Outside In and Inside Out:
Using a Case Study Assignment in a Reading Methods Course

By Karen J. Kindle & Cynthia M. Schmidt

Teacher education programs that focus on preparing urban elementary school educators face a daunting task. In a relatively short time, roughly four semesters of coursework, students are prepared to be transformed into teachers who are certified to meet the challenges of urban schools. This transformation occurs from the outside in as they learn culturally responsive pedagogy, effective strategies for classroom management, instructional design, assessment, and develop strong content knowledge in literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies. At the same, they must be transformed from the inside out, developing the dispositions and identity of an urban educator. To maximize development within program confines, it is essential that every assignment in every course be relevant and powerful with elements that facilitate both content and disposition development.

Karen J. Kindle and Cynthia M. Schmidt are assistant professors of literacy and reading education in the School of Education at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri.

We decided to study how this happens with pre-service teachers in the context of a reading methods course. Accordingly, our purpose was to examine the use of a case study assignment in a reading methods course for elementary and early childhood pre-service teachers preparing to be urban educators. We sought to identify elements that resulted in outside in/inside out development as well as those that were not functioning as designed. As literacy teacher educators in a university committed to the preparation of teachers for urban

schools, we continuously revise and refine our coursework, engaging in the same cycle of learning, enactment, assessment, and reflection (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005) that we intend for our students to adopt as habits of practice. We seek new ways to develop content knowledge and dispositions by scaffolding their learning experiences through authentic tasks that "enculturate" them into the community of reading professionals (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The case study assignment is the primary vehicle for this work as students connect their growing understanding of literacy development and the reading process with their work with a struggling reader in their field placement.

This work began with identifying a need to make the case study a learning experience for our students that would build knowledge, efficiency, and insight (Sternberg & Horvath, 1995). We were not satisfied with the level of analysis of reading behaviors that our students demonstrated in their assignments. We sensed that students were approaching the case study as "one more hoop to jump through" in their progress toward certification and were not building their knowledge and skills to the extent we believed possible. Thus, we examined all aspects of the assignment to see how outside in and inside out elements could be combined and strengthened. Elements were added to the assignment prior to the beginning of the semester to support our students' growing understanding of ways to differentiate instruction for an individual struggling reader, to scaffold them in developing greater expertise needed for reading instruction in urban schools, and to facilitate the development of teacher dispositions and identity. These elements included the dialogic learning log, collaborative sessions, and presentation of the case study in a mock parent/teacher conference.

With these goals in mind, the following questions guided our investigation:

(a) What aspects of the case study, as currently implemented, were effective in developing preservice teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge and dispositions? and

(b) What were the students' perceptions of their outside in/inside out development from completing this assignment?

Related Literature

The case study assignment is consistent with the dual focus of developing pre-service teachers from the outside in and the inside out. Outside in development occurs as content knowledge and pedagogy in reading are mastered, and inside out development occurs as teacher dispositions and identity take root. Through their work with a struggling reader, preservice teachers begin to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained in an authentic teaching context and also begin to feel like teachers for the first time, experiencing the satisfaction, but also the responsibility associated with their chosen profession.

Outside In—Developing Content Knowledge of Reading

Teaching children to read is not a simple task and requires more than the ability to read and a love of literature (Moats, 2001). The federal education initiatives of the last decade have focused attention on reading instruction and have driven the need for teacher candidates to enter their first jobs with a specific set of knowledge and skills that are substantially different from their predecessors (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000; Ogle, 2008).

Novice teachers in urban settings will be teaching in classrooms that are increasingly diverse in terms of language and culture and with greater concentrations of children living in poverty (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Wilkinson, Morrow, & Chou, 2008). The increasing number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds requires teachers to understand principles of second language acquisition and be able to adapt instruction to meet the needs of all learners (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). In addition, changing views of literacy and increasing minimum standards demand that reading teachers expand traditional views of literacy to include electronic texts (Hoffman & Pearson, 2000). Hoffman and Pearson (2002) capture the essence of these changes in their assertion that "yesterday's standards for teaching and teacher education will not support the kinds of learning that tomorrow's teachers must nurture among students who will be asked, in the next millennium, to meet literacy demands that our grandparents could not fathom" (p. 28).

Standards for the preparation of reading teachers require that novice teachers demonstrate their abilities to assess literacy development and engage in thoughtful teaching of reading to meet the needs of individual children (IRA, 2003). They should have "command of the underlying disciplinary knowledge base for literacy instruction" and a "respectable complement of teaching practices for using this knowledge" (Snow et al., 2005, p. 125). Educators involved in the preparation of reading teachers have intensified their efforts to strengthen preservice teachers' understanding of literacy instruction and ways to enact their knowledge in classroom contexts with diverse learners. The influence of the National Reading Panel (2000) and the National Research Council (1998) is evident in the expectation that even novice teachers are well-versed in assessment and instruction of the key components of phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Ogle, 2008). To be effective teachers of reading, candidates must acquire "specialized knowledge about language, how children learn and acquire literacy skills, and a variety of instructional strategies" (Moats, 2001, p. 2). Preservice teachers must also learn how to differentiate instruction for children at various stages of literacy development and from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as be prepared to teach children who have been identified with a wide variety of special needs (Snow et al., 2005).

Our current system of accountability and the emphasis on early identification of reading difficulties have focused attention on the role of assessment of discreet components of reading in ways that did not exist a generation ago. Preservice

teachers must understand both how to administer a wide variety of assessments to document student learning, and more importantly, be able to analyze and interpret those assessments to design effective instruction (IRA, 2003; NCATE, 2008). Snow et al. (2005) identified four key areas in which teachers need to develop expertise. First, they must understand principles of assessment in order to evaluate the quality of various assessment instruments. They must be familiar with a wide range of assessment instruments and practices and understand how to use assessment data to inform instruction. Finally, teachers must be skilled in communicating assessment results to relevant stakeholders.

Preservice teachers must also learn how to engage in professional discourse (Snow et al., 2005). They need to develop sufficient understanding of reading and terminology associated with reading assessment and instruction to communicate effectively with colleagues and other stakeholders. They need to learn how to describe their practice and explain their teaching decisions in ways that demonstrate their understanding of reading theory and reading and literacy acquisition.

Such high expectations for novice teachers require teacher preparation programs to reassess traditional models for teacher education. Candidates need to leave our programs fully equipped to face challenges that many of us have not. They need more than content knowledge—they require "useable knowledge" (Snow et al., 2005, p. 3). They need to feel confident and competent in their ability to put their knowledge into action. Field experiences such as the case study assignment help students bridge the gap from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge by providing what Snow et al. (2005) have termed *situated, can-do procedural knowledge*. Within the structured context of the case study, preservice teachers put the knowledge they have gleaned about reading instruction into practice as they work with a single struggling reader.

Inside Out—Developing dispositions

Education has long accepted the notion that knowledge and skills are not sufficient to guarantee a teacher's success in the classroom. The idea that there is a particular set of dispositions required appears in the standards of accrediting bodies, supporting the belief that a "tendency implies a pattern of behavior that is predictive of future actions" (Villegas, 2007, p. 373). For example, NCATE Standard 1 states that teacher candidates "know and demonstrate the content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and skills, pedagogical and professional knowledge and skills, and *professional dispositions* necessary to help all students learn" (emphasis added, NCATE 2008 standards, p. 12). The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC, 1992) provides dispositions for each of their ten principles which include statements such as the following:

> The teacher realizes that subject matter knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex and ever-evolving. S/he seeks to keep abreast of new ideas and understandings in the field.

The teacher appreciates multiple perspectives and conveys to learners how knowledge is developed from the vantage point of the knower.

The teacher has enthusiasm for the discipline(s) s/he teachers and sees connections to everyday life.

The teacher is committed to continuous learning and engages in professional discourse about subject matter knowledge and children's learning of the discipline. (pp. 14-15)

Despite widespread use of the term, there is neither a single definitive definition of disposition, nor a uniformly agreed-upon list of the dispositions needed for effective teaching. Villegas (2007) defines dispositions as "tendencies for individuals to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on their beliefs" (p. 373). Dispositions can also be viewed as dimensions of personality or patterns of behavior (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). Schussler, Bercaw, and Stooksberry (2008) suggest that there are three domains of dispositions. The intellectual domain is the "inclination to think and act around issues related to content and pedagogy"; the cultural domain is the "inclination to meet the needs of diverse learner in the classroom"; the moral domain is the "awareness of one's own values, the inclination to think through the assumptions and ramifications behind one's values" (p. 40).

Embedded within the construct of dispositions is the belief that personal dispositions are manifested in behavior or action (Splitter, 2010). A preservice teacher may have the knowledge and skills to differentiate reading instruction, but will not do so without the underlying disposition. Schussler and colleagues (2008) suggest that dispositions "comprise more than just knowledge and skill; they involve both the inclination of a teacher to use his or her knowledge and skills and the awareness to know when particular knowledge and skills are appropriate" (p. 40). Similarly, others suggest that dispositions serve as a bridge between ability and action (Splitter, 2010), and the critical role of competence in the manifestation of dispositions (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). Preservice teachers must master key competencies to turn a belief that culturally responsive teaching is critical into effective practice.

The importance placed on dispositions by accrediting bodies naturally leads to the need for teacher preparation programs to assess them. The majority of assessments takes the form of observations in university classrooms and field placements or self-reports completed by the candidates (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). Many assessments focus on evidence of "desirable teacher characteristics and work ethics" (Jung & Rhodes, 2008, p. 647). Preservice teachers are rated highly if they demonstrate responsibility by completing assignments in a timely manner, fulfill obligations, work collaboratively with classmates, and demonstrate awareness of and respect for diversity (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). In some cases, disposition assessments are used as a sorting mechanism in which candidates are placed in various dispositional categories such as developing, proficient, or unacceptable (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). This approach to assessment is not without criticism. For example,

Jung and Rhodes (2008) point out that "many of the dispositions assessment approaches in the United States have consisted of indicators and tools that are, for a variety of reasons, heavily focused on measuring characteristics of teachers as individuals (character-related disposition) rather than competences as professionals (competence-related disposition)" (p. 647). Assessing personal characteristics rather than competence is challenging. Reliance on self-reports raises questions of validity, and observations can be subjective. Additional research in this area will facilitate the development of reliable assessments and also our understanding of dispositions and the role they can and should play in teacher education.

Related to the assessment of dispositions is the contested issue of whether dispositions can actually be taught. Some suggest that they can be developed, changed, or cultivated (Jung & Rhodes, 2008) while acknowledging the practice of doing so is both challenging and controversial (Splitter, 2010). Certainly it follows that if dispositions are deemed a vital component in teacher quality, "then development of teacher dispositions is as important as the development of knowledge and skills" (Schussler, Bercaw, & Stooksberry, 2008, pp. 39-40).

Dispositions for Urban Educators

Boggess (2010) suggests that there may be a "set of identifiable knowledge, skills, and dispositions most effective for instruction in low-income, high-diversity city schools" (p. 88) and that different educational contexts value different sets of dispositions even as they value similar knowledge and skills. In a study of two urban teacher residency programs, he found that participants in one setting valued dispositions such as individual accountability and perseverance, while participants in the second program valued "race awareness and teaching for social justice" (p. 79) which Boggess terms *activist dispositions*. The ideology and agenda of the district influenced the valuing of one set of dispositions over another. Willingness to accept responsibility for student learning was a hallmark of quality in the first program. Perseverance and a strong commitment to the children and the job were also seen as critical dispositions. These characteristics were tied to district and program goals of increased student achievement and attendance. The activist dispositions valued in the second program were aligned with program ideology in which the teacher was viewed as a change agent.

Haberman (1996) identified several characteristics that are valued in the recruitment of urban teachers. Persistence, the ability to make theory-practice connections, taking responsibility for children's learning, and establishing relationships with learners are all dispositions that employers value and look for evidence of in the interview process. The presence of these dispositions is also linked to retention of teachers in urban school. Freedman and Appleman (2009) found that dispositions developed during teacher preparation such as sense of mission, hard work and persistence, quality preparation that balanced theory and practice, and training in the use of reflection were important factors in teachers continuing to teach in urban schools.

Methodology

In our teacher preparation program, case studies are completed during the second of two reading methods courses taken during the first year of the Early Childhood and Elementary Education programs of study. The course includes a field experience in which students are placed in urban districts, working weekly in urban classrooms with diverse learners. During the first semester, students learn about the components of reading, theories of reading, and instructional routines such as interactive read-alouds and guided reading. They carefully observe how reading instruction is accomplished in their practicum classrooms and have opportunities to teach a few lessons. During the second semester, the focus shifts to meeting the instructional needs of one learner who has been identified by the classroom teacher as a struggling reader. This reader becomes the focus child for the case study assignment.

The case study assignment includes several components. Students administer a series of assessments, analyze the data, and develop an instructional plan designed to address the needs of the focus child based on their analysis. Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) propose that the potential for learning "is enhanced if there is an interactive process of review and commentary that pushes the writer to explore the deeper meanings of the case and its relationship to other knowledge in the field" (p. 530). Therefore, the course was recently revised to include several opportunities for interaction with the instructor and peers in the structure of the course. As they worked with the child weekly, preservice teachers recorded their observations and interpretations in a *dialogic learning log* that was submitted to instructor for feedback. Students also met in collaborative groups to discuss their progress and engage in problem solving. At the end of the semester, the case study report was presented in a mock parent conference in which the instructor took the role of the parent.

Fifty of 60 students enrolled in three sections of the reading methods courses for elementary and early childhood majors agreed to participate in the study [16 of 20 in section A, 15 of 18 in section B, and 19 of 20 in section C] ranging in age from early twenties to mid-thirties, with the majority of the students in their twenties. As is typically seen in teacher education, the majority of the students were female (45 female, five male) and White (39 White, seven African American, two Hispanic, one Asian, and one Middle-Eastern). The students' field placements were in urban schools located in a large Midwestern metropolitan area. Selected schools served ethnically diverse populations, and a large percentage of children qualified for lunch subsidies.

Data Sources

Data were gathered from a variety of sources which served to triangulate results. Throughout the semester, students described their experiences working with the child in *dialogic learning logs*. In weekly entries, students recorded their observations and interpretations of the focus child's reading behaviors, evidence

of student learning, and reflected on their teaching. The logs were dialogic in that students received feedback from their instructors at three points during the semester. The feedback was intended to create a dialogue which would move the teacher candidates beyond superficial observations of classroom events and interactions with their struggling readers into thoughtful, insightful analysis and self-reflection. In the final entry in the log, students were asked to reflect on what they had learned through the case study assignment about the focus child and about themselves as teachers. Given the research questions for the study, the final entry was deemed the most relevant of the entries and thus was the focus of analysis as students commented on their acquisition of content knowledge and skills, and also provided evidence of their dispositions as they related in their own words what they had learned about themselves as teachers as a result of this experience.

A second source of data was transcripts from *collaborative sessions*. Students met every other week in small groups of four-to-six with the instructors as participant-observers in sessions lasting approximately 30 minutes. Students were expected to bring evidence about their assessments and tutoring of their focus child to share with the group and get feedback and suggestions. Sessions were audio-taped using digital recording devices and field notes were kept by the instructors. Recordings were transcribed by a graduate assistant and verified by the instructors.

The final source of data was a questionnaire. During the final week of classes, students were asked to respond to two open-ended questions about the various course elements (what did you learn from this activity; what could be changed or improved in this activity). Two additional questions asked students to reflect on the course as a whole: As you reflect on what you learned this semester, what do you see as most valuable for your future as a teacher? Do you have any additional suggestions for improving learning in this course? These anonymous surveys proved to be an important data source in that they provided a venue for students to state their opinions about various aspects of the course without fear of reprisal. They served as an additional verification of what the students' felt they had learned and what benefits they had gleaned from the case study in contrast to the instructor's viewpoints of what learning had occurred.

Data Analysis

We used inductive analysis to identify themes in a variety of data sources which included the dialogic learning logs, transcripts of collaborative sessions, the open response questions of the questionnaire, and the final case study artifact. Data from each source were read separately to gain a sense of the whole (Creswell, 2007) and uploaded into a computer program designed for the analysis of qualitative data. Initial coding, or "lean coding" (Creswell, 2007, p. 152) consisting of first impressions and tentative categories, was completed independently. We met to discuss emerging themes and to share examples of coding to verify our inferences, thus engaging in peer debriefing (Carspecken, 1996). Using constant comparative

analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), initial low-inference categories (Carspecken, 1996) were refined and developed into significant themes. This process is consistent with the "central steps of coding" suggested by Creswell (2007) for qualitative analysis. Through subsequent analysis, overarching themes of outside in and inside out external learning emerged (see Table 1).

Results

Our purpose in conducting this study was to explore whether the assignment was in fact serving its intended purpose of moving our preservice teachers toward greater levels of expertise needed for their work in urban schools. In addition, we hoped to identify opportunities to scaffold their learning effectively; i.e., to provide the type of reflection that Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) suggest as essential in moving to deeper levels of understanding. We group our themes within the two main focal points for our inquiry: the development of the knowledge and skills needed to be effective teachers of reading; and the development of dispositions needed to be effective urban educators. As implemented, the case study assignment proved effective in preparing our preservice teachers from the outside in (content knowledge and skills) and from the inside out (dispositions and identity).

From the Outside In

During coursework, it is essential that knowledge and skills that are outside of the preservice teacher initially make their way *inside*. Students must learn develop

Table 1
Coding Categories

Theme	Category	Example
Outside In Development	Content knowledge competency	It helped improve my lesson planning.
	Reality checks	There is a whole lot more to teaching than I thought, and that scares me.
	Connecting coursework with the classroom	We get to practice all that to this point has been theory.
	Professional discourse	[small group meetings] also helped with terminology.
Inside Out Development	Collaboration	I was able to get feedback from my peers.
	Feeling like a teacher	It was like being a teacher.
	Reciprocity: Teaching and Learning	I think I learned as much as my focus child did.

a thorough understanding of the reading process, principles of assessment, and a wide range of instructional strategies that can be adapted to meet the needs of all learners. They must transition from possessing mainly declarative knowledge where they know *what* to do, into the realm of procedural knowledge where they actually put their knowledge into practice (Snow et al, 2005). Students indicated that they learned a great deal of content knowledge through the case study. Three main themes were identified in the data: developing confidence and competence; reality checks; and connecting coursework to the classroom.

Developing Confidence and Competence. Students began the semester lacking confidence in their abilities to be effective teachers for their focus children. Comments by Jackie and Mark (all names in this article are pseudonyms) are representative of these feelings. "*I came into this class unsure if I was knowledgeable enough to really teach and facilitate growth in a struggling reader*" [Jackie]. "*I was unsure how effective I would be throughout the semester with my specific child*" [Mark]. With the supports they received from the instructor and from their peers, most students felt they had learned a great deal and although they realized they had much to learn, their growing competence led to increased feelings of confidence as well. "*As I progressed from administering the assessments toward determining objectives for tutoring, I began to feel comfortable working with Sarah and observing what she was able to do*"[Jackie].

Pre-service and novice teachers routinely receive training in the administration and interpretation of assessments. In this case study, students used that data to identify a target objective, design a series of lessons for that objective, teach and reflect on student learning. Designing and teaching lessons to meet a specific student's needs helped our students understand the link between assessment and instruction in a concrete way as evidenced by the following representative comments:

> "*I learned how to help a struggling reader and how to figure out where they are and what I should do to help them*."

> "*I learned how to assess a student's reading level. The tutoring helped me develop lessons based on a student's progress*."

Such comments evidence a growing sense of competence and confidence in their abilities to do the work of teachers. Students believed that they were developing the knowledge and skills to be effective reading teachers.

Reality Checks. Through the course of the semester-long assignment, many students experienced dissonance between their prior concept of what teaching would be like and the reality of their experiences in the classroom. The complexity of teaching reading, practical aspects of planning and implementing instruction, and the challenges associated with meeting the needs of an individual child were mentioned frequently in the data.

Preservice teachers realized that teaching a struggling reader was not a simple

task. Shelly's comments are typical. "*I had no idea how much work went into actually teaching a child to read. I guess I just thought that reading was a skill that they developed like learning to talk or walk, but now my view of teaching a child to read has changed dramatically.*" Barb recognized that "*assessing a child is more of a process than I originally thought.*" Students learned that planning a lesson in the abstract and actually teaching that lesson to a child were very different experiences.

Many students seemed surprised by the amount of time and effort required to prepare lessons for their tutoring children. Robert commented, "*I learned that creating lesson plans and tutoring lessons are very time consuming, since a teacher has to take everything into account: learning styles, personalities, and developmental levels.*" Debby summed it up for many. "*I really didn't understand how much preparation needed to take place for the lessons.*" Given the fact that they had already had 60 hours of practicum time prior to starting this course and had engaged in some teaching experiences, this was a bit surprising. Some students indicated on the survey that they felt the case study just involved too much work—a variation of the reality check theme. "*While I think that this assignment is a great idea, it was hard to get all the tutoring assignments done on top of the other lessons.*"

As students worked with their focus children, they grew in their understanding of what it means to differentiate instruction and in the importance of knowing the child. They learned how to "*anticipate the child's needs and adjust teaching accordingly*" and "*how to make adjustments in the moment when things didn't go as planned.*" Although we spend a lot of class time talking about differentiating instruction, our preservice teachers had a reality check as they tried to put what they learned into practice. Jackie felt a bit overwhelmed as she considered meeting the needs of a whole class. "*It is difficult for me to attend to each student as I wish to in order to assess each student's learning.*" Similarly, Mary noted, "*Just because you have a class of children all around the same age that does not mean their abilities will be the same. Each child is unique and has their own learning style and it is up to you as the teacher to accommodate for that.*"

Although we have placed this theme within the larger construct of outside in development, there is clearly overlap with the inside out development of dispositions as well. The outside in development is evident in students' growing understanding of the complexities of teaching and the necessity for thoughtful and deliberate planning. The development of dispositions was evident in their response to that reality. Some students embraced the challenge demonstrating individual accountability and perseverance, while others seemed to consider the work an imposition.

Connecting Coursework with the Classroom. Several students commented that they finally saw the connection between what they were learning in their methods courses and what they were doing in the classroom. In the absence of opportunities for application, the material they were learning seemed to have little practical value or relevance. As one student commented in the survey, "*We get to practice all that to*

this point has been theory." In their weekly work with a student, the theory-practice connection became readily apparent. Mark wrote. "*I found that when I take the knowle*dge that I am learning in my classes and apply it in the classroom, I can see benefits." In a similar vein, Barb commented, "*One of the main things that I learned was that the items we talked about in class are of great importance to me in the future when I start teaching on my own*." It is a little puzzling that this should be such a revelation to students, but comments such as these let instructors know that students are not seeing the connections that we think are self-evident. As noted by Snow et al. (2005), "We cannot assume that teacher-education students will draw inferences about how and when their newly acquired knowledge should be used, any more than we can assume that fourth-graders will know without instruction how to draw inferences from text" (p. 12). Making the shift from declarative to procedural knowledge does not come easily for some students.

Professional Discourse. The collaborative groups and the mock parent conference both proved to be powerful experiences for our students. The collaborative groups helped students enter into professional discourse. As they met with their peers and instructor, they had practice "*using professional terminology*" in a supportive, non-judgmental environment. The discussions, which provided real-life applications of the theories they were learning about in class, helped students "*gain a better understanding of vocabulary*." By discussing their work with their peers, students had the opportunity to use the tools of the profession "as practitioners use them" (Brown et al., 1998, p. 33) entering into the "community and its culture" (p.33). Having facility with technical terminology is critical in that it allows teachers to communicate effectively during collaboration (Snow et al., 2005).

From the Inside Out

A significant part of development in teacher education occurs from the inside out. That is, preservice teachers enter the program with a set of characteristics, attitudes, and dispositions that reflect their unique life experiences. Preexisting ways of thinking about teaching and learning in urban schools may be challenged as the candidates face the realities of the classroom. The students' comments and questions in the collaborative groups and their written comments in the logs provide glimpses into their underlying values and beliefs that are useful in evaluating their developing dispositions.

Learning Together—The Role of Collaboration. In our version of the case study assignment, preservice teachers met regularly with a small group of peers and the instructor to discuss their work with their focus child. Guided by questions and prompts from the instructor, they shared their successes, questions, and concerns, and as a group, engaged in problem-solving. These group meetings proved to be powerful learning experiences for our students. "*I was able to get feedback from peers about my child that they had also experienced with their focus child*." "*I was*

able to hear different perspectives on my child and what I should do." Students felt supported as they "tried on" the teacher identity in the supportive context of the university classroom. Students sought ideas, clarification about procedures, and validation that they were "*on the right track*." Students were able to develop their ability to engage in "professional discourse about subject matter knowledge and children's learning of the discipline" (INTASC, 1992, p.15).

Feeling Like a Teacher. As preservice teachers move into the apprentice stage of development, they must also experience an identity shift and begin to see themselves as teachers rather than students. Teacher candidates must adopt the Discourse of teachers, described by Gee (2001) as an identity kit, filled with the language, vocabulary, actions, and tools that will allow them to "engage in specific activities associated with that identity" (p. 719). A vitally important aspect of teacher education is facilitating the shift in identity from student to teacher by providing authentic opportunities for candidates to "try on" the teacher identity in a supportive environment.

Through the course of analyzing the learning logs, audio-tapes and field notes from the collaborative groups, and student comments during the case study presentation, it was clear that students not only gained knowledge and expertise, but also began to see themselves as teachers. "*The diverse experiences provided from this assignment have given me a taste of what I will be doing as a teacher. I did some things well, but also made some mistakes. I have learned from both!*" By engaging in authentic activities, they gained new respect for the complexity of teaching and responsibilities that are part of the profession.

The mock conferences were particularly powerful as students tried on the role of teacher in a parent/teacher conference and presented the case study. Students had the opportunity to role play as they explained their assessments and tutoring sessions to the instructor, who assumed the role of the focus child's parent.

> "*The mock interview is by far the most exciting aspect because this is not something we get in other courses.*"

Reciprocity: Teaching and Learning. Preservice teachers often talked about their relationship with the focus child as a critical element of their success in tutoring. Haberman (1996) identifies the ability to establish relationships with diverse learners as a critical disposition for urban educators, thus we were encouraged by the number of students who expressed having developed a connection with their focus children. Students talked about the need to take each child's interests into account when planning activities and how that became easier as they got to know the child better. "*As our relationship developed, I was able to predict quite well if an activity would be met with interest or not*" [Jackie].

Some students expressed sorrow that the semester was over, or concern about the child's future. "*I wish I could work with Evan next year as well when he enters 1st grade because I really feel we developed a close bond, but all I can hope for*

is that he gets a tutor that cares just as much as I did" [Mary]. Another student reported that she considered her focus child a friend and would "*remember her forever*." Students commented on the rewarding feelings associated with helping a child, stating that "*knowing that I can make a difference in a child's life*" and that it was "*amazing to see growth over time*."

An important theme that emerged in the students' comments is the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning for preservice teachers. Many students realized that they were learning as much from the child as the child was learning from them. "*Through David, I learned a lot about myself*" [Amanda]. "*Having a focus child has helped me to learn a lot about him and also helped me learn a lot about myself as a future teacher*" [LaTonya]. These types of comments provide evidence of a continuous learning cycle that is consistent with dispositions for teacher candidates (INSTASC, 1992).

Conclusions/Implications

With careful scaffolding, case study assignments can be more than a course requirement. Our work demonstrates that they can be structured in a way that provides powerful teaching and learning for the focus children, the preservice teachers, and for the instructors that guide them. As we reflect on the assignment and its potential impacts on our students, we keep our dual focus of developing the knowledge and skills needed to be effective teachers of reading, and developing the dispositions and identity of an urban educator- outside in and inside out development.

Case study methods have been cited as a promising approach to help novice teachers develop understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Lundeberg et al., 1999). Key features that have been incorporated into the framework of the assignment provide the type of feedback and revision that Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) suggest are critical elements in promoting authentic and worthwhile learning. The collaborative groups seem to facilitate the development of procedural knowledge, albeit at an emerging level. By hearing how their classmates were implementing instructional strategies discussed in class, students were better able to see how they could use the same strategies with their own teaching. It decreased the gap between theory (content knowledge from texts and lectures) and practice, connecting them pedagogically. This emerging procedural knowledge is situated in a developmental context in that students did not yet have the flexibility to adapt as needed to meet the needs of diverse children (Snow et al., 2005).

Discourse plays an important role in both developing and identifying dispositions. Splitter (2010) suggests that "*teachers need to invite students to participate in ongoing, conceptually rich, and deeply reflective conversations*" (p. 225), since "*dialogue is both reflective and productive of our inner lives*" (p. 225). The collaborative groups seemed to be a defining component in our goal of elevating the

case study assignment from a course requirement to authentic teaching and learning. Through regular meetings with the students, we were able to accomplish our goal of outside in-inside out development. We were able to provide the same type of differentiated instruction we advocate for our students, weaving in clarifications and some reteaching as needed, while also posing challenging questions for students who were ready to engage in problem solving at a higher level. Through our comments and suggestions, we were able to make the theory-practice connection obvious for our students, providing links between students' observations of the focus children and course content. We were able to identify students who required additional scaffolding well in advance of the project due date, and to provide that support from the position of expert peer rather than course instructor. Changes were noted in the group dynamics through the course of the semester. Initially, students reported out on their work in turn, waiting for feedback from the instructor. By the end of the semester, students were posing questions to each other and offering suggestions from their own experiences to support their peers.

At this early stage in our work, we cannot claim that we developed dispositions. The collaborative groups did however play an important role in helping us see the dispositions of our students in more concrete ways than would be possible by merely examining the final case study assignment. We are encouraged by the growth we saw in some students, and discouraged by the lack of growth that we saw in others. We agree with Splitter (2010) who suggests that "the idea that dispositions are to be understood in terms of- in other words, are reducible to—actual behavior, however tempting, should also be resisted" (p. 212). Thus taking a specific behavior, such as missing tutoring appointments, as an irrefutable sign of a lack of responsibility is not appropriate. Yet, when taken as a collective, the comments and actions of a preservice teacher provide an impressive body of evidence regarding dispositions. Splitter (2010) reminds us that dispositions are not manifest in single actions and that dispositional states endure over time. Thus patterns of behavior may provide the best evidence of development in this area and need to be examined more carefully. For example, preservice teachers who focused on "how hard it was to be a teacher" in their reflection essay, were by and large the same students who focused on procedures rather than student outcomes, resisted the shift in responsibility, and continued to seek explicit directives rather than general advice. This suggests that these early conversations can aid us in identifying preservice teachers who will need additional support in developing the dispositions needed to become effective teachers. Similarly, those who focused on what they had learned from the child through the process and about themselves in terms of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers, tended to be the ones who embraced the collaborative groups, coming with questions and supporting each other. We are continuing our work to see if we can identify these categories of preservice teachers earlier, and if doing so allows us to intervene in ways that build their dispositions.

We continue the cycle of learning, enactment, assessment, and reflection, using

what we learned from this group of students to make revisions to the assignment for future students. Since we believe that reflection is critical for effective teaching, we continue to seek ways to improve that component. The dialogic learning logs were quite powerful for some students, but many recorded rather superficial observations of their focus children and the reflections demonstrated little analysis or thought. The act of writing out thoughts about learning to teach was viewed as tedious busy work by some students. We are considering ways to use technology to accomplish this purpose. For examples, students might be able to record their thoughts in a voice recorder and upload it to the course management system rather than having to type their comments.

As we conclude, we consider possible extensions for this work. Jung and Rhodes (2008) discuss the "technology-disposed future teachers" (p. 563) as those that are "willing and intend to accept changes in the education context" (p. 563). If so, is there a unique set of dispositions required for achieving excellence in reading instruction? What are the key dispositions related to competence in reading instruction? Identifying and then cultivating these "reading dispositions" would be an area for further research. For example, should those who teach reading place particular value on reading and the power of literacy in society? Based on the idea of the dispositions manifesting in action, the behaviors of a reading teacher who believes thus would be different than one who does not hold that commitment. Jung and Rhodes (2008) suggest that by considering dispositions, beliefs and attitudes, self-concepts, and standards based competencies, it is possible to develop discipline specific competencies. The same can, and we believe should, be done in reading.

References

Boggess, L. B. (2010). Tailoring new urban teachers for character and activism. *American Educational Research Journal, 47*(1), 65-95.

Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (Jan.-Feb. 1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher, 18*(1), 32-42.

Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. New York: Routledge.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Snyder, J. (2000). Authentic assessment of teaching in context. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*, 523-545.

Freedman, S. W., & Appleman, D. (2009). "In it for the long haul": How teacher education can contribute to teacher retention in high-poverty, urban schools. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*(3), 323-337.

Gee, J. P. (2001). Reading as situated language: A sociocognitive perspective. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 44*, 714-725.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Haberman, M. (1996). Selecting and preparing culturally competent teachers for urban

schools. In J Sikula, T. J. Buttery, & E. Guyton (Eds.), *Handbook of research of teacher education* (pp. 747-760). New York: Macmillan.

Hoffman, J., & Pearson, P. D. (2000). Reading teacher education in the next millennium: what your grandmother's teacher didn't know that your granddaughter's teacher should. *Reading Research Quarterly, 35*(1), 28-44).

International Reading Association. (2003). *Standards for reading professionals*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support consortium (INTASC). (1992). *Model standards for beginning teacher licensure and development: A resource for state dialogue*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

Jung, E., & Rhodes, D. M. (2008). Revisiting disposition assessment in teacher education: Broadening the focus. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 33*(6), 647-660. DOI: 10.1080/02602930701773059

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Boston: Cambridge University Press.

Lundeberg, M., Levin, B., & Harrington, H. (Eds). (1999) *Who learns what from cases and how: The research base for teaching and learning with cases*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Moats, L. C. (2001). *Improving reading by preparing teachers*. Issue Brief. National Governors' Association, Washington, DC. Center for Best Practices. Docment number ED 463 243. SP 040 400

National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2008). *Professional standards for the accreditation of teacher preparation institutions*. Retrieved March 3, 2010 from: http://www.ncate.org/documents/standards/NCATE%20Standards%202008.pdf

National Reading Panel. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

National Research Council. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Ogle, D. M. (2008). Teacher education and professional development in reading: 50 years of learning. In M. J. Fresch (Ed.), *An essential history of current reading practices* (pp. 207-228), Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Schussler, D. L., Bercaw, L. A., & Stooksberry, L. M. (2008). The fabric of teacher candidate dispositions: What case studies reveal about teacher thinking. *Action in Teacher Education, 29*(4), 39-52.

Snow, C. E., Griffin, P., & Burns, M. S. (2005). *Knowledge to support the teaching or reading: Preparing teachers for a changing world*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Splitter, L. J. (2010). Dispositions in education: Nonentities worth talking about. *Educational Theory, 60*(2), 203-230.

Sternberg, R J., & Horvath, J.A. (1995). A prototype view of expert teaching. *Educational Researcher, 24*(6). 9-17.

Wilkinson, L.C., Morrow, L.M., & Chou, V. (Eds.). (2008). *Improving literacy achievement in urban schools: Critical elements in teacher preparation*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Villegas, A. M. (2007). Dispositions in teacher educations: A look at social justice. *Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(5), 370-380.