s violent “trends before breaks, and then in testing season” indicating his “stress” and dislike for “going home” as “it wasn’t exactly a fun place.” Similarly, when she felt everyone had “given up” on helping Pedro, she actively searched for someone that could help her make meaning of the problem. Weekly meetings with the social worker, taught her to read his “facial expressions and his body language” every morning, to decipher his mood and potential for running away from school or home on any given day. She learned to distinguish “when he had those facial expressions, okay...don’t push him to work with someone for the safety of himself, and to show him that I care...” Finally, after administering the third LDC to the six ESE students, Rachel “didn’t want to have biased scoring” where it appeared she had made her “own data” that reflected improved scores due to her “anger towards” Ms. Statuesque. Thus, she asked the “writing resource teacher” and assistant principal to grade them, triangulating her findings.

In addition to collaborating with social workers, administration, and school psychologists to make meaning from data and her problems of practice, Rachel reached out often to the teacher

resource. Ms. Joy helped analyze her written journal, as well as “rough drafts” of emails, distinguishing Ms. Statuesque’s unprofessional behavior, from Rachel’s overtly sensitive intuition towards every occurrence related to the situation. Additionally, Rachel admits, “I would run everything by,” asking if responses might be viewed as “unprofessional.” In accordance with Tricarico and Yendol-Hoppey’s findings, (2012), the collegial relationship and discussion served to help Rachel make sense of the challenge leading her to learn and develop professionally. Ms. Joy provided *her* perspective, as well additional perspectives in the way of training (including one at the Gurian Institute), and the text, *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*, which Rachel used to select strategies for working with both Doug and Pedro.

Table 7.4 summarizes Rachel’s data collection and analysis methods, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.4

Summary of Rachel’s data collection and analysis methods

Inquiry Skill	Rachel
Data Collection	Begins year with observation of student and ESE teacher affect to measure effectiveness in narratives with Doug, Pedro, and Ms. Statuesque.
	Shifts to formal data collection across all narratives, using Fair, RR, DOJOs, and emails
Data Analysis	Combination of Independent and Collaborative meaning-making with teacher leader, psychologist, social worker, writing resource teacher, and administrator is visible across narratives

Skill 4: Driving Change. Unlike Rachel’s other students, Pedro “would only work if he could be right next to” Rachel “sitting so close where his elbow would just touch” her. Rightly so, Rachel found it “weird,” and even “uncomfortable.” However, her feelings began to change

when Pedro admitted that his Mother's Day card could only be for her because she was "the only woman who loved" him. From that day on, Rachel called him "my special helper for everything" believing that he "just needed to feel connected to somebody" and "understood that [she] was a person who cared about him that was a woman." Likewise, despite her curriculum and agenda, reading Pedro's "mannerisms" became a morning ritual used to decide the ways she could best support his needs throughout the day. On days where he wouldn't "talk" or arrived with a particular "facial expression," she would say, "you're going to sit right next to me and you're going to help me..."

Attending the Gurian Institute led to several pivotal perspectives for Rachel, as she learned how boys and girls are diverse. Prior to the experience, Rachel would stop boys from horse playing asking, "Why are you touching each other?" She imagined they acted in response to the "violent behavior" continuously seen at home. However, the institute taught her that through those interactions, "they were learning how to communicate and show emotional connections" with each other. After that, "when seeing boys pushing around, if they're laughing afterwards...then" she could say "okay. I don't need to step in because...you're friends." She admits, "It was big letting that happen." At the institute, she also learned from a young boy that he started "caring about school" when "he felt everyone cared about him and everyone was a brother and they had their creed." The insight served as "a huge resource" to Rachel, making her realize she needed to make Pedro "feel like he had a true family" at school, as it was what he longed for in his gang life. Working with her teammate, Rachel became the "caring mother" figure, while Ms. Strict became his "dad, joking around" with him continuously. Driving this change using the new insight led to drastic academic improvements as "his Math scores...sky rocketed."

Unlike novices, Rachel used knowledge of students and how they responded to practices in the dynamic classroom setting, to employ alternative strategies atypical of her most usual responses to given situations (Hall and Smith, 2006). For instance, with Doug she initially believed “this kid thinks he’s a tough guy and you want to give him tough love.” However, after learning of Doug’s domestic challenges and reading the text, *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*, she consciously assessed tough love “doesn’t work with him because really he’s dealing with so many emotional issues and really he’s still such a child that he needed someone gentle.” Because the school psychologist taught her “he didn’t know how to identify what emotion he was feeling” and thus every “emotion was angry,” Rachel began modeling different emotions in her interactions with him. She determined “I can’t show I’m angry. I can show I’m disappointed in your action and we’re going to find a way to change it” instead. Similarly, when upon returning from truancy Pedro strolled into her classroom and unexpectedly cut a lock of her hair, Rachel spontaneously considered “I mean, I can’t move your clip over something like this.” “Oh what should I even do?” She considers with both boys, she was always looking for the next strategy that could work.

Finally, when Rachel could not independently drive change, she used data to argue *for* change. Striving to get Ms. Statuesque to not read the LDCs to the six ESE students, she would say, “I want them to be making gains since we’re collecting data, so please don’t read it to them.” In addition, when running records proved below level for the six ESE students, Rachel organized reading and writing groups to support their learning and kept folders to monitor their change independent of the ESE resource teacher. When Ms. Statuesque did not enact the necessary change to meet students’ needs, Rachel shared student work and previous LDC grades with the assistant principal as a rationale for why Ms. Statuesque should not be allowed to

administer the LDCs to students at all. Table 7.5 summarizes Rachel’s ability to drive change across narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.5

Summary of Rachel’s ability to drive change across narratives

Inquiry Skill	Rachel
Driving change	<p data-bbox="597 594 1356 667">Drives change with Doug by using gentle teaching and assigning jobs</p> <p data-bbox="597 705 1356 779">Drives change with Ms. Statuesque by sharing lesson plans and emailing her instructions</p> <p data-bbox="597 816 1356 884">Drives change with Pedro by assigning jobs and creating a family for him</p>

Inquiry dispositions illuminated in Rachel’s stories. The literature identifies three dispositions of inquiry that serve as a lens to distinguish the dispositions illuminated in Rachel’s stories of approaching problems of practice. These include: (1) reflective dispositions, (2) critical learning dispositions, and (3) emotional intelligence dispositions (Chan & Elliot, 2004; Day, 1999; Deal & White, 2009; Ghanizadh & Moafian, 2011; Goleman, 2001; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Schön, 1983; Smith, 2004; Smith, 2012; Taylor, 2000; Tait, 2008).

Disposition 1: Reflective dispositions. At the start of the year much of Rachel’s reflection was “surface reflection” as she used personal beliefs to guide “what to do, when to do it, and how to do it” without moral or ethical considerations for her actions (Handal & Lauvas, 1987, p. 31). For instance, when she read previous teachers’ notes regarding Doug’s Oppositional Defiance Disorder, she consciously reflected, "I'm just going to have to be a little tougher on that one." She admits that she had “5 minutes” of university preparation on working

with such students and “didn’t think of really digging into it” further. Because the belief to be tough guided her response to Doug’s name-calling and common misbehaviors, Rachel “raised [her] voice” at him and admits “being mean for everything, a little slip of a curse word.” She “was dragging him into the office” continuously. Likewise Rachel believed Pedro roughhoused with other boys because he was “being violent and... saw so much violent behavior” at home. She suspected he had “no idea how to connect with the boys his age because he goes home and he’s around middle and high school kids until all hours of the night.” The personal belief led her to continuously stop the behavior, “getting on him for” it.

In stories of both boys, however, Rachel’s reflective disposition uncharacteristically (for a novice) deepens by fall, as reflection becomes less about only driving action, and more about understanding the theoretical, moral and even ethical reasons and “basis of...actions” (Handal & Lauvas, 1987, p. 31). The shift is triggered when Rachel acknowledges that her methods are no longer working. She recalls, “really thinking about what was happening.” Despite “structures” being in place, “it all started really breaking down.” The pivotal moment is marked by frustration and urgency as with Doug, where she acknowledges a moral rationale, “For the sake of the classroom, for the safety, and for the other kids, I knew I needed to do something extreme...” Unlike novice teachers, Rachel does not remain in survival mode, but rather begins to ask questions to understand the situation and devise appropriate responses (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Fessler, 1995; Day, 1999; Handal & Lauvas, 1987). She wonders “how to reach out to boys who have cut off learning.” Theoretically-driven reflection and action is visible after she begins to read the text about ODD students and attend trainings to learn research-based strategies for teaching boys, such as appealing to boys’ interests (as with art and dance), giving them jobs, and igniting their competitive nature (as done using a homework system). Further, Rachel’s

decision to establish a family unit for Pedro is a morally based reflective decision highlighted when she recalls thinking, “I need to make him feel like he has a true family here and not the family at home.” She admits if the student at the Gurian Institute had “not answered [her] question,” she “probably wouldn’t have really tried to get the boys to hang out with him, tried to be a mother to him, tried to really make that family unit.” For “both boys, I had to really show them that I cared about them and their futures.”

In accordance with Schön (1983; 1987), after attending the Gurian Institute training, use of Rachel’s reflective disposition supported her to “deconstruct” the belief that boys’ roughhousing was a “violent” expression (pp. 28-29). She admits, “Now, when I see boys pushing each other around, if they’re laughing afterwards...then I know... I don’t need to step in because they’re a fourth grade level. They’re ten years old. They’re learning how to communicate, which was huge.” Likewise, deep morally grounded reflection led her to reconceptualize her belief that Doug needed tough teaching. Rather, she embraced “gentle teaching” as the more effective way to reach him, also using the strategy to consciously model emotions and expressions other than anger, which were unfamiliar to him. She explains:

One of the things I noticed with him... he's got a very tough guy appearance. He has some family in the gang atmosphere. He watches rated R movies. And so, automatically you want to be like, "This kid thinks he's a tough guy" and you want to give him tough love. That doesn't work with him though, because really, he's dealing with so many emotional issues and really he's still such a child that he needed someone gentle. The gentle person in his life who's typically mom is dying, and dad

is trying to raise him to be like the next man of the house, so he needed that. He didn't need another teacher yelling at him.

Table 7.6 summarizes Rachel’s levels of reflection throughout narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.6

Summary of Rachel’s levels of reflection throughout narratives

Inquiry Disposition	Rachel
Reflection	Reflection is evident across narratives (Schön, 1987)
	Shifts from surface reflection to deeper reflection with theoretical, moral or ethical considerations present in narratives 1 with Doug and 3 with Pedro (Handal and Lauvas, 1987)
	Only surface reflection is visible throughout narrative 2 with Ms. Statuesque

Interestingly, while the story with Ms. Statuesque depicts Rachel’s use of a reflective disposition, her level of reflection according to Handal and Lauvas (1987), remains predominantly as surface reflection. She keeps a journal by “writing everything in an email and then sending it to” herself, thus documenting each encounter with Ms. Statuesque. The entries are then only used to share the written reflections with the teacher resource, Ms. Joy, in an effort to receive advice for deciding what and how to respond to each encounter. Ms. Joy would probe Rachel with questions including, “How could you fix this?” However, no theoretical or moral reasoning for actions taken is explored. Important to note however, is that despite the literature stating that novices abandon reflection due to lack of time and fear of the unfamiliar realities in their new context, Rachel purposefully embraces reflection, using lack of time as her exact

rationale for engaging in it (Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Korthagen & Wubbels, 1995). She states, “you don’t realize how quickly everything goes, when something big happened last week that you really were like, ‘Why did that happen?’” is behind you. “If you don’t immediately at least write it down as a teacher on a sticky note and then email something, before you know it’s next month...everything goes so quickly.”

Disposition 2: Critical learning dispositions. As literature regarding novice teachers’ reflection indicates, Rachel was initially guided by unconscious beliefs and intuition about teaching (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007). This is evident when she assumes Doug’s defiant behavior is requiring of only tough love, and when she advocates for Pedro to be removed from her class believing that his movie watching experiences were the rationale behind inappropriate behavior. However, a continuous reflective attitude tied to a pursuit for professional development uncharacteristically surfaces, making Rachel a critical novice learner. She states, “once I really thought about how [Pedro] doesn’t have this home life and after talking with that outside social worker about how he doesn’t know how to show these emotions, I realized it wasn’t like that at all. He was really depending on someone to love him and just show that they cared about him.” She began modeling caring emotions through her interactions with him. For both Pedro and Doug, Rachel acknowledges, “I had to really reach into every corner and find anything that would work...” Specifically for Pedro she admits, “I had no idea what I was doing with this little gang member child. I went to the Gurian Institute for teaching boys and used” learned strategies. She also reached out to campus police for “gang training,” believing “I didn’t want my only gang knowledge to be from movies. I didn’t know exactly what type of stuff his initiation entailed and what type of stuff he had been seeing.” She asserts, “...I wanted to know what’s happening.”

“Ongoing and recursive” (Smith, 2004, p. 531) inquiry to learn and transform her practice is seen when Rachel states her mission to “figure out how to reach boys.” She soon realizes the ongoing challenge as, “...what worked one day wouldn’t necessarily work the next day. That was really hard.” She would ask herself, “How do I even address that?” and recalls thinking:

So looking at my resources, identifying what the main things were.

Okay. With the boys, it’s that they are violent, they don’t care about school...those are the trends. And because they were similar, I kind of grouped them together and narrowed them down. I’m going to go to this training. It will help me with things with Doug. Help me with things for Pedro.

Rachel demonstrates Brookfield’s (1987) characteristic of critical thinkers as she “imagines and explores alternatives” in her ongoing inquiry (as cited in Day, pp. 7-9). She would identify “these are my strategies I’m going to use and those were the ones that I found effective for both of them.” With Doug she learned, “I needed to always have another strategy up my sleeve.” Rachel outwardly acknowledges her unplanned use of inquiry, “I didn’t even realize I was doing inquiry.” Her teacher resource, Ms. Joy, shed light on her acts by stating, “You’re doing your inquiry thing again...” “You’re going to trainings. You’re picking certain strategies. If they don’t work, you’re doing another one...you’re doing your whole thing again.” It was at this time Rachel realized, “it was just so natural and [she] couldn’t imagine solving these problems in another way.”

There is only one instance where Rachel’s expressed critical learning disposition is grounded on awareness of “the social and political forces that distort and limit teachers’ educational conduct” and suggest issues of “ethics and social justice” relative to teaching values

(Day, 1999, pp. 29). This instance is seen when she acknowledges the underlying decision to attend the Gurian Institute training, as “I wanted to go because I just -- I knew the school system is set up for girls. In America, that's our school system. It's really set up for girls to succeed and I want to learn about boys, and so I went.” She fails to explore this further. However, she does later mention that “historically boys don’t really like writing” and she “took away” strategies particularly for teaching them how to write. As such, while this is very limited evidence of her ability to connect self-awareness, professional development, and awareness of social injustice, whether she is aware of her ability to use it to enact necessary social change is truly yet to be seen (Taylor & Petit, 2007).

Finally, “critical analysis” of Rachel’s own practice is most clearly evident in a short additional story she tells of scoring “progressing” on “student engagement” during a formal observation (Smith, 2004, p. 526). She admits that her intense desire to connect with her “below level” kids ensured she used “resources and strategies” with them, “but the rest of the kids weren’t as engaged.” She observed, “I was letting them slip under the radar and I noticed in some FAIR data that they had been dropping.” “I failed and I was really upset.” Rachel asked herself “Why did I get this?” “What am I doing? How can I make sure I reach them but I’m still being a good teacher to everyone else too?” She documented her thoughts in a journal. In response, she checked out an “iPod touch with a tripod and microphone” and “videotaped them, watch the boys, watch the rest of the kids, watch myself.” She realized the “need to ask...higher order questions for them and do more engaging things.” As such, she “looked up student engagement activities” to get them more actively involved, and reached out to the writing resource teacher for ideas.

Table 7.7 summarizes the visibility of Rachel’s critical learning disposition throughout her narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.7

Summary of Rachel’s critical learning disposition in narratives

Inquiry Disposition	Rachel
Critical Learning	Initially reflection is guided by unconscious beliefs and intuition about teaching across narratives.
	Reflection becomes led by critical learning when she becomes determined to learn from her problems to improve them in narratives 1 with Doug and 3 with Pedro (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007).
	Critical learning is less visible in her narrative regarding Ms. Statuesque.

Disposition 3: Emotional intelligence dispositions. Despite the fact that Rachel was not functioning within a safe teacher inquiry group, where collaboration for problem solving was encouraged, she evidences reflection supported by emotional intelligence as she uncharacteristically (of novices) acknowledges need for personal improvement and seeks collaboration with others (Tait, 2008). At every given instance throughout the stories, she turns to trainings, colleagues, and even books as resources. When assigned six ESE students she admits, “The first thing I did was go to third grade teachers, get some information to learn what would be best.” When the ESE resource teacher, Ms. Statuesque, refused her access to students IEPs, Rachel turned to the assistant principal to learn how to read them, stating, “I don’t know how to do this.” and admitting, “I’m having a problem and I don’t know how to handle it.” Throughout this story, she openly shares written reflections with her teacher leader, Ms. Joy,

seeking feedback. Further, when turned away by colleagues, as she strived to create a book study for the text, *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*, to learn more about Doug, Rachel determined to establish her own reading partnership with Ms. Joy. Likewise, when she felt everyone had “given up” on Pedro, she reached out to the social worker she barely knew to compare data and establish trends between his grades and emotions.

On two separate occasions, Rachel recognizes “anger” towards Ms. Statuesque, as well as in her own ability to engage all students consistently. To help regulate the emotions, she documents her feelings in a journal and then leans on the assistant principal, teacher leader, writing resource teacher, and others to help interpret them. Goleman (2001) defines such recognition and regulation as characteristic of emotional intelligence. Further, she is able to recognize and regulate emotions in others. With Doug, she recognizes his anger when she verbally establishes expectations or is tough on him, and learns to regulate her own behavior to support regulation of his, stating, “at the beginning, I raised my voice and that really backfired on me, but I had to just...even if he's calling me the worst names under the sun, I had to be so gentle.” Most critically, as suggested by Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) in two of the three stories, she demonstrates ability to critically think through the emotions to reason, establish goals, solve challenges and make decisions. Determined to reach out to Doug and Pedro, she engages them in common interests and intentionally models emotions they are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with, such as happiness and care. With Ms. Statuesque, however, she is less able to critically think through her anger in order to establish goals, solve the challenge, and make decisions. She is guided by colleagues every step of the way in her decision-making process. Unlike the warm demeanor she exhibits when she speaks of how she “loves” her boys, Rachel expresses *fresh* anger when speaking of Ms. Statuesque. She states:

I wanted to punch her in the face, or I wanted to just like scream at her half the time because she was just -- well, everything with Ms. Statuesque was just so, I mean, terrible for the kids sake and for like our working. She was in my classroom every day, co-working. It was really terrible.

Rachel does admit to being less tolerant of adults, as “they should know better.”

Finally, it is important to note that when confronted by her failure to engage all students, Rachel admits, “bawling” her “eyes out” and questioning, “Why am I even a teacher?” But after having “talked it through, writing it down, talking it through again” she was able to get “back up” again. She was then ready to tell herself “Yes, it’s upsetting. Yes, I always thought that was my strong suit but I got it for a reason. I need to think why.” This confrontation of failure, according to Tait (2008), demonstrates emotional intelligence, as it shows how Rachel “persists in the face of difficulty...” (p. 60). As Tait suggests, it enables the ability to take the next step in reaching out to stakeholders to learn from the experience. Such action is visible in Rachel’s decision to reach out to the writing resource teacher and her teacher leader after the occurrence. Table 7.8 summarizes the visibility of Rachel’s emotional intelligence throughout narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.8

Inquiry Disposition	Rachel
Emotional Intelligence	Exhibits emotional intelligence across narratives by rising to challenges, seeking support from stakeholders and regulating emotions (Tait, 2008)
	Openly reveals professional needs and seeks resources including colleagues, trainings and books (Tait, 2008).

Critical to note is that it appears Rachel’s commitment to reflect and critically learn from her problems with Doug and Pedro, support her emotional intelligence, as she is able to confront the challenge with optimism, reach out to stakeholders and manage her feelings in the face of difficulty. Contrarily, critical learning is less visible in reflections regarding Ms. Statuesque, and thus, the novice communicates a challenge managing her feelings towards the resource teacher. In anger, she states “she should know better,” but leans on Ms. Joy to support her to regulate the frustration and respond to the situation.

In accordance with the literature, Rachel’s narratives illustrate the interdependent relationship between inquiry dispositions, as emotional intelligence supports her to reflect with stakeholders to learn from challenges with Doug and Pedro, while reflection and critical learning support her to regulate her feelings, given the challenging problems of practice she faced (See Figure 7.1)

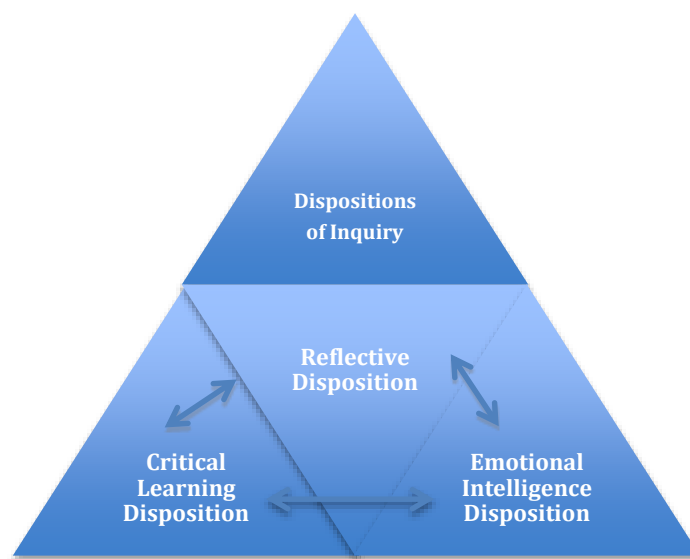


Figure 7.1: Dispositions of inquiry

Barriers and facilitators to resolving problems of practice. For this section, Rachel's transcripts were conceptually analyzed to explore and respond to the research question, "How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?" (Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model of human development serves as a lens to examine novice teachers' stories for the facilitators and barriers to solving problems of practice in their first year. Among the most influential factors on teachers, the researcher identifies family members, peers, school, and even church and health services. In a second subsystem, influencing factors may be the interaction between two primary sources, such as home and school, while in the third subsystem factors affecting novices are more indirect. For instance, factors may include stress from education policies impacting the school and administrator's ability to offer professional development to teachers. In the fourth subsystem, beliefs and values may affect a teacher, unlike the final subsystem, where time may serve as a facilitator or barrier to resolving challenges.

Barriers to resolving problems of practice. In Rachel's first story, her own peers in the workplace directly served as the biggest barrier to resolving her problem with Doug. Rather than supporting her efforts, the science teacher, Ms. Neuron mocked her employed strategies, stating "Oh, is that what they teach you in college now to do?" or "Oh, well, you're just acting like a big sister, not a teacher." She did not agree with Rachel's "gentle teaching" approach. In consequence, despite working to ignite Doug's interest in school, Rachel knew that when Ms. Neuron "yelled at him...before coming to [her] room," she would have to work to get him to let the "bad mood go." As a second subsystem influence according to Bronfenbrenner (1974), the interaction between Ms. Neuron and Doug served as a barrier to resolving Rachel's challenge. She notes, "Whatever mood she'd put him in, he would come to me like that." As another

second subsystem barrier, Rachel recognizes that serving as a first-year teacher made it challenging to “get them on board” and convince them that she was “not just being a first-year teacher and not just being a pushover.” She often introduced ideas to them stating, “I've done my research. I have this resource and this is what's going to work for him. So if you want him to work, you can try it because it works for me.” She believed with conviction in her ideas, stating her feelings towards Ms. Neuron:

I look at it as you don't want to grow. You're set in your ways and you won't go to anyone. He's in your homeroom class. He's technically your student and you haven't done anything. You scream at him all the time and he wants to come to my class because you're not trying.

Despite acknowledging that Doug's “home life” was a “contributing factor” to his ODD, Rachel identifies her team as the single barrier to resolving her problem with him. This is especially interesting, in light of research that states novices focus on their own challenges, attributing students' problems to uncontrollable factors, such as their home circumstance and lack of motivation (Fry, 2009; Maloch et al., 2003).

In Rachel's second story, she identifies the first subsystem barrier as her resource teacher, Ms. Statuesque (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Her “passive aggressive demeanor” ensured that the resource teacher did not “respond” to Rachel or her “demands.” She recalls that even when Rachel requested support for an observation, Ms. Statuesque “didn't show up” as a “vindictive move.” Further, Rachel describes her own “beliefs,” as an interfering barrier. She admits, “In the very beginning, I was just so worried of hurting her feelings.” She “wanted to be nice to her” in an effort to be “liked,” since they had to “work together.” As such, she made the decision early on not to meet with her and the administrator, as it would “be so awkward to have to work

with her after that.” In retrospect, Rachel now believes, you need to “state what you want professionally,” and she wishes she had been “more assertive” early on.

Rachel’s story with Pedro was much more complex and plagued with barriers to achieving resolution. She acknowledges that when “he would run away,” or she “wouldn’t see him for a couple of days,” she would “be sick to [her] stomach, worried what he was doing.” “I would cry at night,” she says. She was “so worried about him.” It was at these times when the primary subsystem, family, served as a barrier. She would speak to her fiancé and family about what she “was feeling, but no one really understood.” Instead, they would say, “Why, why are you even worried about him? He’s going to make those decisions.” Likewise, the secondary interacting subsystem school and Pedro’s history made it a challenge to “getting him help from inside the school, because they would just take him down, put him in an office, or put him in a cafeteria and make him work.” This made it more challenging for Rachel to give him the help she believed he needed. As a third barrier located in Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) fourth subsystem, Rachel notes the challenge of communicating with his home. When she reached out, a “different guy answered the phone every time and they would just hang up, hang up, and hang up...” Moreover, when she could make contact “with grandma,” she “only spoke Spanish and she was very hard to speak to.” Rachel admits, “It was really heartbreaking to tell this very elderly lady what her son had been doing.” Thus, Rachel identifies communicating with his home “was definitely a big barrier.”

Table 7.9 summarizes the barriers Rachel identifies throughout her narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.9

Summary of Rachel’s barriers illuminated throughout narratives

Narrative	Rachel’s Barriers
1	Peers in the workplace Interaction between Ms. Neuron and Doug (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).
2	Peer in the workplace Overarching belief and value: Non-confrontational
3	Family Communicating with Pedro’s home/grandmother Interaction between school and Pedro’s history there (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).

Facilitators to resolving problems of practice. When working with Doug, Rachel shares that the first subsystem facilitators to resolving her problem were “the principal and assistant principal,” as well as the “school psychologist.” The administrators provided insight beyond his Oppositional Defiance Disorder, helping her understand “his home life,” which Rachel deems a “contributing factor to his ODD.” In addition, working with the school psychologist directly impacted Rachel as she learned to read and monitor “his emotions and how he automatically goes back to angry.” She notes, “I couldn't imagine not having her.” She helped Rachel identify that he wasn’t “just some angry kid; He just didn’t know how to identify” positive emotions. Knowing this, led her to “find things to make him feel other emotions” like “making him feel excited” to do “new jobs.” Likewise, Ms. Joy provided her with the resource

Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children, which “opened [her] eyes” to strategies for helping Doug.

As facilitators that supported her to solve the problem of practice with Ms. Statuesque, Rachel references her teacher leader, Ms. Joy and the assistant principal. As resources, they taught her how to “look at ESE data,” understand “what’s an IEP?” and especially learn “what’s going to entail an IEP meeting?” Moreover, Ms. Joy served as Rachel’s sounding board, helping her interpret the emotions written in her journal, as well as Ms. Statuesque’s behavior. These factors were then used to guide Rachel’s approach to the problem.

The major facilitators to supporting Rachel to reach Pedro, included “working with the social worker...and then the training.” The social worker provided her insight into how to read Pedro’s mannerisms to inform her decisions and strategies for supporting him. Likewise, the Gurian Institute training and the book *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*, were instrumental in providing “insight into boys from the neighborhood” similar to Pedro and strategies for reaching them. She believes, if she hadn’t had those resources, she “wouldn’t have known how to start with them; I probably would have still been screaming at them, and that would have backfired.”

Ironically, while she doesn’t explicitly identify teacher inquiry as a facilitator, she references it as “a natural problem-solving technique” she “wasn’t realizing” she “was using.” She recalls learning to identify a problem in college “didn’t feel natural” and was “difficult,” as she had to “find” it. But in her own classroom she was:

put into a situation where these problems are thrown at you, you’re not looking for them, they’re abundant. And you’re kind of overwhelmed...

They're all around you and they're not going to just go away. You have to find a way to fix it.

With knowledge of teacher inquiry, she felt she had “a lot of ammo basically.” She could “pick this strategy...and trial and error here, continuously reflecting and doing things.” Confirming study findings by DeAngelis, Wall and Che (2013), Rachel states, “If I hadn’t learned how to do all that, these problems probably would have drowned me and I would not have wanted to teach next year because I wouldn’t have even know where to start.”

Table 7.10 summarizes the facilitators Rachel identifies throughout her narratives, as discussed in this section.

Table 7.10

Summary of Rachel’s facilitators illuminated in narratives

Narrative	Rachel’s Facilitators
1	Principal/ assistant principal School psychologist Ms. Joy
2	Ms. Joy Assistant principal
3	Social worker Gurian Institute training Teacher Inquiry skills

In the next chapter, Rachel and Charly’s findings are analyzed side by side to glean insight into ways the novice teachers illuminated inquiry skills and dispositions in their narratives, as well as the barriers and facilitators they faced when approaching problems of practice. The findings are then organized to communicate lessons learned regarding the research questions in this study.

Chapter Eight

Findings Across Rachel and Charly's Narratives

While findings in this study are not intended to be generalizable, due to its small sample and the contextual characteristics specific to the university program experienced by both Charly and Rachel, this chapter looks across findings from their narratives. It is aimed at gleaning overall insight into whether the novice teachers employ inquiry skills and dispositions developed during their teacher preparation program and, if they do, in what ways. In addition, in this chapter, I share lessons learned from this study's findings, as well as how I came to them.

The chapter is organized according to the research questions guiding this study:

1. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
2. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
3. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Sections pertaining to each question are introduced using sub-headings and small tables to summarize the respective findings referenced specifically throughout each section. Lessons learned with respect to the query are then explored.

Lessons Learned

Research Question 1: What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories? Problems of practice Rachel and Charly identify include teaching to students'

special needs, working with stakeholders, and learning instructional techniques. Table 8.1 summarizes these challenges according to their respective narrative.

Table 8.1

Summary of problems of practice identified in narratives

Narrative	Rachel	Charly
1	Teaching to students' special needs: "I need to find a way to connect to him [Doug] because I can't imagine going through that and having this disorder..."	Instructional techniques and teaching to students' special needs: "What is it that I could be doing differently, that could make my kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom?"
2	Working with stakeholders: How to work with Ms. Statuesque, the ESE teacher	Working with stakeholders: How to work with Ms. Recluse, her partner teacher
3	Teaching to students' special needs: "How do I reach someone who's already at the age of ten, so distant from thinking that learning is important?"	Instructional Techniques: "What were the kids supposed to be learning [in guided reading groups]? How exactly should I be teaching it? What should the job of a facilitator be?"

Given their teacher inquiry preparation, two lessons are evident with regard to the problems of practice Rachel and Charly identify in their stories. The first, being reflective and critical learning dispositions, lead them to look beyond characteristically novice classroom management challenges when identifying problems of practice; and the second, is the novices demonstrate reliance on inquiry skills to respond to identified problems. The teacher inquiry

skills and dispositions exhibited lead the novices to exemplify more experienced problem identification skills than traditional novices, and support them to overcome the survival phase identified in the literature (Day, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Lesson 1: Reflective and critical learning dispositions lead problem identification.

Despite literature that cites novice teachers most often focus on classroom management when identifying their problems of practice, neither Rachel nor Charly cited this as a problem of practice. While one might consider classroom management was simply not a challenge for them, Rachel's description of Pedro banging his head against her desk or Charly's student disrupting instruction to dance and sing during instruction could have been interpreted as a classroom management problem. However, the novices' reflective inquiry disposition supports them to look beyond the common focus cited throughout the literature, while their critical learning disposition leads them to strive to learn from their circumstance (Schön, 1983; 1987; Stoughton, 2007). The shift is seen specifically when "frustration" surfaces, and both acknowledge that their methods for addressing the students are "not working." These pivotal moments in their narratives are marked by *intentional* and *conscious* reflection, as advocated by Schön (1983; 1987), who asserts that it leads individuals to "deconstruct" erroneous beliefs (pp. 28-29). Charly states, she "challenged" herself with questions to "figure it out" led by a need to "understand what was really happening," while Rachel similarly recalls, "really thinking about what was happening."

In accordance with Fuller and Bown (1975), however, Charly does in fact exhibit the characteristic evolution of thinking about self, to teaching tasks, and eventually to considering her impact on student learning when speaking of her problem of practice in the third narrative regarding guided reading. The primary focus of the narrative remains on teaching tasks

throughout, however, as motivation for improvement, she discusses “I just want to do what’s best for my kids, and if they’re struggling, those small groups are a really good time to try to help.” Rachel, rather, remains focused on a desire to impact student learning first with Doug whom she recalls witnessing an “an increase in his [academic] productivity after connecting with him through art, and then with Pedro whom she realizes after feeling threatened by his behavior, “I don’t need him to be removed from my classroom...I need to help him.” In addition, despite the fact that her problem with Ms. Statuesque is, in actuality, a challenge working with a stakeholder, Rachel identifies the problem of practice when she assesses students using running records, and discovers the necessity to pull groups to academically support students’ needs that the ESE teacher fails to address. She then further instructs Ms. Statuesque to not give students answers to classwork, stating “We’re collecting data, and I want them to be making gains.”

Lesson 2: Novices’ reliance on inquiry skills to respond to identified problems.

Unlike novices who enter and remain in survival mode when consumed by problems of practice in their first years teaching, Rachel and Charly tell stories of ways they rise to their challenges using inquiry skills and dispositions acquired in teacher preparation. Rachel states “If I hadn’t learned how to do all that, these problems probably would have drowned me and I would not have wanted to teach next year because I wouldn’t have even know where to start.” Likewise, in moments of survival, Charly recollects, I “thought about the things I was doing” and “about my preparation for teaching,” believing “I used them [teacher inquiry skills] because that’s all I knew how to solve problems...that’s what I was taught in college and that’s all I really knew.”

When seeking to understand guided reading facilitation, Charly admits teacher preparation did not teach her how to facilitate it, but rises to inform the challenge using teacher inquiry skills to learn about the problem in texts and from colleagues. This finding, identified

across narratives, supports research that novices satisfied with their preparation programs, willingly respond to challenges, over desiring to leave the profession early (DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013). Significant to this, when Charly reflects on her problem of practice with Ms. Recluse, she alludes to dissatisfaction with preparation, as “Maybe I haven’t been given the tools to try to help myself through these types of confrontational issues.”

Research Question 2: How do the teachers’ first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?

This section highlights ways the individual inquiry skills and dispositions are illuminated throughout Rachel and Charly’s narratives, and is thus organized accordingly. As in the previous section, a table initially summarizes findings with respect to each skill or disposition, and is then followed by lessons learned.

Identifying problems. When identifying problems of practice, Rachel and Charly demonstrate attention to a combination of both surface features including context, and deep features comprised of knowledge of students’ needs (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009). Table 8.2 summarizes the ways the teacher inquiry skill is illuminated in each participant’s narratives. The lesson learned includes the novices’ uncharacteristic awareness that their practice impacts student learning.

Table 8.2

Summary of Rachel and Charly’s problem identification levels

Inquiry Skill	Rachel	Charly
Identifying Problems	Advanced development stage based on “deep features” of “students’ need” in problem identification (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009)	Novice to advancing development stage based on predominant “surface feature” of “context” in problem identification (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009)

Table 8.2 (continued)

Inquiry Skill	Rachel	Charly
	Some reference to surface features in narrative 2 with Ms. Statuesque	Varied expressed <i>awareness</i> of student needs in narratives 2 with Ms. Recluse and 3 with guided reading

Lesson 1: Novices’ uncharacteristic awareness of their impact on student learning.

While Rachel is advanced in her ability to identify problems based on deeper theoretical features related to Doug and Pedro’s “instruction, assessment, and diversity...issues in the classroom,” Charly demonstrates a greater focus on surface features including grade differences in guided reading facilitation and subject matter challenges focused on teaching within curriculum guidelines (Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, p. 166). However, Charly shows her inquiry skills in problem identification are advancing, as within both narratives, problems of practice with Ms. Recluse and guided reading evolve into challenges to support learners’ needs.

Most interestingly, despite differences in problem identification skill levels, when identifying challenges, both Charly and Rachel demonstrate knowledge that their instructional practices impact students. This characteristic is unlike teachers who focus on problematic surface features, as attention to context most often impedes acknowledgement that one’s practices may be the source interfering with student learning (Fry, 2009; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). Consequently, participants in this study are driven to seek strategies for improving engagement, guided reading practices, and even “connecting” with students in need of guidance such as Doug and Pedro.

Asking questions to investigate. Rachel and Charly demonstrate the ability to ask investigative questions given problems of practice with students and instructional tasks.

However, they are unable to do so when navigating professional relationship challenges. Table 8.3 summarizes the ways the teacher inquiry skill is illuminated throughout participants' narratives. The lesson learned includes the possibility the nature of the problem interferes with novices' ability to ask investigative questions.

Table 8.3

Summary of Rachel and Charly's use of investigative questions in narratives

Inquiry Skill	Rachel	Charly
Asking questions	Investigative questions asked in narrative 1 with Doug and 3 with Pedro	Investigative questions asked in narrative 1 with engagement and 3 with guided reading
	To mediate professional relationship in narrative 2, novice was unable to ask investigative questions	To mediate professional relationship in narrative 2, novice was unable to ask investigative questions

Lesson 1: The nature of the 'problem of practice' matters. When asking questions, both novices demonstrate the uncharacteristic inquiry skill to ask investigative questions to seek help on challenges (Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2010). Specifically, Rachel inquired into ways to reach students "distant from thinking learning is important" and ways "to connect to him [Doug]." However, it is crucial to observe that, potentially resulting from intense activity and limited classroom time documented by Handal and Lauvas (1987) and Day (1999), Rachel shortens formal investigative questioning in her narrative with Doug, noting an investigative statement instead. Like Rachel, Charly is capable of asking investigative questions to explore

strategies for making “kids want to learn and be doing what they need to be doing in the classroom,” as well as ways guided reading should be facilitated in her fifth grade classroom.

Neither participant, however, understood how to ask investigative questions to approach problems of practice with professional colleagues, Ms. Recluse or Ms. Statuesque. Rather, they felt unprepared to approach professional relationship problems. This indicates the possibility that either the nature of the challenge did not lend itself to asking investigative questions, or novices were not led to do so enough in teacher preparation and felt unfamiliar with the process.

Collecting and analyzing data. Rachel and Charly demonstrate the initial tendency for novices to rely on informal observation and ambivalent intuition to collect data. However, both shift to more formal data collection methods overtime, though Rachel does so significantly more than Charly. Likewise, both participants engage in independent and collaborative data analysis practices. Table 8.4 summarizes ways the teacher inquiry skills are illuminated throughout participants’ narratives. Lessons learned include the novices’ ability to shift from characteristic informal data collection methods to more systematic means to inform practice, as well as the exhibited initiative to reach out to stakeholders to facilitate collaborative analysis.

Table 8.4

Summary of Rachel and Charly’s data collection and analysis methods

Inquiry Skill	Rachel	Charly
Data Collection	Begins year with observation of student and ESE teacher affect to measure effectiveness in narratives with Doug, Pedro and Ms. Statuesque.	Begins year with observation of student affect to measure effectiveness in narratives with engagement and guided reading.

Table 8.4 (continued)

Inquiry Skill	Rachel	Charly
	Shifts to formal data collection across all narratives, using Fair, RR, DOJOs, and emails	Shifts to formal data collection in only narrative 1 with engagement, using journal writing and district rubric
Data Analysis	Combination of Independent and Collaborative meaning-making with teacher leader, psychologist, social worker, writing resource teacher, and administrator is visible across narratives	Combination of Independent & Collaborative meaning-making with district mentor, 1 st grade teachers, and writing resource teacher is visible in narratives with engagement and guided reading

Lesson 1: From limited intuition to formal data collection. In accordance with the literature, both participants rely on observation of students’ affect and intuition plagued by their limited experiences, to identify the effectiveness of their strategies at varied points (Ingram, Louis & Schroeder, 2004). Charly assumes the *Mystery Student* strategy is beneficial to Joshua’s engagement, as his outbursts become less frequent, and calls her guided reading methods “not meaningful” to learners when they just don’t “feel” right. Likewise, Rachel believes Doug “shuts down” when she places pressure on him to do well.

According to the participants, lack of success with strategies tried leads them to become more systematic in collecting data to inform their problems. Across her narratives, Rachel adopts FAIR testing data, running records, dojos, and even emails as data collection methods. Charly, rather, adopts journal writing and district rubrics to collect data on her problem with engagement. The participant only collects data in this first narrated problem, later articulating the wish to have collected data using her guided reading methods to “document growth” in her

students, and “compare” it to the results of using more traditional guided reading methods. Thus, it appears Charly is still evolving in terms of considering feasible methods to inform practice in the new context.

Lesson 2: Inviting collaborative analysis. Both Rachel and Charly reach out to professional colleagues to collaboratively analyze data, supporting them to overcome ambivalent data analysis practices, identified by literature to merely confirm beliefs, rather than aid in novice thinking reconceptualization (Ingram, Louis & Schroeder, 2004; Smith, 2004; Stoughton, 2007; Wenger, 1998). To analyze data and make meaning, Rachel collaborates with Ms. Joy, the teacher leader, as well as the psychologist, social worker, writing resource teacher and administrator across her narratives. Charly, likewise, analyzes data with the first grade teachers she invites to observe her engagement practices and Joshua, as well as with the district mentor. In addition, she analyzes data with the writing resource teacher to arrange “study groups” at the end of her guided reading narrative.

It is critical to note, however, collaborative data collection and analysis must have been a challenge particularly for Charly, given her school was small, her partner teacher refused to work with her, and the school principal advised her to “rely on” herself only. Illuminating Charly’s initiative to reach out to others is the articulated belief “inquiry is definitely not something that you just keep to yourself.” Thus, this suggests that preparing PSTs to collaboratively collect and analyze data may lead them to later reach out to others to make meaning of the unfamiliar circumstance that is their first classroom setting.

Driving change. Rachel and Charly demonstrate ability to drive change throughout their narratives. However, “fear” of not adhering to school and district guidelines, hindered Charly’s ability to do so effectively in her narrative of engagement. Table 8.5 summarizes these findings.

The lesson learned includes novices may drive change, though their need to remain within required boundaries may still impede their effectiveness to impact student learning.

Table 8.5

Summary of Rachel and Charly’s ability to drive change across narratives

Inquiry Skill	Rachel	Charly
Driving change	Drives change across narratives	Drives change across narratives*

* Note: In her narrative of engagement, Charly feels responsible to adhere to curriculum guidelines until after state testing, thus driving change with minimal improvement in problem of practice.

Lesson 1: Novices drive change, though boundaries may impede effectiveness. In terms of the inquiry skill driving change, Rachel and Charly consistently do so throughout their narratives. Rachel’s exhibited strategies to connect with Doug and Pedro, as well as to guide Ms. Statuesque are numerous. Despite connecting with them using art and music, giving them jobs in class, using “gentle teaching,” and creating a “family” atmosphere for them, Rachel admits with the boys, she was always looking for the next strategy that could work. With Ms. Statuesque, driving change included giving her lesson plans, emailing her specific requests, doing running records independent of the teacher, and organizing in class reading and writing groups to support ESE students’ learning.

Likewise, Charly drives change throughout her narratives. In her problem with guided reading, she organizes groups using her traditional method, and then modifies the practice to pull students with assessed needs. While with Ms. Recluse, she drives change by planning strategies to assume responsibility for her class when the teacher is not present, and even teaching them

social studies to support students to acquire the requisite knowledge. When driving change and engagement with Joshua, however, Charly’s “fear” of using strategies not aligned with curriculum guidelines and district-approved methods impede her ability to do so. Despite thinking book studies would address her challenge, she ignores the belief, adhering to the curriculum, as literature says most novices do when confronted with classroom challenges (Berliner, 1998; Fry, 2009; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). Thus, it must be noted despite the novice’s ability to drive change, Charly’s need to remain within boundaries, as she believed was required, hindered her ability to impact students’ learning.

Reflection. Rachel and Charly demonstrate varying levels of reflection throughout their narratives, per Handal and Lauvas (1987). These include surface reflection focused on how and when to do something, deep reflection with awareness of theoretical considerations for acting, and deepest reflection focused on moral and ethical considerations to guide responses to problems of practice. Table 8.6 summarizes the ways the reflective inquiry disposition is illuminated in each participant’s narratives. Lessons learned include the novices’ need to critically learn from circumstance deepens the reflective disposition, and focus on surface contextual features impedes depth of reflection.

Table 8.6

Summary of Rachel and Charly’s levels of reflection throughout narratives

Inquiry Disposition	Rachel	Charly
Reflection	Reflection is evident across narratives (Schön, 1987)	Reflection is evident across narratives (Schön, 1987)

Table 8.6 (continued)

Inquiry Disposition	Rachel	Charly
	Shifts from surface reflection to deeper reflection with theoretical, moral or ethical considerations present in narratives 1 with Doug and 3 with Pedro (Handal & Lauvas, 1987)	Shifts from surface reflection to deeper reflection with theoretical, moral or ethical considerations present in narratives 1 with engagement and 2 with Ms. Recluse (Handal & Lauvas, 1987)
	Only surface reflection is visible throughout narrative 2 with Ms. Statuesque	Only surface reflection is visible throughout narrative 3 with guided reading

Lesson 1: Critical learning deepens the reflective disposition. A reflective disposition is visible across Rachel and Charly’s narratives (Schön, 1987). However, reflective levels vary according to Handal and Lauvas (1987). For both participants, the year begins throughout all narratives with surface reflection that considers only “what to do, when to do it, and how to do it” relative to their problems of practice (Handal & Lauvas, p. 31). For instance, when working with Doug, Rachel initially considered she needed to be “tougher” with him due to his Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), and Charly initially believes to “stop” Joshua’s “outbursts,” she needed to get him out of the room.

Come fall, the need to critically learn from the circumstance by self-questioning results in deeper levels of reflection to explore theoretical, and even moral considerations. Rachel reads texts for teaching children with ODD, reflecting on new ways to teach Doug and Pedro based on knowledge about boys and the disorder. Similarly, Charly examines evaluations and student responses to identify her situation with Joshua, and reads district resources along with previous journal entries to consider why she responds as she did and ways she “could have done” things

differently. Moving forward, Charly's decisions became more theoretically based as when selecting to read, *Number the Stars* to increase engagement, and "open the door to go across the curriculum and talk about geography and history." Ethical and moral considerations, as Handal and Lauvas' (1987) deepest level of reflection, are less visible throughout. However, ethics does surface when Charly reflects on not reading the book, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, due to its discriminatory nature and language, as well as when she hopes Joshua connects with the African American history in the book, to consider ways to make his future different than his ancestors. Rachel, likewise, shows moral considerations, for instance when creating a family for Pedro, saying, "I need to make him feel like he has a true family here and not the family at home."

Lesson 2: Focus on surface contextual features impedes depth of reflection. Novices each remained in surface reflection throughout one of their problems of practice. For Rachel, her challenge with Ms. Statuesque kept her focused consistently on striving to understand what to do next, rather than theoretical, moral or ethical considerations for action. Interestingly, while moral and ethical considerations surface as Charly navigates her professional relationship with Ms. Recluse, and protects learners from a potentially angry teacher by not reporting her to administration, she is unable to move past surface reflection when striving to understand guided reading facilitation. In the situation, all of her reflective questions are founded on understanding how and when to accomplish the task.

Critical learning. Rachel and Charly demonstrate a critical learning disposition when they become determined to learn from their problems of practice, rather than responding to them using unconscious beliefs and intuition about teaching and learning (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007). Table 8.7 highlights the narratives, where a critical learning inquiry disposition is illuminated for each participant.

Lessons learned include the novices' critical learning and reflective dispositions support them to overcome frustration, critical learning leads them to confront, rather than submit to unconscious beliefs, and critical learning dangerously wavers in the eyes of professional relationship problems of practice.

Table 8.7

Summary of Rachel and Charly's critical learning disposition in narratives

Inquiry Disposition	Rachel	Charly
Critical Learning	Initially reflection is guided by unconscious beliefs and intuition about teaching across narratives.	Reflection is primarily guided by critical learning throughout narratives with engagement and guided reading.
	Reflection becomes led by critical learning when she becomes determined to learn from her problems to improve them in narratives 1 with Doug and 3 with Pedro (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007).	Critical learning not apparent in narrative 2 with Ms. Recluse (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007).
	Critical learning is less visible in her narrative regarding Ms. Statuesque.	

Lesson 1: Critical learning and reflective dispositions overcome frustration. While initially guided by unconscious beliefs (characteristic to novices), as when Rachel stopped boys from roughhousing believing they enacted violence witnessed at home, and when Charly found a “male role model” for Joshua assuming he didn’t have one in his daily life, critical learning becomes visible in their stories when novice frustration surfaces (Day, 1999; Hogan &

Rabinowitz, 2009, Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007). In Rachel's stories of Doug and Pedro, frustration visible in ongoing reflection leads to a need to "reach into every corner and find anything that would work" to "figure out how to reach boys." When seeking strategies and analyzing their results to determine effectiveness in an "ongoing" teacher inquiry cycle, she demonstrates her openness to learn (Smith, 2004, p. 531). With Doug, she admits always needing to have "a new strategy up her sleeve."

Moreover, Rachel critically analyzes her practice after receiving a progressing on engagement during a formal evaluation. In response, she says "I videotaped them, watch the boys, watch the rest of the kids, watch myself," realizing a need to ask "higher order questions" and "do more engaging" activities that appealed to higher-level learners in the room. Charly similarly positions herself as the "spectator of the show" during Joshua's frustrating outburst, analyzing herself, Joshua and student reactions, to critically see what was happening in the room and learn from it.

Lesson 2: Critical learning disposition leads novices to confront, rather than submit to unconscious beliefs. Interestingly, unlike novice teachers who submit to unconscious beliefs and ideas about teaching and learning, Charly demonstrates the ability to independently challenge her knowledge base (Day, 1999; Hogan & Rabinowitz, 2009; Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000). For instance, she discredits her guided reading experience stating, "I know that the model that I did see is not what it's supposed to look like anymore," and thus pursues literature and colleagues in an "on-going and recursive" mission to learn (Smith, 2004, p. 531). Charly constantly questions her practices, assessing a need for Ms. Trust to collect data on her engagement levels, and critically acknowledging she isn't certain if her SS teaching practices were exactly "right." Critical analysis is also visible when Charly receives a "progressing on a

classroom environment” domain in her formal evaluation. She becomes determined to improve, driven by the idea, “I didn’t want my kids to have a ‘progressing’ classroom environment. They needed the best I could give them.” She reflects on the problem and uses critical analysis to rearrange the classroom environment in ways that might better support her learners.

Lesson 3: Critical learning dangerously wavers in the eyes of professional relationship problems of practice. Significant to note in the novices’ stories of solving problems of practice with professional colleagues, is that critical learning and analysis is less visible. Rather than analyzing the situation to decipher her responses and learn from it, Rachel seeks advice from administration and Ms. Joy to determine her every move in responding to Ms. Statuesque. Fortunately for her, Ms. Joy’s role proves critical in probing Rachel with questions including, “How could you fix this?” In the end, Rachel learns the need to meet with stakeholders early on to establish expectations, a schedule, and even an instructional model. To Charly’s detriment, she chooses to isolate herself when experiencing the challenge with Ms. Recluse, thus preventing similar opportunities for colleagues to support critical analysis and learning from the situation. By not confronting the issue, she surrenders the critical learning disposition visible in her other narratives, for methods to keep the situation hidden and “peaceful” in the eyes of peers, colleagues, and students. This is the only time throughout her narratives where Charly acknowledges herself as an unknowing new teacher, submitting to obliviousness and ignorance by stating, “what do I know? I’m the new teacher.” Consequently, she does not pursue learning ways to navigate the professional relationship.

Emotional intelligence. Rachel and Charly’s emotional intelligence disposition surfaces when they confront their challenges optimistically, manage feelings despite frustration, and openly reveal professional needs by seeking support from stakeholders and resources (Tait,

2008). Table 8.8 highlights the ways an emotional intelligence inquiry disposition is illuminated in participants’ narratives. Lessons learned include emotional intelligence supports novices’ personally high expectations to improve practice, and critical learning and reflection symbiotically support emotional intelligence.

Table 8.8

Summary of Rachel and Charly’s emotional intelligence across narratives

Inquiry Disposition	Rachel	Charly
Emotional Intelligence	Exhibits emotional intelligence across narratives by rising to challenges, seeking support from stakeholders and regulating emotions (Tait, 2008)	Exhibits emotional intelligence across narratives by rising to challenges. * Seeks support from stakeholders and regulates emotions consistently throughout narratives 1 with engagement and 3 with guided reading (Tait, 2008)
	Openly reveals professional needs and seeks resources including colleagues, trainings and books (Tait, 2008)	Openly reveals professional needs in narrative 1 and narrative 3 (Tait, 2008) Seeks resources including colleagues and books

*Note: Emotional intelligence is threatened by inability to critically learn from the situation over concealing its reality in narrative 2 with Ms. Recluse.

Lesson 1: Emotional intelligence supports personally high expectations to improve practice. In accordance with Tait (2008), both Charly and Rachel appear to “...manage feelings, handle stress, confront failure with optimism, [and] persist in the face of difficulty...” (p. 60) This allows them to reach out to stakeholders to derive learning from experience and regulate their behavior accordingly to problems solved (Tait, 2008). With Doug and Pedro, Rachel turns

to colleagues, books and trainings, admitting, “I’m having a problem and I don’t know how to handle it.” She persists through difficulties despite being cussed at by Doug, having her hair cut by Pedro, and knowing resources were scarce since others had “given up” on the boys.

Charly similarly reaches out to colleagues, texts, and trainings to navigate her problems with engagement and guided reading. She openly admits need for support to Ms. Raft and Ms. Care stating, “I’m pulling students into groups using the old school model,” but want to learn the new model. After learning they did not have time to pull groups, she persists by seeking literature to learn, rather than submitting to the low expectation to not pull them at all. With her engagement challenge, Charly turns to the principal and the reading resource teacher to no avail, but continues to optimistically seek support, finally finding it in Ms. Trust.

Lesson 2: Emotional intelligence is symbiotically supported by critical learning and reflection. Both participants express feelings of failure related to formal evaluations; Rachel in the area of “engagement” which she believed initially was her “strong suit,” and Charly with “classroom environment.” Despite disappointment and even tears, they get “back up” to confront their respective challenge. Rachel calls it “upsetting” and rises with the belief “I need to know why,” while Charly admits to anxiously combing the observer’s notes for an “explanation” of “why” she received the rating. Both analyze their practices and respond with modifications in their methods.

Moreover, when Rachel feels “anger” towards Ms. Statuesque, she turns to reflect with Ms. Joy, who supports her to critically learn from the circumstance, and regulate her emotions towards it. Such regulation is characteristic to an emotionally intelligent teacher (Goleman, 2001; Tait, 2008). However, because Charly fails to engage her critical learning disposition to initially confront and learn from the problem, she loses her ability to regulate the emotions

affiliated with the situation. Anger eventually gets the best of her as she publically “calls her [Ms. Recluse] out.” These finding illuminated in Rachel and Charly’s narratives illustrate the symbiotic relationship between inquiry dispositions.

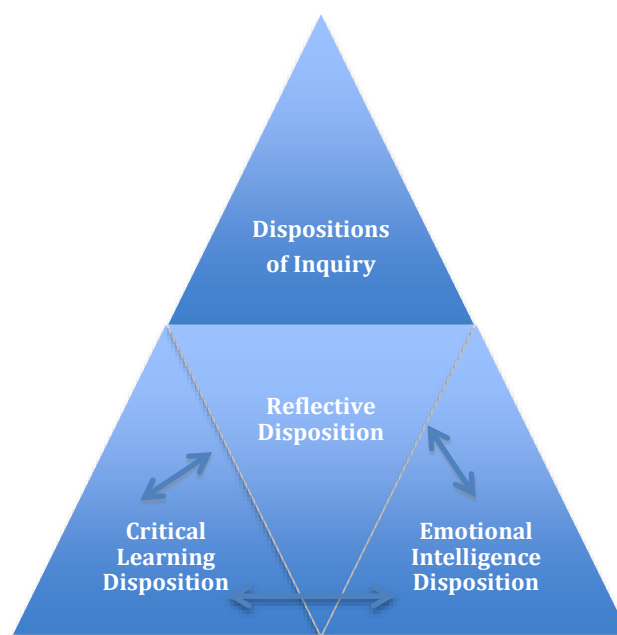


Figure 8.1: Dispositions of inquiry

Research Question 3: How do the teachers’ first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

This section highlights the barriers and facilitators to resolving problems of practice highlighted throughout Rachel and Charly’s narratives. Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) ecological model of human development served as a theoretical guide to identify these constructs. Barriers to resolving challenges will first be discussed, followed by the novices’ articulated facilitators. As in the previous section, a table will initially summarize findings and be proceeded by lessons learned.

Barriers. Rachel and Charly identify barriers to resolving problems of practice as peers in the workplace, school support, time, family, and personal beliefs founded on non-confrontation and contextual expectations. Table 8.9 summarizes these challenges according to the respective narrative in which they are illuminated. Lessons learned include non-confrontational beliefs interfere with overcoming problems of practice, the challenging role of the teacher researcher in a traditional school culture, and the family dilemma.

Table 8.9

Summary of Rachel and Charly’s barriers illuminated throughout narratives

Narrative	Rachel	Charly
1	Peers in the workplace Interaction between Ms. Neuron and Doug (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).	Overarching belief and value: Fear of non-compliance perception by administration
2	Peer in the workplace Overarching belief and value: Non-confrontational	Overarching belief and value: Non-confrontational Considers lack of “conversational tools” not provided in teacher preparation
3	Family Communicating with Pedro’s home/grandmother Interaction between school and Pedro’s history there (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).	Interaction between compliance beliefs and district demands (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Time

Lesson 1: Non-confrontational beliefs interfere with overcoming problems of practice. The novices' narratives highlight several barriers to resolving challenges, in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's (1974) ecological model of human development. Among them, both Charly and Rachel identify their beliefs to be "non-confrontational" as an inhibitor. Collaboratively working with stakeholders meant potential for an "awkward" working environment when disagreements were present. Consequently, for the "sake of the kids," Charly did not want to confront Ms. Recluse, just as Rachel avoided directly addressing Ms. Statuesque once witnessing her "anger" when asked to speak quietly in her group as Rachel taught. Moreover, both admitted wanting to feel liked by their colleagues, and thus avoiding direct discussions about the problems with the stakeholders. While Rachel does not specify this, Charly believes she lacked "conversational tools" for navigating her professional relationship, and wished she had taken a related "course" in her teacher preparation.

Lesson 2: The teacher researcher in a traditional school culture. In Rachel's narratives, other peers in the workplace also served as a barrier, as they mocked her use of strategies. Refusal to collaborate on techniques for reaching Doug and Pedro meant the students arrived angry to Rachel's classroom after confrontations with Ms. Neuron, leaving her to remediate upset attitudes before being able to even teach them. She felt strongly she knew what she was doing, and that the science teacher simply did not "want to grow." Similarly, the interaction between Pedro's school and his history there meant that she could not easily receive support in her efforts to reach him, as many others had "given up" on any potential for improvements. Nonetheless, Rachel felt she knew what was best for him, and would go to lengths to make it happen.

In contrast, for Charly it was an innate belief and desire to please others that interfered with the ability to resolve her problems of practice. She feared being viewed as non-compliant, and often selected strategies that allowed her to adhere to curriculum guidelines and instructional models, rather than directly impact her problems. Interaction between compliance beliefs and fear of administrator disapproval surfaces in the first narrative, as she continued to use the district text to maintain engagement, rather than book studies, as desired (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). Likewise, in the third narrative, Charly feared district personnel walkthroughs and was desperate to use an approved guided reading model, over pulling groups based on assessed need and data. In this narrative, time also surfaces as a barrier in accordance with Bronfenbrenner. She felt frustrated by the amount of time researching the problem took, particularly because explored resources failed to provide specific insight into her query, all while professional classroom demands continuously persisted.

Lesson 3: The family dilemma. Unlike Charly, Rachel found “family” to be a barrier. This could well be because Charly lives alone and in another state distant from any family. Rachel’s fiancé and family could not empathize with her felt distraught emotions when Pedro would run away. She wanted their support, but rather they questioned her feelings, asking “why are you even worried about him?” With Pedro, it was also *his* family that served as a barrier (Bronfenbrenner, 1974). When she called home, “different” people “answered the phone every time and they would just hang up...” Moreover, she could not speak Spanish to clearly communicate with his grandmother.

Facilitators. Rachel and Charly also highlight several facilitators to resolving problems of practice in their stories, per Bronfenbrenner’s (1974) ecological model of human development. Facilitators include professional development, literature, district observation tools,

and stakeholders in the workplace such as administration, resource teachers, the social worker, school psychologist, and colleagues across grade levels. Table 8.10 summarizes these facilitators, according to the respective narrative in which they are illuminated. Lessons learned consist of novices' ability to persistently seek supportive stakeholders, as well as reach out to professional development and texts.

Table 8.10

Summary of Rachel and Charly's facilitators illuminated in narratives

Narrative	Rachel	Charly
1	Principal/ assistant principal School psychologist Ms. Joy	"Observation tools" acquired in teacher preparation Interaction between "observation tools" and Ms. Trust in the workplace (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).
2	Ms. Joy Assistant principal	Fourth grade peers in the workplace
3	Social worker Gurian Institute training Teacher inquiry	Books and teaching resources

*Note 1: Facilitator in narrative 2 was accessed to comfort her *after* experiencing problem, rather than to support seeking resolution.

*Note 2: Facilitator in narrative 3 did not aid in problem resolution, rather it made participant aware "there was a deficiency" in need of remediation

Lesson 1: Persistently seeking supportive stakeholders. Throughout Rachel's stories, the novice demonstrated persistence in reaching out to school stakeholders for support. The administrators provided insight into Doug's family history and ODD, while also teaching her how to read IEPs and supporting her in the conflict with Ms. Statuesque. Additional resources, such as Ms. Joy, who served as a sounding board for her problems with the ESE teacher and provided the text, *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*, as well as the school psychologist, were also the key. Moreover, when administration had given up on Pedro, Rachel intentionally pursued a qualified individual "with a special degree" to provide insight, finding such support in the school's social worker.

Likewise, Charly persistently reached out to stakeholders. However, she admits it was only the district mentor, Ms. Trust, who supported her by collecting engagement data to facilitate reaching resolution to the problem. She initially pursued the principal and Ms. Taken, the reading resource teacher, finding they were most often too busy and unavailable. Moreover, she believes that the interaction between the district mentor and her own skill to use "observation tools" (learned in teacher preparation), allowed for improving her practice, as she used the district rubric to examine levels of engagement and determine where and how to get where she wanted to be. While Charly credits the writing resource teacher and fourth grade peers for supporting her to seek resolution in her problem with Ms. Recluse, in truth they did not support the search for resolution, but rather served to comfort her after realizing the experienced challenge.

Lesson 2: Novice's reach out to professional development and texts. Finally, throughout the narratives, trainings and literature surface as facilitators to solving problems of practice. For Rachel, training at the Gurian Institute provided insight into creating the family at

school that Pedro desired, while the text, *Educating Oppositional and Defiant Children*, teaches her about “gentle teaching” and giving the boys jobs. Similarly, Charly pursues texts to learn to facilitate guided reading. While she describes the books as a facilitator to solving the problem, she admits that their role was predominantly in making her aware “there was a deficiency” in need of remediation, rather than helping her address it.

In the next chapter, lessons learned are analyzed to confirm and/or add to what is known throughout the literature regarding problems novices identify, inquiry skills and dispositions that surface, and the challenges to resolving problems of practice. The chapter further communicates seven implications for school administrators, mentors, and teacher educators facilitating PSTs skills and dispositions of inquiry in teacher preparation.

Chapter Nine

Implications and Conclusions

Employing Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) perspective that experience occurs narratively, and thus "educational experience should be studied narratively" (p. 19), this qualitative study uses stories to understand how two novice teachers, who learned teacher inquiry throughout teacher preparation, navigate problems of practice they identify in their first year in the classroom. Despite the documented developmental change on preservice teachers' practice when using teacher inquiry, the ways in which first-year teachers illuminate inquiry skills and dispositions after having experienced teacher inquiry as a teacher preparation practice, has long remained unclear (Capobianco, 2007; Dawson, 2006; Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders & Goldenberg, 2009; Halai, 2012; Keys & Bryan, 2001; Megowan-Romanowicz, 2010; Poekert, 2011; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1999; Taylor & Pettit, 2007; Yendol-Hoppey & Franco, 2014).

Responding to Feiman-Nemser's (2001) asserted need for "connective tissue" between phases of professional development from preservice teacher (PST) to novice teacher, the study examined novice teachers' stories of their first year, to understand the problems of practice they experienced, and how they approached them in their first classroom as new teachers. As such, it is crucial to note this study does not aim to establish causal influence between teacher preparation and novice teachers' skill level; but rather to discuss the inquiry skills and dispositions illuminated in the novice teachers' stories of problems of practice. Guiding my inquiry was the overarching research question, "What stories do novice teachers tell about the problems of practice in their first year?" And three subquestions:

1. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?
2. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?
3. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?

Using a narrative design, the study documents three richly detailed stories for each novice teacher, communicating their contextually laden experiences to understand the problems of practice identified in their first year teaching, inquiry skills and dispositions that surfaced when seeking resolution, and barriers and facilitators experienced as the novices sought to resolve identified challenges (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). Findings gleaned insight into whether the novice teachers employed inquiry skills and dispositions developed during their teacher preparation program and, if they did, in what ways. This study contributes to teacher educators' ideas for researching models of practice used, and to ignite discussion regarding the need to study results of signature pedagogy on novice teachers past their teacher preparation (CAEP, 2013; DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; 2003; 2008; Shulman, 1986).

Summary of the Study

An interpretive paradigm and constructivist theoretical perspective informed the use of Connelly and Clandinin's (2000) narrative "theoretical methodological frame" (p. 128), asserting that novice teachers' stories are a significant way of knowing how they negotiate the world they live and the meaning attributed to those described experiences. To attain Rachel and Charly's stories, interview data was collected in the summer immediately following their first contracted year teaching (Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997).

Findings from this study indicate the two novices identified problems of practice related to instructional methods, collaborating with stakeholders, and teaching to students' special needs, rather than the classroom management challenges novices most typically cite (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000). Inquiry skills cultivated in teacher preparation including identifying problems, asking investigative questions, collecting/analyzing data, and driving change, appeared across several of each participant's narratives when the novices sought resolution to challenges. Moreover, unlike novices in studies independent of preparation program guidance, inquiry dispositions such as reflection, critical learning, and emotional intelligence also surfaced; though with varying levels of depth, depending on the identified problem of practice (Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Korthagen & Wubbels, 1995; Stoughton, 2007; Volk, 2010). Specifically, inquiry skills and dispositions were most evident when approaching problems of practice related to students' needs and instructional methods, while less evident when striving to resolve professional relationship problems of practice.

Participants in the study explicitly articulate reliance on inquiry skills, asserting it was "all I knew to...solve problems," and "If I hadn't learned how to do all that, these problems probably would have drowned me and I would not have wanted to teach next year." As they used inquiry skills and dispositions to approach the problems, the study found, unlike many novices, Charly and Rachel demonstrate awareness their instructional practices impact students (Fry, 2009; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). They uncharacteristically collect student data to inform practice, using methods including running records and rubrics. Formal use of data collection methods illuminate Rachel and Charly's shift from initial characteristic novice reliance on limited intuition and observation of students, to formal data collection methods

(Bachor & Baer, 1999; Ingram, Louis & Schroeder, 2004). In addition, the study finds unlike novices who strictly adhere to classroom management and lesson plan guidelines even when student learning is not evident, Rachel and Charly look for ways to drive change in their practice, seeking pedagogical methods to impact student learning (Berliner, 1998; Fry, 2009; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). Charly however, initially drives change within curriculum guidelines, impeding the effectiveness of her strategies on students' engagement.

Finally, the study finds the symbiotic relationship between inquiry dispositions. While research highlights reflection must be supported by critical learning, the study finds Rachel and Charly's critical learning and reflective dispositions supported them to regulate emotions in order to overcome frustrations related to problems of practice (Tait, 2008). Contrarily, when critical learning was not present in Charly's reflection, her ability to regulate emotions was impaired, preventing her from systematically approaching her problem of practice.

In summation, the study offers teacher inquiry skills and dispositions, defined in the literature as identifying problems of practice, asking investigative questions, collecting and analyzing data, driving change, reflecting, critically learning, and exhibiting emotional intelligence, supported Rachel and Charly to identify and approach student-centered and content-focused problems of practice using methods more characteristic of experienced teachers. While I can only claim inquiry skills and dispositions surfaced in the ways the novices approached problems of practice, findings *suggest* PST preparation grounded in teacher inquiry is beneficial to novice teachers' ability to solve such challenges in their first year.

In this chapter, I communicate the implications of this study for mentors and principals supporting novices in their first year as classroom teachers, as well as for teacher educators

tasked with preparing PSTs with inquiry skills and dispositions to overcome problems of practice that interfere with novices' ability to reach students. After each implication, I provide suggestions for future research, which may complement or confound the respective findings/implication described. This chapter ends with a description of the limitations of this study, as well as my personal insights as a novice teacher educator.

Implications

Findings from this study both confirm and add to knowledge of the problems of practice novices identify; and the ways in which inquiry skills and dispositions surface when seeking resolution after completion of a PST preparation program grounded in teacher inquiry. Upon reflecting on my findings, I offer seven important implications for school administrators and mentors supporting novices, as well as teacher educators facilitating PSTs' skills and dispositions of inquiry in teacher preparation. These implications include: (1) leading novices to see beyond classroom management; (2) emphasizing essential problem solving skills; (3) supporting novices when the nature of the 'problem of practice' inhibits asking investigative questions; (4) communicating boundaries for novices to drive change effectively; (5) fostering critical learning with reflective focus on student needs; (6) cultivating the symbiotic relationship between emotional intelligence, critical learning and reflection; and (7) promoting the novice teacher *researcher* in a traditional novice teacher culture.

Implication 1: Leading Novices to See Beyond Classroom Management

While studies indicate novices limit problem identification to classroom management problems of practice, this study adds to our understanding of novice problem identification. Whereby, using reflective and critical learning dispositions, beginning teachers are capable of seeing beyond the commonly identified contextual management problem (Andrews & Quinn,

2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Burkman, 2012; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000). Charly speaks of a need to “challenge” herself to “really figure out what it [the problem] was” with Joshua and the class. On four separate occasions, she adamantly resists identifying the problem as classroom management, and rather employs reflective and critical learning dispositions fostered by teacher inquiry to examine the impact of her own practices on students. Rachel similarly recalls, “really thinking about what was happening” with Doug, and asking questions to identify the nature of the situation.

Given this finding, mentors and administrators can serve a critical role in supporting novices to shift beyond thinking about management, to teaching tasks, to teaching to impact student learning (Fuller & Bown, 1975). First, mentors assigned to novices during induction should make themselves available to observe the teacher in the classroom context, and engage in collaborative post-reflective discussions. In this time, mentors should probe novices to examine problematic situations and critically analyze the impact of their instructional practices on the identified challenge with respect to student learning. Mentors can then brainstorm with novices a list of strategies for supporting student learning, and collect/analyze data for them to inform novices’ use of the strategies. Likewise, administrators collect data on novice teacher performance and discuss it with novices during post conferences. However, the administrators should engage novices in discussion regarding trends visible in the data over time, to support them to identify problems of practice.

Finally, because problems of practice are first encountered throughout preservice teacher preparation, every field placement in teacher preparation can/should serve as a controlled dress rehearsal for PSTs to learn ways to intentionally use reflective and critical learning dispositions to identify and understand their overwhelming circumstances. Teacher educators must be

present in the field, probing PSTs to critically analyze their practices for ways they impact student learning, in light of the challenges they identify.

Future research. While emotional intelligence surfaces throughout the literature as a third inquiry disposition according to Day (1999) and Tait (2008), the role of emotional intelligence on the problems novices identify remains unclear. Tait (2008) highlights emotional intelligent teachers *approach* problems optimistically and reach out to stakeholders to inform them. However, to this end I wonder how, if at all, novices' emotional intelligence influences the types of problems of practice they identify.

Implication 2: Emphasizing Essential Problem Solving Skills

Feiman-Nemser (2001) communicates novices abandon learned preparation practices for “safer, less complex” teaching methods (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1029). However, participants in this study challenge this assertion, explicitly articulating reliance on inquiry skills learned by stating, “If I hadn’t learned how to do all that, these problems probably would have drowned me and I would not have wanted to teach next year...” and I “thought about the things I was doing” and “about my preparation for teaching,” believing “I used them [inquiry skills] because that’s all I knew how to solve problems...that’s what I was taught in college and that’s all I really knew.” While I do not aim to establish a causal relationship between teacher preparation and novices’ problem solving abilities, I do offer that challenges inevitably arise in accordance with the literature (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Brewster & Railsback, 2001; Burkman, 2012; DeAngelis, Wall & Che, 2013; Gratch, 2000; Lundeen, 2004; Whitaker, 2000). Thus, this study extends the literature by suggesting when preparation practices are “all” novices claim to know for solving challenges, they turn to them, overtly communicating their reliance.

Given this finding, administrators should emphasize induction programs and professional development opportunities grounded in supporting novices to develop problem-solving skills. In accordance, mentors assigned to novice teachers should be prepared to facilitate problem solving, in order to support novices to develop such habits in the context of their first classroom. Moreover, teacher educators can provide district professional development to administrators, resource teachers, and mentors interested in facilitating problem solving skills in their respective schools.

Future research. The field could benefit from knowledge of several researched pedagogical practices teacher educators can use to prepare novices to develop problem-solving skills. In addition, because mentors are a critical resource to novices in the context of their first classroom, a deeper understanding of their role in facilitating problem solving skills with novices is needed.

Implication 3: Supporting Novices When the Nature of the ‘Problem of Practice’ Inhibits Asking Investigative Questions

In light of research, stating novices are unable to ask investigative questions to address their needs given the challenges of their first year, stories of problems of practice in this study contradict this assertion, illuminating the use of Charly and Rachel’s inquiry skill asking investigative questions in their new context (Stanulis, Fallona & Pearson, 2010; Stoughton, 2007). More importantly, however, findings from this study extend knowledge regarding novices’ ability to ask investigative questions, offering that the nature of the problem of practice mattered in terms of the questions participants in this study were capable of asking. Queries focused on informing students’ needs and teaching tasks, but novices were unable to ask investigative questions to navigate professional relationship problems of practice.

Given this finding, the role of the mentor is critical, as novices may feel unable to turn to school-based stakeholders too close to the professional relationship that defines the problem of practice. Mentors can/should help novices analyze the situation, probe them to ask questions to inform their challenge, help them regulate emotions by listening and advising them, and guide novices to devise professional responses, given related frustration that may arise. Similarly, administrators can help by being attentive to the needs of the novice, particularly when a troublesome history with an individual stakeholder is present. The administrator should surround the beginning teacher with a supportive professional community of colleagues, and regularly ask the novice how the professional relationship with the challenging stakeholder is progressing. The goal is for the novice to feel supported in navigating the professional relationship, thus ensuring all stakeholders are able to work together in the best interest of the students. When preparing novices with inquiry skills, teacher educators must redefine problems of practice to include professional relationship challenges. In doing so, novices can be encouraged to ask related investigative questions, and learn strategies for working with challenging stakeholders to ensure continued impact on student learning.

Future research. Additional research is needed to understand the set of skills novices must have to effectively navigate problems of practice with stakeholders in the school context. Only with this understanding can teacher preparation develop a variety of pedagogical practices to support novices to develop this skill set. Moreover, research is needed to know ways teacher educators can best support novices to develop the identified skills.

Implication 4: Communicating Boundaries for Novices to Drive Change Effectively

Contrary to literature, the novices' stories of solving problems of practice illuminate their ability to drive change (Berliner, 1998; Fry, 2009; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Maloch et al., 2003;

Westerman, 1991). In Charly's narrative of engagement, however, she fears exchanging the reading textbook for book studies would get her in "trouble" with administration; and thus, to no avail, decides to apply multiple strategies within curriculum guidelines instead. Applying the book study strategy after testing season results in a drastic improvement in students' engagement. The finding primarily confirms literature stating when confronted with classroom challenges, novices adhere to curriculum (Berliner, 1998; Fry, 2009; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Maloch et al., 2003; Westerman, 1991). However, in addition, it extends what is known regarding driving change, illustrating the lesson that despite the novice's ability to do so, the need to remain within conceived boundaries impeded the participant's effectiveness to impact student learning.

This finding is particularly pertinent to administrators, as novices need an understanding of professional boundaries for driving change. Adhering to curriculum guidelines feels safe to novices, until they learn acceptable expectations. To ensure beginning teachers are encouraged to drive necessary change, administrators should communicate expectations beyond the curriculum guidelines, allowing novices to feel safe to apply strategies they feel reach learners best. Similarly, mentors can play a significant role in communicating school expectations to novices. As a close and familiar advisor, mentors should meet with novices to discuss innovative, yet acceptable ideas for driving change in response to problems of practice.

Finally, teacher educators must work with collaborating teachers in the field to remain knowledgeable of state and district expectations. PSTs turn to field supervisors to begin to develop a foundation for realistically acceptable ways to drive change in practice. Expectations deemed impractical or unrealistic by PSTs discourage them from driving change in the

classroom, and prevent them from establishing an accurate understanding of professional boundaries.

Future research. Research is needed to define “acceptable boundaries” for teachers to drive change. While such boundaries will vary geographically, standard-driven educational settings adhering to Common Core, for instance, may subscribe to a set of norms helpful to novices. In addition, the field could benefit from exploring ways administrators and mentors can better support novices to drive change.

Implication 5: Fostering Critical Learning with Reflective Focus on Student Needs

While this study initially confirms Handal and Lauvas’ (1987) findings, that novices engage in surface reflection focused on what to do and when to do it, narratives illuminate that Rachel and Charly’s need to critically learn by asking investigative questions, deepens their levels of reflection. In two instances, the critical learning disposition leads the novices to focus on investigating ethical and moral considerations for supporting students’ needs. Rachel’s creates an in-school family for Pedro, while Charly reads a book to connect Joshua to his African American history in hope he will be inspired to apply himself to a better future. This is significant to me, given researchers advocate for teacher educators to support PSTs to connect their beliefs and classroom culture, with societal challenges to enact change from within (Brookfield, 1987; Stoughton, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Taylor & Petit, 2007). However, in preparation, I did *not* foster the connection described; yet the novices felt led to position themselves as change agents in their first classroom, though ever so minimally. Given the contextual reality of participants, this study finds novices must be supported to use critical learning dispositions to reflect on societal challenges affecting students, in order to support learners’ needs and influence change.

School administrators often have insight into the challenges students within their schools face, resulting from a history with families as students proceed through grade levels. Because novices are new to the context, administrators should share students' background information, leading novices to investigate ways to support the students' specific needs. Moreover, mentors should provide a safe place for novice teachers to discuss their beliefs regarding the students' situation, thus supporting them to confront fallacies and foster a critical learning disposition from which novices can learn. Likewise, as advocated by Taylor and Petit (2007), teacher educators must provide opportunities for novices to acknowledge their beliefs and be led to consider ways their classroom culture can lead to change.

Future research. Research is needed to further explore the ways mentors and administrators can support novices to use a critical learning disposition to define their role in enacting societal change from within the classroom context. In addition, as a teacher educator, I am led to wonder how, if at all, novice teachers given preparation fostering a 'change agent' perspective, position themselves in their first classroom when solving problems of practice.

Implication 6: Cultivating the Symbiotic Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Critical Learning, and Reflection

Review of the literature highlights researchers' critique that without critical learning and emotional intelligence dispositions, reflection is unable to ensure what individuals learn from problematizing situations (Day, 1999; Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011; Handal & Lauvas, 1987; Smith, 2004; Smith, 2012). A critical learning disposition ensures novices analyze their beliefs and situation to learn from it, while an emotionally intelligent disposition supports novices to optimistically confront challenges, regulate emotion, and reach out to stakeholders to problem solve (Tait, 2008). While Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) found a strong positive relationship

between individuals with emotional intelligence and their ability to critically think in order to reason, this study finds when a critical learning disposition is not present in reflection, the novices' emotional intelligence in this study was threatened. The lesson is particularly evident when Charly conceals Ms. Recluse's behavior, rather than approaching the problem of practice to critically learn from it. In the end, she is unable to regulate her emotions and angrily confronts the teacher publically.

Given this finding, both administrators and mentors must play a key role in supporting novices to critically learn from their problems, to ensure they are able to continuously confront challenges that arise, and learn to regulate the overwhelming emotions characteristic to novices in their first year. To do so, administrators should regularly conference with novices regarding their problems of practice, and collaboratively discuss ways for improving them. Similarly, the mentor's presence is necessary as the novice teacher seeks advice for responding to challenges, and strives to regulate emotions that may accompany confronting problems of practice their first year.

Future research. Because critical learning, reflection, and emotional intelligence are interdependent, teacher preparation must also lend attention to the emotional intelligence dispositions of PSTs. Teacher educators should administer surveys to assess candidates' emotional intelligence, and engage in qualitative studies to learn ways to best support them to develop the disposition. In addition, more research is needed to understand practical ways administrators and mentors can help novices develop emotional dispositions.

Implication 7: Promoting the Novice Teacher Researcher in a Traditional Novice Teacher Culture

Research has long communicated the perception that novice teachers are unprepared for the realities of the classroom context. In this study, the sentiment was shared by professional colleagues as reflected in the way participants were viewed and treated in their respective schools. Rachel communicates how teammates mocked her ongoing use of strategies and skill set, as well as spread rumors about her competence as a novice. Similarly, Ms. Recluse undermined Charly's instructions for learners to study using interactive notebooks. In reference to the potential district reaction to using book studies, she asserts, "They say that it's your classroom, you're the teacher, you make the decisions; but clearly not." Findings suggest, while preparation programs may prepare teacher *researchers* with inquiry skills and dispositions for making data driven decisions, it appears the culture of schools is currently prepared to support only the traditional overwhelmed novice teacher, and is unaware of the role of the novice teacher researcher in the context. The finding builds from Feiman-Nemser's (2001; 2003; 2008) assertion schools are unprepared to support novices, evidencing rather they are even less prepared for the novice teacher researcher.

Given this finding, teacher educators should work with local hiring schools to promote recognition of teacher inquiry as a respected investigative practice with ability to provide novices continued professional development. The teacher educator should arrange for the novice teacher to formally share their latest PST research study during a school-based professional development meeting, also presenting ideas for research in their first classroom. In addition, familiarity with novices' classrooms and contextual challenges makes the mentors' role a significant asset, as they can/should support novices to research their specific developmental need.

Finally, because teacher inquiry enhances all teachers' professional development, administrators should invite novice teachers' to serve as leaders of school-based teacher inquiry groups. Principals should allocate time during professional learning communities (PLCs) for teachers to collaboratively study instructional practices, and systematically research their classroom challenges.

Future research. More attention must be given to understanding how, if at all, novices prepared using teacher inquiry adapt to teaching in a traditional novice teacher culture. Do novices continue to use their inquiry skills and dispositions overtime, or abandon them to conform to the context? In addition, the field could benefit from exploring ways teacher educators can work with school administrators to support novice teacher *researchers* in traditional school settings.

Limitations

This study was designed using a thorough analysis of the literature to determine the need to identify teacher inquiry's influence on beginning teachers, as well as my personal interest in deeply understanding the pedagogical practice. However, it is without hesitation that I attest to shortcomings that restrict my findings and conclusions.

At the start of this study, various limitations were considered. First, while my prior relationship with participants may have served to advantageously encourage open discussion where the novices communicated personal details in their stories, an alternative possibility is also quite conceivable. I am cognizant the novices may have limited that which they selected to share, or misrepresented their experiences, resulting in narratives portraying them only as victorious in overcoming their selected problems of practice. This was certainly a potential risk, given the novice teachers were my interns for two years prior to entering the classroom. To

address this limitation, I met with each novice to define problems of practice, and specify the expectation that challenges communicated in narratives did not have to be resolved or successfully addressed. In addition, to minimize any potential power differences given our history as teacher and student, I defined my researcher role as one with the sole purpose of communicating their experiences approaching problems of practice in their first year. The novices were also asked to member check their transcripts, empowering them to eliminate any information desired and ensure transcribed data was accurately representative of their communicated stories.

My reliance on self-reported interview data communicated only by novices for this study also serves as a limitation. I recognize that in failing to explore perspectives from mentors or school administrators regarding the ways the beginning teachers approached their problems of practice, I minimized my ability to corroborate data to verify their stories. However, to address this, I asked that novices bring an artifact to aid in the telling of their story. The artifact was not analyzed, but rather served to substantiate communicated experiences. In addition, because this study relied only on two novices' perspectives, and detailed the specific contextual characteristics of the university preparation program and novice teacher elementary schools, conclusions were not intended to be generalizable. Finally, I am aware that limiting novices to only three stories of problems of practice also limits my conclusions, given that novices may have several stories to tell that may provide additional insight into the research questions guiding this study.

During analysis, my prior relationship with participants surfaced again as a limitation, as I became fearful that interpretation could convey my personal pride and disappointment in the decisions they made throughout each narrative. I admit it was challenging to be so close to

participants in light of our preparation program history. As such, I obsessively relied on thick description and use of quotes to remain close to participants' words, striving to keep assumptions to a minimum. Additionally, when analyzing narratives for conceptual elements responding to each research question, I kept copies of the respective literature review section within reach. This encouraged me to use the literature as my analysis lens, rather than my personal biases. Similarly, use of my critical peer was significant, as we analyzed data independently, and then collaboratively compared and contrasted our findings and assertions.

Moreover, because the novices were employed in different elementary school settings, characteristics of the context in which they practiced influenced ways they approached problems of practice. For instance, because Charly's school climate was characterized by a strong presence from district personnel, she felt less comfortable with applying and investigating strategies distinct from curriculum guidelines, than Rachel. Conversely, because Rachel practiced at the school where her last internship was completed, familiarity with the context encouraged her to try new ideas and reach out to professional colleagues she had previously established a rapport with.

Finally, it is critical to note participants in the study were PST that exemplified ability to engage in the inquiry process throughout their teacher preparation. Thus, while findings are not intended to be generalizable, this is a limitation, as participants are best representative of individuals who demonstrated a strong ability to apply inquiry skills to solving problems of practice in preservice teacher preparation. Had participants represented a lesser dedication to the practice, conclusions may have varied, potentially depicting a lesser influence of inquiry skills and dispositions on solving problems of practice in their new context. This remains to be seen.

Epilogue: My Insights

I began this study with the curiosity to understand if the use of teacher inquiry in teacher preparation could make any difference in the quality of teachers produced. I attest to approaching this study with the personal belief that despite my efforts in supporting them to learn the practice, novices would abandon their preparation for safer methods. After all, I, too, was an overwhelmed novice teacher once. However, that which I discovered in this study has truly challenged and even altered my thinking.

Contrary to my belief, novices do not always disregard their preparation. Rather, they are highly reliant on it, considering it for ideas to aid them in the messiness of their first year. If, and when, they cannot derive the needed support from their learnings, I believe they are forced to move on to other avenues. As a teacher educator, this awareness has enhanced my sense of responsibility to prepare PSTs with skills and dispositions they can truly rely on when found in the throws of their first years.

I admit to feeling awestruck at times by my participants' competencies when working to support diverse students' needs. It was as though each narrative unfolded characteristics of a breed of teacher very new and unfamiliar to me. I had never experienced nor imagined a novice capable of identifying problems of practice as complex as Rachel's; or even pursuing resolution to them with such intent strategies for reaching learners and critically learning, as did Charly. This finding has led me to believe teacher preparation, without teacher inquiry, is not teacher preparation at all. The reality is, classrooms are incubators of problems of practice for teachers, and they cannot rise to systematically resolve them without having acquired the skills and dispositions to do so.

As I lived Rachel and Charly's narratives and the way they approached problems of practice, I wanted to see characteristics of myself in them, but couldn't. Rather, I realized the unskilled way in which I have approached my own life as a learner, and quite possibly, even as a teacher. I have long preferred to overlook problems, lacking knowledge of how to approach them. Yes, it is ironic considering the novices learned teacher inquiry in my class. However, I have not experienced using the practice when overwhelming situations leave me no other place to turn. When Rachel commented, had she not been taught methods for seeking resolution, she wouldn't have known where to begin in doing so, I began to realize this lack of experienced deficiency. As such, the novices have elevated my awareness of the need to advocate for the use of teacher inquiry in PST preparation, believing I, as the teacher educator, must also continue using the practice to resolve my professional challenges alongside learners.

Rachel and Charly's narratives brought to light for me the role of the teacher and their use of inquiry skills and dispositions for supporting learners' diverse challenges with gangs, drugs, violence, and poverty in their everyday lives. I had always viewed teacher inquiry within the scope for supporting academically related challenges with learners. Consequently, during interviews, communication of their narratives led me to even wonder if I had defined 'problems of practice' correctly for them in the beginning. I soon realized their definition was broader, and more importantly, much more accurate than my own. The novices' ability to bring change to their students' circumstances proved unexpected to me. Particularly, because I now realize I failed to intentionally foster such attitudes in my preservice teachers due to *my* personal beliefs and experiences.

While I maintain that challenges with gangs, drugs, violence, and poverty are the primary responsibility of parents, I am more cognizant than ever that teachers must be prepared to reach

learners experiencing them, especially when parents are not present. Unfortunately, such circumstances are common; yet fortunately, teachers with inquiry skills and dispositions CAN make a significant difference in these students' lives. In accordance with this new awareness, I need to pursue a deeper understanding of ways to support novices to connect beliefs and their classrooms with the need for enacting societal change. I have much to learn...

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Appendix A

IRB Documents Letter of Approval



June 29, 2015

RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

Yvonne Franco Teaching and Learning 4202 E. Fowler Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Expedited Approval for Initial Review** IRB#: Pro00022425 Title: Novice Teachers' Stories of Solving Problems of Practice

Study Approval Period: 6/28/2015 to 6/28/2016

Dear Ms. Franco:

On 6/28/2015, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents outlined below.

Approved Item(s): Protocol Document(s): [Study Protocol Version #1; 6/19/2015](#)

Consent/Assent Document(s)*: [Consent Form- Version #1 .pdf](#)

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s).

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

Appendix A (continued)

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

Kristen Salomon, Ph.D., Vice Chairperson USF Institutional Review Board

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Kristen Salomon', followed by a horizontal line.

Appendix B

Approved IRB Informed Consent Form

Study ID:Pro00022425 Date Approved: 6/28/2015 Expiration Date: 6/28/2016



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk and Authorization to Collect, Use and Share Your Health Information

Pro # ___00022425__

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

Novice Teachers' Stories of Problems of Practice

The person who is in charge of this research study is Ms. Yvonne Franco. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Diane Yendol-Hoppey.

The research will be conducted in the USF College of Education.

Purpose of the study

The Purpose of this study is to use novice teachers' stories of their first year:

- To understand the problems of practice they experience and how they approached them in their first classroom as new teachers.

Appendix B (continued)

Why are you being asked to take part?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are a 1st year elementary classroom teacher that learned how to use teacher inquiry to solve challenges in teaching.

Study Procedures:

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in four 60-minute interviews over a two-month period during your summer break. The interviews will be scheduled at your convenience within the two months, and will take place in the USF College of Education. You will be invited to share three specific stories of your experiences with approaching problems in your first year of practice, in addition to an artifact of your choice to help substantiate each story that you choose to tell.

Questions that will guide each interview include: Tell me about your first year in the classroom teaching.

- How was your first day of school?
- How would you describe your classroom?
- How would you describe your students?
- How would you describe your classroom management?
- How would you describe your interaction with other teachers and faculty members? Tell me a story about a problem you encountered during your 1st year of teaching.

How did you know this was a problem?

What steps did you take to approach solving that problem? Why?

What, if any, methods or resources did you access to help you understand the problem?

What did you learn about the problem?

How might you approach the problem differently in a similar situation?

Describe any barriers to solving the problem.

Appendix B (continued)

Describe resources that enhanced your ability to provide insight into the problem/ solve the problem. In addition, you will be invited on the last day of the interview to read the transcripts of each of the interview sessions to identify if there is anything that you feel is not represented as you said or meant it and clarify, add or remove any information you desire from the accounts. The interviews will be audio recorded. As the principal investigator, I solely will have access to the recordings. However, they will be stored using only a pseudonym (no other identifiers) in a password-protected computer, along with the transcripts and this signed informed consent. Data will be maintained for 5 years, and will then be deleted from the computer and/or shredded.

Total Number of Participants Four individuals will be invited to participate; data will be collected on up to three participants based on the number that agree to participate. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete 4 scheduled interviews in the College of Education. **Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal** You do not have to participate in this research study. You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. **Benefits** We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study. However, the anticipated potential benefit of participating in this research study includes your own personal professional growth from reflecting upon experiences in your first year of practice. Social Behavioral Version #
Version Date:

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Costs

There will be no additional costs to you as a result of being in this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

Appendix B (continued)

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, research nurses, and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP) as applicable.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance, and other USF offices who oversee this research. We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are. **You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints** If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Ms. Yvonne Franco at 727-452-2327. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study	Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

APPENDIX C

IRB Certification

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)

HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT

Printed on 02/04/2014

LEARNER	Yvonne Franco (ID: 3899419) 4202 E. Fowler Ave. Tampa FL 33620 United States
DEPARTMENT	Childhood Education and Literacy Studies
PHONE	727-452-2327
EMAIL	yfranco@usf.edu
INSTITUTION	University of South Florida
EXPIRATION DATE	12/09/2015

SOCIAL / BEHAVIORAL INVESTIGATORS AND KEY PERSONNEL

COURSE/STAGE:	Refresher Course/2
PASSED ON:	12/09/2013
REFERENCE ID:	11899158

REQUIRED MODULES	DATE COMPLETED
SBE Refresher 1 – Defining Research with Human Subjects	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – Privacy and Confidentiality	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – Assessing Risk	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Children	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – International Research	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Federal Regulations for Protecting Research Subjects	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Defining Research with Human Subjects	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Research with Children	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Research in the Public Schools	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – International Research	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – History and Ethical Principles	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – Federal Regulations for Protecting Research Subjects	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – Informed Consent	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – Research with Prisoners	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – Research in Educational Settings	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 1 – Instructions	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Instructions	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Informed Consent	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Privacy and Confidentiality	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Assessing Risk	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – Research with Prisoners	12/09/13
Completing the SBR 201 Refresher Course	12/09/13
SBE Refresher 2 – History and Ethical Principles	12/09/13

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course site is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

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Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Research Questions	<p>b. What stories do novice teachers tell about the problems of practice in their first year?</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. What problems of practice do first-year teachers identify in their stories?</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b. How do the teachers' first year stories of approaching problems of practice illuminate their inquiry skills and dispositions?</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">c. How do the teachers' first year stories of problems of practice illuminate the barriers and facilitators to resolving them?</p>
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Interview Structure

Interview (60 minutes)	Purpose
First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish Rapport ▪ Describe novice teacher's general view of 1st year in the classroom ▪ Describe classroom/school context ▪ Define <i>problems of practice</i> and list examples ▪ Explain interview structure: each a different problem of practice ▪ Define <i>artifact</i> purpose and list examples ▪ Invite novice to bring artifact to each of the following interviews to help portray the story they desire to tell on each day.
Second, Third & Fourth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe story of 1 problem of practice identified & contextual characteristics ▪ Describe identification of the problem ▪ Describe ways novice approached resolution and why ▪ Describe what novice learned/is learning (if anything) as a result ▪ Describe specific changes made after learning more about problem ▪ Describe barriers/ facilitators to attaining resolution
Fourth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More explicitly describe the use of specific inquiry skills or dispositions/ barriers and facilitators that do not surface in their told stories. ▪ Participants member check transcripts to ensure stories are conveyed as intended ▪ Participants add to the stories or remove any concepts as desired.

Appendix D (continued)

Interview 1

Big Idea Explored: Defining Problems of Practice/ artifacts; General view of 1st year context

Cohort graduates in their first year teaching, like you, are the focus of this study. My intent is to understand how and if teacher preparation practices support novice teachers. The purpose of the first interview is to gain insight into how you view your 1st year in the classroom and to understand the context of your classroom/school. I anticipate getting a description of your new classroom and school environment and hearing stories about your daily experiences in it.

Exploration Question: Tell me about your first year in the classroom teaching.

Probes:

- How was your first day of school?
 - What was that like?
 - How did you feel?
 - Describe that feeling.
- How would you describe your classroom?
- How would you describe your students?
- How would you describe your classroom management?
- How would you describe your interaction with other teachers and faculty members?
 - Your team
 - Your mentors
 - Co-teachers
 - Administrators
- ❖ In the next three interviews I would like to hear stories of the problems of practice that you experienced this 1st year, and the ways you approached resolving them. ***Problems of practice*** are challenges you experienced in your school/ classroom as a first-year teacher.
 - **Probe:** What experiences come to mind when you think of the words “problems of practice experienced this year?”
 - A list will be compiled based on the problems of practice communicated
 - **Probe:** Which of these problems from the list can you use to tell a story of ways in which you worked to approach the problem and improve the practice?
- ❖ For each of our next meetings, we will focus the discussion on a different problem from this list. Select a problem from the list that allows you to tell the story of how you approached resolving it. At this time, the problem does not have to be completely resolved, but come to each interview prepared to tell the story of the problem of practice that you select. You will want to select a story that best allows you to discuss details of: the setting, the problem you experienced, actions taken towards a resolution, the outcome (resolution or lack thereof), and if/ how you experienced closure.
- ❖ For each story you would like to tell, bring an ***artifact*** that represents the problem of practice and/or the way you approached solving it.

Appendix D (continued)

- **Probe:** Looking at your list, what artifact would help you communicate the way you approached solving *this* problem of practice?

Interview 2

Big Idea Explored: Problem of Practice; Story #1

The purpose of the interview is to hear a detailed story about a problem of practice you experienced this past year, and gain a deep understanding of how you approached it and the characteristics of your school/classroom as they pertained to the situation.

Exploration Question: Tell me a story about a problem you encountered during your 1st year of teaching.

Probes:

- How did you know this was a problem?
- What steps did you take to approach solving that problem?
- Why?
- What, if any, methods or resources did you access to help you understand the problem?
 - Why did you select those resources?
- What did you learn about the problem?
 - What, if any, specific changes did you make after learning this?
- How might you approach the problem differently in a similar situation?
- Describe any barriers to solving the problem.
- Describe resources that enhanced your ability to provide insight into the problem/ solve the problem.

Interview 3

Big Idea Explored: Problem of Practice; Story #2

The purpose of the interview is to hear a detailed story about a problem of practice you experienced this past year, and gain a deep understanding of how you approached it and the characteristics of your school/classroom as they pertained to the situation.

Exploration Question: Tell me a story about a problem you encountered during your 1st year of teaching.

Probes:

- How did you know this was a problem?
- What steps did you take to approach solving that problem? Why?
- What, if any, methods or resources did you access to help you understand the problem?
 - Why did you select those resources?
- What did you learn about the problem?
 - What, if any, specific changes did you make after learning this?
- How might you approach the problem differently in a similar situation?
- Describe any barriers to solving the problem.

Appendix D (continued)

- Describe resources that enhanced your ability to provide insight into the problem/ solve the problem.

Interview 4

Big Idea Explored: Problem of Practice; Story #3 & Member Checking

The purpose of the interview is to hear a detailed story about a problem of practice you experienced this past year, and gain a deep understanding of how you approached it and the characteristics of your school/classroom as they pertained to the situation.

Exploration Question: Tell me a story about a problem you encountered during your 1st year of teaching.

Probes:

- How did you know this was a problem?
 - What steps did you take to approach solving that problem? Why?
 - What, if any, methods or resources did you access to help you understand the problem?
 - Why did you select those resources?
 - What did you learn about the problem?
 - What, if any, specific changes did you make after learning this?
 - How might you approach the problem differently in a similar situation?
 - Describe any barriers to solving the problem.
 - Describe resources that enhanced your ability to provide insight into the problem/ solve the problem.
- ❖ **End of the Story-telling:** At this time, I will ask a few more questions to explore concepts from your stories that I would like more details on.
- ❖ **Individual Probes** listed below will be purposefully selected based on the need to more explicitly explore the use of specific inquiry skills or dispositions/ barriers and facilitators that do not surface in novices' told stories.

Potential Probes:

- Tell me of a time this school year when you used any teacher inquiry skills to solve a problem of practice
- Why did you/ did you not use teacher inquiry to solve your problem of practice?
- Tell me of a time this school year when you used reflection to navigate a problem of practice. How did you use it?
- Tell me of a time when you were critical of your teaching practice and worked to improve it. How did you do this?

Appendix D (continued)

- Tell me of a time when you felt like you failed at teaching. How did you approach this failure? Why?
 - How did you feel as the new addition to your school/team? How did you feel exhibiting your professional learning needs to colleagues? Why?
 - Who/what was most helpful in supporting you through your first year?
 - Who/what made it most challenging to get through your first year?
- ❖ **Member Checking:** Thank you for sharing your stories. I have transcribed the stories you have shared in our previous three meetings exactly as you have communicated them, and would like to invite you to look at the transcriptions at this time. As you read them, please feel free to let me know if there is anything that you think does not represent your words and thoughts as you said or meant it. In addition, please let me know if there is anything you would like to clarify, add, or remove from the accounts.

Appendix E

Researcher Reflective Journal

Entry #1

Today, I did the first set of interviews, and while I enjoyed it, I found it to be a bit more difficult than anticipated. I am a researcher in the discussion and as such I need to listen, I need to be quiet. In my daily life, interest in a discussion has meant mutual conversation. I tend to listen for the speakers' response, seeking words for follow-up conversation. As a result, I felt the continuous need to reinforce the discussion by chiming in with my thoughts! I knew it was wrong, and as such, found myself unnaturally tightlipped, leaning forward and making eye contact as a means for DECLARING the interest I could not verbally express. 5 minutes of this and I started yawning and thinking, 'boy, this researcher role is quite boring.' Then I thought, 'is this what I do when other people talk to me?' Before you know it, I forgot where I was and what I was doing, feeling grateful that the recorder was still running to capture all I had missed! Resisting the yawn, I tuned back in and grabbed a piece of what was being said to ask a follow-up question that would pull me back into the convo. That worked- I was back! And for the rest of the hour, I felt a guilty responsibility to attentively listen.

Because the discussions today were around the novice's context, I did not feel compelled to want them to share ideas about their skills/ dispositions of inquiry when speaking. I was really open to the ways in which they discussed their contexts, admin, colleagues and students. However, my past experiences as a novice were triggered, making me want to relate to their stories regarding their professional interactions with others. I, of course, resisted. I also did find

Appendix E (continued)

that the novices wanted to discuss the problems they had with those around them as they described their contexts. It was as if their context was seamlessly defined by their experiences in it. Oh yes...this is what the literature says! They might say, “that teacher next door expected me to keep her organized in her instruction, but what did I know as a new teacher trying to figure it out...but that’s a problem I want to discuss more later.” I let them speak, but worked to pull them back into general discussion about their classroom, students, etc. I wanted to “picture” the context.

Despite resisting the exploration of their challenges in the first interview, since I wanted to more deeply explore this in subsequent interviews, I heard inklings of inquiry skills they used to solve their challenges and dispositions of inquiry; whereby they went to speak to colleagues or to professional development to help them understand their problems. I, however, worked to maintain focus on understanding their context, knowing that I was trying not to simply ‘see as I wanted to see.’

For my next interview, I need to devise a method for maintaining focus on their stories of problems of practice rather than losing focus, because I cannot contribute to the discussion as I would in a mutual conversation. I think I will try writing notes on what is being said that is of interest to this study, in order to keep myself engaged and able to ask follow-up questions that lead to a deeper exploration of what is being said...hmmm... I wonder if, as a researcher, I reserve the right to ask follow-up questions that are inspired from the discussion rather than the script? I need to read up a bit on this.

Appendix E (continued)

Entry #2

Today went better than day 1! I felt much more at ease with my role as researcher. At first I dreaded it, but once I started using my notepad to jot down notes of what was being said, I found myself very engaged. Different from the first interview, the stories of problems of practice were coherent rather than choppy, and did not need as many follow-up questions to keep on topic. At one point, I felt as though the participant was about to go on a very long tangent as she described in detail the facets of a strategy she tried out. I started feeling the need to get her back in focus in hope that she wouldn't forget about the problem of practice story at the center of the discussion. No sooner after I started to have the thought that she was taking me on a circus ride, she circled back to the point that the strategy proved successful in supporting her to engage the students. She then shared her evidence that demonstrated engagement. I was shocked and immediately realized the patience that I needed to exercise to be a researcher! Had I stopped or redirected her, I would've completely missed out on the details that supported the plot of the story. My next personal notes read 'shut up and listen patiently.' The notes were not intended for my mouth, but for my head! I needed to quiet my thoughts to truly listen to the stories told by my participants.

At first, my note taking worried me, appearing as though it was distracting the participants or making them nervous. One novice in particular, kept glancing at my notepad and so I considered stopping. But then, miraculously her stories became richer and more exciting. It seemed to get her story telling more focused on the topic at hand, and so she really started providing deeper details about the problem she faced and how she systematically approached it. Maybe it's me, I thought... perhaps it was because I was more engaged and getting into her

Appendix E (continued)

story? When I listened to her recordings, however, the tone in her voice changed in the moment I started writing, leading me to believe that she must have felt like I was more in tune with what she was saying. She soon thereafter started pulling out her artifacts.

At first, I was a bit skeptical of the positive effect that the artifact might have on the discussion, wondering if it would be more something the participant awkwardly tried to fit into their story. But actually it was quite the opposite! I noticed that the artifacts really made the stories richer, and so I began to feel more committed in this research decision. For interview #2, artifacts were evidence of journaling, mentor/admin evaluations, and even books read and teaching strategy cards. The novices did not stick to one artifact, but rather shared several. This made their stories come alive in greater ways than even the first interview. One was even excited to show me her negative evaluation, because it led to her journaling and decision to reach out to colleagues for help with her non-engaged student.

As a new researcher, I feel that while I can explain the conscious decisions I've made in these last two interviews, such rationales for decisions are based predominantly on literary advisement. Using the documented advice of veteran researchers, I am seeing results and better understanding my decisions. This is in contrast to my initial belief that I would make decisions in practice, because I instinctually knew that they would have a positive result. I'm glad I planned this study in such great detail. My limited research background means that I don't know for certain the results I will get, and must rely on what I read and ultimately find out from the experience. As such, this process has become unexpectedly reflective at every stage.

Appendix E (continued)

Entry #3

Today, I began to feel a bit more in tune with all I know, and have studied about novices' problem solving skills and dispositions, as I spoke with my three participants individually. While I resisted thinking of my past experiences with teacher inquiry and my literature review/lens in the first set of stories, I found it more challenging to do so. Going in with the desire to hear inquiry skills/dispositions, in some respects, ruined the research experience for me. I wanted to experience their stories as they felt them, but couldn't seem to get into it. Resisting my lens proved harder than I had ever anticipated. As they spoke of their problems and how they approached them, I couldn't help but to think 'why didn't you do that?' or 'why didn't you do this?' In my first interview, I wrote on a separate page the words "resist topic changing." This was my reminder to stick to my script and not ask leading questions for the purposes of hearing what I wanted to hear. I did discover that in going with their story, the novice seemed to find her way to identifying the use of some inquiry skills in problem solving anyway. However, these came much later in the story! Shamefully, I'll admit feeling anxious for them to get to the point. They spent a great majority of the time identifying and detailing their problems, while I predominantly wanted them to get into how they approached them. I realized that I needed to let them develop their stories as they saw fit and simply chill out! After all, these are NOT my stories to tell!!

In all three instances, I confirmed my decision as a researcher to probe them to list problems of practice at the beginning. Two of the three stories were about working with colleagues, specifically ESE support and the same grade colleague. The problems began by observing, "these are 'her' problems." At some points I felt the need to intervene to redirect the

Appendix E (continued)

story into how this was the novices' problem of practice; however, I resisted for fear of contaminating the story with my thoughts. While I certainly didn't want them to tell a story that didn't fit the requirement, I really wasn't sure if it was in my power to address it. In the end, both novices surprised me by exploring deeply the ways in which their colleagues' problems became an instructional practice problem for them and their students. The experience taught me to trust the process; trust the fact that I want over defining "problems of practice" and providing examples of them in list form for each novice.

For my third interview, the novice wanted to discuss a classroom management story. In all honesty, I felt that it would be very similar to her first story in which she explored her problem with establishing a community of practice in her room. While there was in fact some overlap, it was less than anticipated. The novice was more forthcoming in explaining that this problem could potentially lead her to probation, since her peer evaluation scores remained the same in this area throughout the year. I almost wondered if she wanted to see my reaction as she said this. As such, I was very intentional to show no/minimal expression for fear that she would shut down. She continued opening up into the barrier to her personal growth that resulted from the evaluation policies in place. The discussion began to take us to a new level of honesty and openness, whereby she was really exploring how she felt as a result of the problem, rather than simply what transpired.

After realizing my apprehensive feeling that one individual's 3 stories might not be varied enough from each other, and that perhaps they would not explore their own problem of practice and journey to resolving it, I decided to take one final step in the interview process. At the end of the interviews, I casually redefined the term "problem of practice," and invited each

Appendix E (continued)

novice to briefly describe the story they would share next time. This led to some thought regarding the experienced story that best aligned with the terminology, the preemptive preparation for how they would tell it, and the artifacts they would like to share. I look forward to examining how this strategy will guide the next set of interviews.

Entry #4

What an incredible data collection day! I realized today that the intentional decision last made to begin to have novices consider their next story made a HUGE difference. They came much better prepared to share stories of problems of practice. In fact, as they shared the stories, I felt as though the words were at the tip of their tongues--they seemed excited to dive into them. In consequence, I found my role as researcher less challenging in that I did not need to keep probing them to speak more. They had prepared the details they would share and how they would respond to the questions I have consistently asked for the last couple of weeks. I would say that today's stories were well representative of their latest reflection of problems of practice. I would definitely probe participants to preemptively consider their next interview responses when using similar data collection methods in future studies.

One novice teacher shared how much she has learned from thinking and processing the experiences this year, while a second participant verbalized that speaking of her approaches to solving problems led her to realize how much her teacher inquiry skills helped her. I admit that I was grateful to hear her say this, because my analysis of her approaches to problems of practice truly surfaces patterns of teacher inquiry skills consistently in her stories. I remain particularly fearful that I may be seeing that, which I want to see, rather than what is present in their stories.

Appendix E (continued)

Despite the fact that I will have a critical friend analyze the transcripts for me as well, hearing her confirm my preliminary findings is a source of relief that I am not skewing the data.

For the most part, I have been very fortunate to conduct my interviews during quiet times in the interview location, however today things began to take a turn. The café was quite loud and the resonating loud boom of male voices projecting from neighbors invaded our usual corner. In all honesty, it was the first time that I felt as if this wasn't working. I was committed to finishing the interview in the location despite the unwanted 'noise,' and upon wrap up, made the decision to relocate for the next interviews to the USF College of Ed. In the quieter setting I came to a realization that will influence my research methods for the rest of my life. Sitting in a quiet space to speak to a participant is better for me. I hear the speakers and become much more enthralled in their stories. I ask less follow-up questions, which I now believe denotes an effort to stay focused and follow the story line in a distracting context. However, I do not believe that all participants benefit from this setting. My third participant for instance requires food to talk. Food stimulates her desire to speak and tell her innermost thoughts and feelings. For the future, this is a decision that I will have to make thoughtfully based upon the needs of my participants, placing them before my own. "Placing them before my own" is crucial, as I am aware that recording the interview compensates for my inability to focus in the immediate setting. I can return to the transcripts and ask follow up questions in the next meeting. However, if I am unable to get my participant to talk because the setting is not conducive to intimate storytelling, then my interview will simply flop. This was definitely an 'aha' moment that will drive future research decisions.