

## Triad Journaling: A Tool for Creating Professional Learning Communities

By Diane Yendol Silva

*I always wondered what my student teachers wrote about in the journals. I was so curious and actually really interested. What did they think about the kids, our classroom, the materials we used? For some reason we didn't talk deeply about these things in our daily conversations. But I have questions about them myself that I would love to share with someone else but there really isn't space to do that in schools. The journals seemed sacred to the university and whenever the topic of journals came up I know everyone at the university would say, "This is just our way of keeping in touch with what the student teacher is learning and wondering about." But I wondered too... I wanted to be a part of that dialogue. I missed the opportunity to talk about and name these things that haunted me as I taught each day.... I wanted to share in the journaling. But I never mentioned it to anyone...*

The teacher journaling described above, an interpretive self-observation technique (Bolin, 1988; Zeichner & Liston, 1987), is typically used by prospective teachers as a method of recording and sharing their own observations and thoughts about their own teaching practice, and their observations of other teachers' professional practice. Holland (1998) suggests that this type of journaling forms a stable text that represents a prospective teacher's thinking about his or her own work. Within this text, contextualized de-

---

*Diane Yendol Silva is a professor with the College of Education at the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.*

### *Triad Journaling*

---

scriptions of actual teaching experiences as well as the writer's underlying beliefs and values surface painting a picture of the teacher's practice.

Since teacher journals often call attention to reflections on events, beliefs, emotions, concerns, questions, problems, and future plans, journals serve as effective communication tools for supervisors who are not present on a daily basis. On the other hand, Holly and Mcloyghlin (1989) believe that journaling is a powerful method for documenting and learning from one's own experience. They argue that journaling becomes a powerful tool for self-study. Journaling also offers a way of making private inner thoughts about teaching and learning public for others to see, question, and understand. As a result, student teacher supervisors often use journal entries to understand prospective teachers' professional selves, and to gain insight into their needs and wonderings. These journals serve as a communication link between the supervisor and the student teacher. In addition to learning about self and communicating with a supervisor, Killian (1991) suggests that collegial dialogue journals between teachers can also act as a collaborative learning tool. As teachers share their journals with each other, they collaboratively pose and solve problems as well as provide reciprocal support that results in professional growth.

Given that journaling can lead to self-study, communication, and collaborative learning, the time seems ripe to investigate ways all members of the student teaching triad can benefit from these three goals. For example, missing from the literature are the ways that journaling can be utilized to enhance the professional growth of the prospective teacher, mentor, and supervisor. As school-university partnerships continue to grow and year-long field experiences become more prevalent, opportunities exist for building strong collaborative relationships among the three members of the student teaching triad that may lead to self-study, enhanced communication, and co-reflection by all three members.

In professional development schools, university-based teacher educators are joining forces with school-based partners to enhance teacher education programs. This collaboration should encourage teacher educators to rethink the way they do business in field experiences by providing heightened voice to school-based colleagues, and by recognizing the importance of developing strong relationships between the members of the student teaching triad. To do this, new roles and instructional tools should be explored to heighten each member of the triad's professional learning. Evidence of efforts toward developing these new roles include the change in terminology from student teacher to intern, cooperating teacher to mentor, and supervisor to professional development school associate (Silva & Dana, 2000). In some cases, the traditional supervisor/student teacher journals are also being retooled to heighten interaction, and to build community among the triad members. This shift includes the voices and thinking around shared professional issues of all members of the triad learning community including intern, mentor, and professional development associate (PDA), formerly named University Supervisor.

Until now, triad journaling has been relatively unexplored in the research literature as a tool for enhancing the teaching and learning of prospective teachers, practicing teachers, and university teacher educators. In reviewing the literature, most of the work has been limited to descriptions of this journaling technique used in England where a school-based teacher education movement has been underfoot for over a decade (Wallace, 1999). The purpose of this study is to explore the use of triad journaling as a collaborative tool for enhancing teaching and learning in a professional development school context.

## **Background**

Over the last four years the Mountainside Elementary School in conjunction with a Research One Institution's Elementary Education program has been developing a strong school university partnership which more recently has been actualized as a PDS (professional development school) targeted at reforming the teacher education program, and building an inquiry-oriented culture (Silva & Dana, in press). These reform efforts resulted in a yearlong internship where the mentors and PDAs work side-by-side to create and re-conceptualize elementary teacher education.

The conceptualization of this PDS utilizes the framework described by Frankes, Valli, and Cooper (1998) who in a review of research on PDSs discuss four roles mentors assume as they participate in PDS work. These roles include teacher as decision-maker, teacher as teacher educator, teacher as researcher, and teacher as political activist. This study explored the second phase most highly congruent with developing the role of "teacher as teacher educator." During this phase, the traditional student teaching handbook was discarded and mentors were offered space to create an individual intern plan that met the needs of the intern, classroom teacher, and children (Dana, 1999; Silva & Dana, 2000). Additionally, in an effort to further the mentor's participation in the work of teacher education, a triad journal was initiated, becoming a tool for both supervisor and mentor to share in the work of teacher education. In nine of the ten cases, the comfort with sharing this space grew out of a high level of trust developed between the professional development associate (PDA) formerly known as the university supervisor, the mentor, and the intern over an entire school year. In the tenth case, less trust and interest existed between participants.

The triad journaling became a part of the weekly routine of 10 triads drawn from two cohorts, within a single professional development school over the course of a two year period. Beginning in September, the interns wrote approximately three weekly reflections, and sent them electronically to the PDA. These entries typically focused on ideas, questions, actions, and thoughts about their own teaching, their students, and their classroom context. The PDA printed, read, and responded to the journals by adding comments, questions, and often her own reflections based on her recollected teaching experience, current university teaching experience, or obser-

### *Triad Journaling*

---

variations of the classroom. At times, the PDA would also initiate new questions to the discussions. Finally, the PDA placed the journals in a three ring binder kept in the classroom for the mentor to read, and to add her own comments, responses, questions, and thoughts. These open-ended journals provided a snapshot of the classroom context, the triad relationship, the challenges of teaching, and efforts toward insuring prospective teacher and student learning.

Since all three of the triad members — intern, mentor, and PDA — contributed and responded to the journal, the triad members used the journal as a vehicle for sharing their own insights about the work in which they were co-engaged as well as responding to insights or questions posed by another member of the triad. The journals provided a shared space for this community of inquirers to problem pose and problem solve around issues central to teaching and learning.

### **Methods**

This study employed descriptive case study methodology (Merriam, 1998) in an effort to capture the content, complexity, and interactive nature of the participants' journaling. The study investigates two years of data, and the ways two cohorts of full year interns used triad journaling over the course of the school year. The unit of analysis was the intern/mentor/PDA triad, and identification was based on the unique case selection procedure (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). In this case, the unique attributes included the triad members' willingness to engage in and share the journal. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do mentors, interns, and PDA's use triad journals?
2. What is the content of the triad journal conversation?
3. How do the participants feel about engaging in the triad journaling as a communication tool?

The techniques used to enhance the quality of the analysis and ensure trustworthiness of the study include source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checks. Source triangulation required "checking out the consistency of different sources within the same method" (Patton, 1990, p.464). Method triangulation relied on "checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data-collection methods" (Patton, 1990, p. 464). The data sources used in this analysis included: field notes, open-ended interviews and the triad journal documents. The interviews, conducted on two occasions with the mentor and the intern, yielded direct quotations from the participants capturing their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge about the use of the triad journals. The tape recordings of each interview were transcribed, allowing for accurate reporting of the participants' responses, and enabling the researcher to interpret specific responses in the context of the entire transcript. The typical length of the responses was in the form of many paragraphs.

The documents provided the excerpts and quotations included in the results. Field notes were also collected by the PDA. Finally, periodic member checks with the mentors and interns were also a part of the analysis.

After reviewing the data set multiple times utilizing Wolcott's (1994) methodological structure of description, analysis, and interpretation, four themes emerged, and as these themes took shape systematic searches of the data for disconfirming and confirming evidence were conducted (Erickson, 1986). The remaining sections of this paper present an analysis and interpretation of the triad journal as a vehicle for enhancing teaching and learning in a PDS.

## **Results**

Findings indicate that the triad journal served four strategic roles in the professional development school work. The journaling: (1) offered evidence of mentor/supervisor role re-conceptualization, (2) escalated communication between all triad members by providing the opportunity to engage in the dialogue about teaching and learning, (3) acted as a vehicle for nurturing a problem posing culture which is a critical, and often missing feature of a inquiry oriented professional development school, and (4) created a "professional energy."

### ***Role Re-conceptualization***

The journal provided evidence of role re-conceptualization as teachers shifted from cooperating teachers to mentors, and as university supervisors shifted to PDA's interested in joining both mentor and prospective teachers in conversation about teaching and learning. Effective cooperating teachers characteristically provided a supportive context to their student teacher. However, mentors went beyond providing a caring context, to intentionally focusing on the pedagogical development of the new teacher (Silva & Tom, 2001). At first, the mentors felt unsure about this additional responsibility of teacher education (Silva, 2000). The willingness to assume these new roles has not come immediately:

When I first discussed the idea with the teachers they seemed interested but tentative. When I probed as to why, they asked me if it was ok with the intern because this might be a place where the intern really needed some privacy to write about things they didn't like in the classroom or that they were not comfortable with their mentor hearing. (Field notes 12/98)

These comments indicate that mentors did not feel it was initially a part of their job to discuss issues with interns that may be more private, challenging, missing from their own practice, or issues that arise due to the incongruency between mentor and intern's espoused belief systems. However, as these mentor teachers had the opportunity to gain insight into their interns' thoughts, worries, and questions they began to re-conceptualize themselves as teacher educators, and assumed new roles characterized by heightened responsibility for their interns' development.

### *Triad Journaling*

---

In all but one case, the interns were willing and enthusiastic about re-conceptualizing the journal to include their mentor in the work of teacher education:

When I first discussed the idea with the interns, nine of the ten were interested in the idea of including their mentors in the journal conversation because they wanted a deeper understanding of their thoughts, and more feedback from their mentor. The only one that was tentative was the intern with the weakest relationship with her mentor. However, she asked to be included because she thought it might be a way to get more detailed feedback and insight into her mentor's thinking and make her year run more smoothly. (Field notes 12/98)

Interestingly the only intern who was skeptical about the triad journal shared the following comment in her exit interview.

You know, I tried the three-way journaling and it was good and I could see the benefits for keeping the journal. But in my opinion it was really time consuming. To keep up with it was time consuming. I had written one up and handed it to my mentor and she had the notebook for two weeks. When she finally gave it back to me she said, "I just don't have time for this right now." (Exit interview, 5/99)

This intern struggled throughout the entire internship year. Evidence exists to suggest that this was due to a lack of relationship between the intern and mentor, and the mentor's resistance to re-conceptualize her own role from cooperating teacher to mentor. Additionally, evidence suggests that although the journaling didn't serve as a tool for mentor involvement, the presence of the journal did not complicate the relationship.

For the nine mentors who did engage in role re-conceptualization, a typology of mentor participation became apparent. The mentors first began using *reinforcing statements* much like they reinforce children who share ideas with them in class. For example, comments like, "Yes, that is exactly why we do it that way," "I am glad that you are thinking so deeply about your work," "You are very insightful about the children," "I would love to have you share more poetry with us," "This was such a great reward, maybe you can do this more," were often a part of the mentor's written comments.

Next, mentors began *explaining their thinking* behind questions that were raised by the other participants and providing advice.

Watch for signs from the students and this will let you know when it is too long ... Using the words of children is very powerful.... It is their language and their understanding ... Remember, structure is not all bad. At the very base-safety is important too. Susan, as you learn more and more "little management techniques" this will also give you more time. It is amazing how small interruptions to give reminders.... add up. I can see you realizing through practice how helpful these time savers are. ...

Finally, mentors began *raising questions* for their interns and asking their own questions.

Could you give her opportunities to initiate and take a leadership role? Are you getting her attention to truly engage her? I am wondering what is the difference between “wait time” and “think time.” Could these constructions be their play? I wonder? How can we better help this ESL child in our classroom?

The triad journal encouraged the mentors to move beyond sharing their classroom context with their intern to making public their thinking and questions about their teaching. The teachers began to feel a responsibility for intern growth that they previously didn’t have, and this sense of responsibility for prospective teacher learning led to re-conceptualization of their role from cooperating teacher to mentor.

The triad journal also offered the supervisor space to re-conceptualize her role since the supervisor’s own journal responses were read by both intern and mentor:

I often would find myself probing the mentor to respond to questions that I knew she had deeper understanding about or I wondered what her espoused platform was in a particular area. For example, I didn’t know the children as well as she did. So many times I would defer the question to her. Other times I would raise my own questions about children or curriculum for both of them to respond to. There was even a couple times when I wrote my own entries about issues that I was struggling with in order to get their individual and collective thoughts. (Researcher’s journal, 2/00)

As evidenced, the triad journal in many ways provided a space and the momentum for the university supervisor to re-conceptualize her role. This space made it a part of her role to not only engage in the discussion of professional questions, but also raise professional questions with the intern and the mentor. In sum, the triad journal provided a space for this community of learners to inquire into job-embedded issues of professional practice.

### ***Heightened Communication***

The triad journals resulted in a heightened level of communication between the triad members. For example, one intern who did not typically share her professional reflections publicly offered:

When we first started the triad journal it was in the back of my head that Bridgett would be reading it. But then I heard that Bridgett wanted to get into my head and understand my thinking too. Sometimes I am quiet and I do not say a lot. But in my journals, I kind of open up and I let Bridgett see what I am thinking and what is going on. I like the feedback that I get then too. (Angela, interview, 1098-1102)

The triad journal became an effective communication tool for Angela to share her thinking and wonderings with her mentor Bridgett. She adds:

I kind of wish we would have done this sooner. I think there are questions that I should ask her but I don’t. But in the triad journals she can see my thinking coming out about children and situations. I think it is a good way for everyone to see what each other is thinking. I bring up questions and those bring up more thoughts for

### *Triad Journaling*

---

me, more things of concern. I think it is because I have a close relationship with her. (Angela, interview, 218-223)

Bridgett also shares the following thoughts about the journal as a forum for Angela to raise questions:

You just learn so much about how they (the interns) are feeling about things. Even the fact that Angela and I are together all day, have conversations and visit, chit chat and everything else, it is still another way to get to know her, get to look at her thinking and see what she considers important. (Bridgett, interview B, 438-441)

Bridgett writes to Angela in the journal:

Angela, I am so enjoying your journal. It's helping me to understand issues you feel are important. You share a wonderful variety of insights and from reading it I don't feel that the journal is drudgery for you. I hope you are able to continue as your teaching load increases. (Bridgett, triad journal, 1/99)

Jerelyn Wallace (1989) who has also worked with a similar three-way dialogue journal describes the journal as a "forum for observations, questions, and reflections that chronicled the year's teaching practice as well as the evolving relationship between mentor and teacher candidate. Periodically, the university folks would jump into the conversation, adding their own responses" (p. 35). They found that, like Bridgett and Angela, many mentors viewed the dialogue journal as a tool:

The exchange may take on a life of its own, become a welcomed place to record the joys and frustrations of teaching practice, and provide a forum through which communication among teacher candidates, mentors, and university colleagues is greatly enriched. Additionally, the journal is a reflective instrument, in both the long and short term, gives incredible insight into the process of the year — the progress of students, personal growth as an educator, the evolution of relationships and connections all the way around. (Wallace, p. 35)

Because mentors and interns are so focused on their teaching and children during the day, dialogue journals provided a tool or space for co-reflection around both practical and philosophical questions (Silva, 2000).

Often we are so busy during the day; we do not have time to discuss events, questions, ideas, etc. The journal provides for me a "window" into my intern's thinking. I am surprised by her insights, discovering what was important for her to write about, and her questions. I feel that the journals are most important at the beginning of the internship when I am just learning about my intern and this helps me know her a little better. (K.B. interview, 3/00)

Other comments included:

I think the journals are valuable because Renee mentions ideas and concerns that haven't been brought up in our discussions. We can really talk about these things



after I have had a chance to give her entries some thought rather than speaking too quickly. (LD, mentor)

I like using the journals as another form of communication — not to replace others, just in addition to. I feel they are not time consuming. I like sitting down with them in the evenings, where I have time to reflect and some distance from the hectic pace at school. I actually look forward to reading the entries and miss the journal when it hasn't been around for a while. (CC, mentor)

Because of the journal's ability to heighten communication, the mentors advocated continuing triad journal as they began their second year of journaling with a new set of interns. One mentor beginning her second year bought a special pen that writes in gold. She shared the following comment in the journal demonstrating her thoughts about the triad journal as a form of communication:

I bought this pen Ann because your thoughts and our conversations are like pure gold to me. I am looking forward to hearing and seeing your thinking this year.

#### ***Nurtured a Problem-Posing Culture***

The triad journals also show potential as a vehicle for nurturing a problem posing culture, which is a critical feature of an inquiry-oriented professional development school (Frankes, Valli, & Cooper, 1998). Over the course of the eighteen months of data collection, all three of the triad members increasingly posed questions to one another in the journals. However, in most cases substantially more questions continue to be raised by the PDA and the intern than the mentor. However, the mentors who defined themselves most strongly as teacher educators tended to ask more questions in the triad journals, and revealed more questions than those who were just emerging as teacher educators. Interestingly, a number of mentors individually asked the PDA if they were suppose to be asking questions to the intern in the triad journals because they noticed that pattern as a typical feature of the PDA's responses.

Even though some mentors posed fewer questions, most mentors indicated that the triad journal provides space for all members of the triad to pose questions. For example, one mentor welcomed the opportunity to consider new and different questions:

Reflection and questions come naturally to you, Susan, as one would hope with all teachers... As "problems" become greater, one tends to prioritize what needs to be "worked out" first. This is a part of the professional work of a teacher.

Another mentor offers the following thoughts regarding the influence of the supervisor's questions in the triad journal.

Also, I really enjoy the supervisor's comments and questions. Her thoughts open a new line of questions and reflections for both of us! I get different information from the triad journals than our conversations ... Yes! (K.B. interview, 3/00)

### *Triad Journaling*

---

To facilitate this type of openness, the PDA made herself vulnerable by adding her own questions and reflections to the triad journal in an effort to flatten the power structure of supervision in the PDS to a structure that is shared between all members of the triad. For the supervisor, the triad journal has become a tool for infusing questions about practice into shared conversations. As the intern raises questions about her integrated coursework, classroom challenges, and professional responsibilities, all members of the triad begin learning from each other. The intern's initial voice in the journal provides a springboard for a variety of professional conversations around key questions. These collaborative conversations enhance communication and build learning communities with a shared focus on professional growth for all members of the triad. Thus, the line between the PDA who initially focused on theory, and the mentor who is immersed in practice begins to fade. These discussions create space within a professional culture where all educators can raise questions around issues of reform-minded teacher education.

Interestingly, fewer cases existed where the mentor raised new questions not mentioned by the intern or PDA. Instead, most mentors responded to the topics raised by others. Future efforts should be made to encourage mentors, to explore their own practice and make their own questions public. When the participants begin to see the journal as a tool for all to share their thoughts about teaching and learning, a new professional culture characterized by collaborative professional reflection and problem-posing behavior can emerge.

#### ***Created a Professional Energy***

With the exception of one triad, all triad participants described a "professional energy" generated by both reflection and celebration as a result of dialoging in the triad journal.

My relationship with my mentor is growing stronger everyday. I feel that my ideas are really valued and that my mentor has placed a lot of confidence in me. In responding to that entry Bridgett adds, "Absolutely!" (Triad Journal, 2/99)

Another mentor shares her thoughts about the professional energy spawned from the journals:

I really like the triad journals. They allow me to get to know my intern in a different way than before and we are able to discuss ideas that impact my own professional thinking. It is another way of coming out of isolation (Claudia, interview, 3/99)

Similarly, a PDA shares the following professional excitement associated with participating in the triad journal:

I must admit. One of my favorite parts of my job is reading the triad journals. I feel like it is really a gift to be able to see into the thinking of both the intern and the mentor with whom I am working. Their openness with their thoughts allows me to understand their professional espoused platforms and their on-going struggles

within the classroom. We get multiple perspectives on the same issues from three professionals. I have learned a lot from my school-based partners as a result of this collaborative reflection on practice.

This last excerpt demonstrates how the triad journals provide the energy, space, and time for the type of reflection that leads to shared professional growth.

We are so busy during the day that many times (especially during the first semester when Amy left at 2:30 several times a week) we did not have the time to talk and reflect. I feel that I NEED the journals to stay “in touch” with my intern. Several times this year, we would have long professional talks on the phone about different ideas that came from the journals. These are important to me. (K.B. interview, 3/00)

An intern reflects:

Anyway, I do like the triad in the second half of the internship because I think it provides a great opportunity for mentors, supervisors and interns to offer suggestions, advice, express confusions, etc.... I find it very helpful. I also believe that the constant reflection is very important to my growth as an educator. I have learned a great deal about myself as I write my journals. Sometimes just by typing out my thoughts I solve a lot of my own problems. (SID, intern journal entry)

Another mentor describes how the triad journal offers her the opportunity to see her classroom through another teacher’s eyes as well as time to focus her energy and thoughts on future professional dialogue:

It gives me time and motivation to organize my thoughts. Rhonda reflects on events in the classroom and that gives me a different perspective of our students, lessons, routines and my teaching. The journals help me stop and reflect. (LD, mentor)

## **Discussion**

What is the meaning of these findings to those who work with K-12 teachers and interns in professional development schools? Based on this study, triad journals are a tool for re-conceptualizing school communities by providing space for teacher voices to join the conversations about teaching and learning traditionally reserved for the supervisor and intern. Because triad journals heightened the level of communication between the triad members, more opportunity exists to clarify misconceptions, develop professional relationships, and understand each other’s espoused platforms. Once the triad members begin to communicate with each other around professional issues, space and trust emerges that allow for questions to be raised by each of the participants. Through this collaborative problem posing and problem solving activity a professional energy is created and shared among the members. Given the potential that the triad journal has for enhancing communication, providing professional energy, reconceptualizing roles, and nurturing a problem posing culture, efforts should be made to create strong relationships that can “weather,” sustain, and profit from interaction around uncomfortable and critical questions.

### *Triad Journaling*

---

Many supervisors have traditionally refrained from sharing the journals with cooperating teachers because of the risks involved. They worry about what would happen if the intern communicates something that offends a mentor? Regardless of the skill level of the mentor, these questions are bound to be raised as a result of the developmental level of the new teacher. When critical comments are raised, teacher educators must find ways to help all members of the triad hear and understand the questions. Hearing and understanding are the prerequisites to any reform agenda.

If we are to create future teacher leaders that can navigate the structures of school on behalf of children (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000)), thought must be given to our responsibility as teacher educators to help interns learn how to both communicate with their mentor and engage in conversation around alternative approaches to teaching and learning. Isn't there a difference between unproductive venting and posing professional questions around issues key to enhancing one's professional practice and schools in general? Prospective teachers need to learn how to pose and discuss problems they see in their own practice as well as the broader problems of schools. Prospective teachers need to know how to raise questions in ways that they can be heard and addressed rather than silenced or ignored.

As these new lines of communication open, mentors will also need support as they explore new ways to nurture and provide space for intern development. Mentors do this with children, and need to seek to understand their intern in this same way. For example, if a child says something that is critical of the teacher or an activity, the skilled and compassionate teacher doesn't get upset with the child. Instead, this teacher seeks to understand and help. In some cases, the teacher may need to rethink her approach to helping the child. In the same way, mentors need to seek to understand their interns. What makes my intern think or ask this? How can I help her understand my thinking? Maybe there are parts of my own practice that I should revisit. In some cases, the mentor may even learn about her own practice through the eyes of the intern and make adjustments.

University teacher educators will also need encouragement and support from the other triad members as lines of communication are opened. The intern and mentor must understand the faculty's position as an outsider, and be willing to genuinely bring the supervisor into the classroom conversations. They must begin to realize why and how the university culture influences the thoughts of the teacher educator, and be willing to see what the university teacher educator can contribute to k-12 education. University faculty must also be willing to assume a learning stance by seeking to understand the classroom context and espoused platforms of her partners before seeking to be understood. Isn't this the type of learning community we need to provide prospective teachers as a part of their learning to teach experience? Isn't this the type of learning community that can support mentor growth? Isn't this the type of learning community that allows university teacher educators insight into key issues of k-12 practice?

Yes, including mentors in the dialogue is a risk to all members of the triad. But

if the goal is reform-minded teacher education, the risk is worthy of exploring. The mentor teacher has a substantial impact on the intern's thinking and can provide the dialectic needed for university teacher educator growth as well. Thus, reform-minded teacher education will necessitate strong and open relationships based on a shared responsibility for learning. For those committed to that goal, the triad journal offers a powerful tool for prospective and practicing teacher development as well as university teacher education faculty development.

Still missing from these triad conversations is the critical element of reflection described by Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991). Reform-minded mentoring is only as strong as the critical elements upon which it rests. Thus, as triad members reconceptualize their work, serious attention should be given to developing these critical elements as a part of the professional conversations. The challenge facing university teacher educators is to find ways to help mentors and prepare prospective teachers to raise and respond to the "critical elements" as emphasized by Gore and Zeichner (1991):

We do not think that it makes much sense to promote or assess reflective practice in general without establishing clear priorities for the reflection that emerge out of a reasoned educational and social philosophy. We do not accept the implication that exists throughout much of the literature, that teachers' actions are necessarily better just because they are more deliberate and intentional. (p. 121)

As interns and mentors engage in conversations around their reasoned educational and social philosophy, reform-minded teacher education can occur. The triad journal offers a space to begin these conversations

## **References**

- Bolin, F. (1988). Helping student teachers think about teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 39, 48-54.
- Dana, N.F. (1999). The professional development school story: Assessing the impact of year one (1998-1999) of the State College Area School District-Pennsylvania State University Elementary Professional Development Schools. Evaluation report submitted to the State College Area School District Board of Directors.
- Frankes, L., Valli, L., & Cooper, D.H. (1998). Continuous learning for all adults in the professional development school: A review of the research. In D.J. McIntyre and D.M. Byrd (Eds.), *Strategies for career-long teacher education: Teacher Education Yearbook VI*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Goetz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Gore, J.M. & Zeichner, K.M. (1991). Action research and reflective teaching in preservice teacher education: A case study from the United States. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 7, 119-136.
- Holly, M.L., & McLoughlin, C.S. (1989). Professional development and journal writing. In M.L. Holly & C.S. McLoughlin (Eds.), *Perspectives on teacher professional development* (pp. 259-284). New York: Falmer.

### *Triad Journaling*

---

- Killian, J.E. (1991). Colleague journals as a staff development tool. *Journal of Staff Development*, 12 (2), 44-46.
- Lemma, P. (1993). The cooperating teacher as supervisor: A case study. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 8(4), 329-342.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Silva, D.Y. & Dana, N.F. (2000). *Supervision in a professional development school*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.
- Silva, D.Y. & Tom, A. (2001). The moral basis of mentoring. *Teacher Education Quarterly*.
- Sparks-Langer & Colton, A.B. (1991). Synthesis of research on teachers' reflective thinking. *Educational Leadership*, (3), 37-44.
- Wallace, J. (1999). The dialogue journal. In P. Graham, S. Hudson-Ross, C. Adkins, P. McWhorter, & J.M. Stewart (Eds.), *Teacher mentor: A Dialogue for collaborative learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wolcott, H. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zeichner, K.M. & Liston, D.P. (1987). Teaching student teachers to reflect. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57 (1), 23-48.