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**Telling Stories of Our Teaching, Reflecting on Our Practices'**

*Mary Louise Gomez  
University of Wisconsin-Madison*

*This article explores how one teacher educator developed contexts in which White, middle-class prospective teachers told teaching stories to one another in a weekly, on-campus, student-teaching seminar. The goal of the seminar was for the student teachers to consider alternative ways to think about and to behave toward children different from themselves in race, social class, and language backgrounds. Through storytelling, the prospective teachers saw the strengths of children whom others wished to label as deficient. By sharing stories, the prospective teachers engaged in collaborative critique regarding classroom events, took greater control over their own development as teachers, and developed plans for future action that support all children.*

My ten-year-old daughter Lily' has always loved books and stories. In her years of pre­school, she never napped. Rather, she gained permission to lie on her cot and "read" a bagful of picture books that I brought from home every day. In the evening, we have always shared a few books, or a chapter or two, before bedtime. Five years ago, as she struggled to conquer her fears of being in a new school where noisy "big kids" were in the halls and on the playground, she began to plead for one last story before she slept--"one from the mind," as she said.

So, each night during that kindergarten year, after we read a few books and talked about her day, Lily and I composed stories about a hero named Peter whom we had originally come to know as a character (who saved others in trouble) in a favorite book. Now, he romped through our collaborative stories as a citizen of Blueberry Land, Triangle Land, or some other exotic and faraway place. In the pattern of these shared tales, Peter's primary role was to enter a story just when the troublesome children of a kind king or queen required rescuing. Regardless of how careless a story's royal offspring had been in leaving a gate unlocked or in wandering too far from their caretakers, Peter was always able to save them. Each day, when the monsters were conquered and the kingdom safeguarded, Peter returned home to his mother. Then our chapter closed, and Lily drifted off to dream.

Gloria Anzaldua (1988) asserts that stories like the ones Lily and I shared magically link tellers and listeners. "The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic" (p. 30). Our stories provide solace from the frightening demons that lurk in children's dark bedrooms late at night. Stories draw us to adventures from which we would otherwise be barred by time, geography, or physical prowess. And, as Thomas Barone suggests, they help to "render the horizons of others more accessible" as "we seek to understand landscapes other than our own" (1988, pp. 14-15). Stories make permeable the boundaries of our own and others' life experiences (Smith, 1991), and enable the appraisal of these experiences (Rosen, 1985). Through telling and listening to stories, individuals are able to "put the personal and particular into perspective" (Rich, 1979, p. 43) and to fashion "alternative notions of truth and representation" (Helle, 1991, p. 50). As people, we interpret and secure, challenge and reinterpret our experiences through telling stories.

Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) argue that it is the teller in particular who has the potential to be transformed through the tales:

The stories people tell about themselves are interesting not only for the events and characters they describe but also for something in the construction of the stories themselves. How individuals recount their histories--what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonists or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience--all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned. It is this formative--and sometimes deformative power of life stories that make them important. (p. 1)

Rosenwald and Ochberg remind us that stories are fashioned by the individual teller within the social and institutional discourses available and they acknowledge the possibilities for self­understanding that are inherent in the stories we tell.

I have never spoken directly with Lily, my storytelling partner, about the parallels between her fears of "big kids" who fill school hallways with their large, jostling bodies and who accidentally bump into you when you are least expecting it, and the children of Blueberry and Triangle Land who are stalked by creatures prowling the royal woods. Yet, her requests for our jointly-constructed stories began after she had first expressed her fears of the sixth, seventh and eighth graders at her school, and ended later that winter when she became more comfortable with their presence. Unlike the children in our stories, she had no Peter to rescue her. However, through the telling, I believe that Lily came to see that she could conquer her fears and rescue--or transform--herself as we made the strange familiar in our tales.

Many times since we told the "rescue stories," I have thought about how beneficial the storytelling was for Lily as she became accustomed to a new school, and for me as a mother who wanted to support her in meeting this challenge. Our storytelling was facilitated by the bonds that connect us, as mother and daughter, as people who share a language background, social class, gender, and ethnicity, as people who daily work and play together. As a teacher educator and teacher, I dream of ways that I and my colleagues in classrooms around the country might similarly support and sustain children's learning and adults' understandings. Yet, I recognize that it is unrealistic to expect that teachers and students in the United States today share many of the commonplaces that link my daughter and me. Opportunities for teachers to know the feelings and imagine the experiences of the children in our classrooms are inhibited as the student population becomes more diverse and the teacher population remains homogeneous. (See Gomez, 1994, for a discussion of how United States teachers' race, social class, gender, sexual preferences, and language backgrounds affect their perspectives on diverse students' ability to learn.) As the differences between those teaching and those taught continue to grow, I fear the barriers to understanding one another become greater, and the possibilities for teachers to forge personal relationships with students and to develop curricula and instructional practices that assist students' learning and meet their needs for academic success become narrowed.

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Lisa Delpit (1988) contends that teachers can develop personal relationships with students and meet their academic needs only when we become "vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to avoid the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness" (p. 297). Delpit tells us that we have to develop an insiders' perspective on children's lives if we are to help them learn in school. As teachers, we must see school and its demands from children's and families' perspectives as well as from our own. In the pages that follow, 1 examine ways in which telling stories of teaching has allowed me and prospective teachers with whom I have worked to turn our teaching worlds upside down and to develop new perspectives on our practices.

**Telling Teaching Stories: My Own**

For the past few years, I have been asking the question (Abt-Perkins & Gomez, 1993; Gomez, 1992; Gomez & Abt-Perkins, 1995; Gomez & Tabachnick, 1992): What happens when teachers tell stories about themselves and about their work? I have found that in telling teaching stories--narratives in which a teacher and her classroom practices play a central role--individuals can conduct a self-critique in which they can see themselves and their complex interactions with others in a fresh light. In particular, I am trying to understand how telling teaching stories to their peers (over time and in a supportive setting) can assist teachers in puzzling through their behavior toward different students; questioning accepted schooling practices; unpacking the social, economic, and institutional forces against which children and their families struggle; and devising new ways to teach that invite all children to learn.

In the next section, I tell about one way in which I began to consider how telling stories of teaching might affect teachers' thinking and actions. In 1989, two colleagues, Bob Tabachnick and Ken Zeichner, asked me to write a chapter for their book focused on inquiry-oriented teacher education. Bob and Ken asked me to write about my university teaching of a course focused on teaching language arts in the elementary school. They said that they were interested in the social justice orientation of the course--how I taught and how students responded to my teaching. They also encouraged me to write about what grounded my teaching--why I taught in particular ways and what drove my choices for readings and activities.

As I considered their request, my eyes drifted to my bookshelf. I pulled from their places paperbacks with now brown pages and I recalled the reading about teaching and school reform that had absorbed me when I was in my twenties--work by Virginia Axline (1964), George Dennison (1969), Joseph Featherstone (1971), John Holt (1964, 1967, 1974), Kenneth Koch (1970), Herbert Kohl (1967), Jonathan Kozol (1967), and Jesse Stuart (1970a, 1970b). I also thought about the influence of my father, who explained by his words and by his actions what he saw as each person's obligation to care for others. I remembered children whom I had taught. In particular, I recalled my former first-grade student, David.

As I considered what grounded my university teaching, I was drawn again and again to thinking about David, whom I had taught in Black River, Vermont, in the 1970s. I contemplated how I had felt called to teach by the promise it held for changing children's lives. I remembered how I had tried to live out my ideals as a student teacher with David and his friends, and I (1991) wrote the following story.

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Twenty years ago in a small Vermont Milltown where the looms had long been silent, I was a student teacher. My experiences that year mark my teaching to this day, for it was then that I became David's foster mother. I was drawn to David from the moment I entered his first-grade classroom for my year-long student teaching. David was small and brown; his eyes were large and liquid, sorrowful. He could not identify the letters of the alphabet in September, nor could he do so in May. David's biological mother was a singly parent and an alcoholic; she was an absent and sometimes abusive parent. While she was hospitalized during the winter that year, David came to live with me and my husband.

Like many of his peers at Black River School, David and his mother lived in terrible poverty produced by the closing, decades earlier, of the town's factories; Frequently hungry and sleepy, he and his classmates walked from flats adjacent to the rail yard to the town's one elementary school. There, Ms. Paterson, their teacher, and attempted to construct a sanctuary from life as these children knew it.

Late in the springtime, when my student teaching--evaluated as highly successful by all--was nearly completed, David's mother was discharged from the hospital. The state social services department required that we return David to her. Soon afterwards, my husband and I finished graduate school, and we moved away, leaving David in Black River. Neither the social worker assigned to David nor his mother encouraged us to remain in contact with him. So, unhappy about returning him to his flat by the tracks, buried myself in my new teaching job in the Midwest and did not write or call. I have thought a lot about David in the past years. He would be in his mid-twenties now--about my age when he lived with me. (pp. 91-92)

My reflections about my student teaching in Black River helped me understand how, in attempting to create a sanctuary from their daily lives outside of school, Ms. Paterson and I failed to build the critical links that bind children's homes to their school classrooms. Missing from our teaching was recognition that all children come to school with knowledge, skills, and experience upon which we can draw, build, and expand. Our reading and writing program focused on activities and ideas that Ms. Paterson and I chose because we thought that the children would enjoy them and learn from them. We chose the themes, the books to be read, and the forms that the writing would take.

Ms. Paterson and I did not extend an invitation to the children and their families to make this school their school because we wanted to replace what they brought to school with what we knew and valued. We failed to value the stories that David and his friends brought to school other than to confirm our own vision of their families' pathology. Therefore, we could not, in Chambera Erasmus's (1989) words, "extend, rather than limit the possibilities these children [brought] to school" (p. 274).

As I wrote my story about teaching David, I understood my intentions as a teacher and the outcomes of those intentions in a fresh light. My writing was a telling of my teaching stories or personal narratives of classroom life. The telling provided me with the time and opportunity to revisit my practices with an imagined sympathetic audience of peers. The telling provided me

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with multiple perspectives on my work--the perspective of an insider on my teaching as a person who wanted to make children's lives better. It also provided me with the perspective of an outsider—someone who could see that my idea of making children's lives better was to make their lives more like the one I had experienced in a working-class family with middle-class aspirations. In responding to my colleagues' request to write about why and how I taught a university course, I engaged in self-critique. I looked closely at how I had enacted those intentions. I analyzed theirs outcomes for the children. I saw how what I had thought about as classroom teaching grounded in concerns for social justice was teaching entrenched in middle-class perspectives on what children should know and learn and do.

**Telling Teaching Stories: With Prospective Teachers**

During the same period of time in which I wrote the book chapter, Bob Tabachnick and I were co-directing an experimental multicultural program of teacher education called Teaching for Diversity (1987-1992). The teacher education (and accompanying (research) in which we were engaged was aimed at helping prospective teachers to successfully prepare for U.S. elementary classrooms where privileged children primarily from White and middle-class backgrounds sit side by-side with peers from low-income families, who are often also families of color. Our program was predicated on multicultural and social reconstructionist theories (Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1991). Our objective was to prepare teachers who were committed to and successful at teaching everyone's children.

Our program spanned the three semesters that the university students were enrolled in coursework and field experiences. Students enrolled in our program mirrored their peers in the U.S. teaching population; most were White, middle-class, suburban-and rural-born, English-speaking, heterosexual females (Zimpher, 1989). Students worked in one of two schools with children from a variety of social class backgrounds--50% of whom in each building were children of color. Most children in these two schools spoke English as a first language; however, there were children from many different language backgrounds enrolled in English as Second Language programs in each building.

In each semester, we co-led weekly seminars with two teachers from the school field sites. Over time, we had found that our weekly seminars provided opportunities for students in our cohort group to get to know one another well and that the conversations in the seminar, while guided by readings and assignments, were most exciting and challenging when students talked to one another about their teaching and their understandings of it.

We began to explore how focusing on telling teaching stories in the seminars provided the student teachers with the time and opportunity to do what I had done in my writing--to critique their classroom practices in relation to their goals for themselves and for their students, and in relation to the outcomes of their work. We wanted prospective teachers to recognize links between classroom action and children's lives outside of school. We wanted our students to see how their interpretations of children's motives and behavior were rooted in their race, social class, gender, and sexual preferences, just as the children's actions were rooted in their backgrounds and experiences. We wanted our students to understand how they as teachers and how schools as institutions transformed the multi-faceted, complex dilemmas that families confront into school problems. We wanted prospective teachers to see themselves as a community that had collective responsibility for the children in their care. Through storytelling, we aimed to question our teaching goals; to consider effective alternatives to our teaching practices so that we continually focused on who the children were and what strengths as well as needs they brought to school;

and to reconsider our role and actions as individual teachers. We tried to see ourselves as members of not only a classroom community of children to whom we were obligated, but also to see ourselves as members of a school community and of larger communities outside of school to which we were obligated for social action and justice.

Bobby Jo Johnson's Story

In the story that follows, I show how, telling teaching stories challenged prospective teachers to think about teaching for a literacy that was focused on increasing children's skills of reading and writing. It also considered literacy as a means of making and challenging meanings. Bobby Jo Johnson, the narrator of this story, is a White woman born in the rural Midwest and raised on a farm as the youngest of 11 children. She was 25 years old and a candidate for a second bachelor's degree (her first was in economics) as an elementary teacher when she was enrolled in our program. In a pedagogical autobiography that Bobby Jo wrote at the beginning of the program, she said that until she had completed her first university degree she had not thought much about teaching because she thought "money was a critical factor" in her life. However, as she grew older and was not happy with who she was or what she was doing (a paraphrase of her words), she decided that she wanted to be a teacher and "make a difference in the lives of my students and help as many children as I could to be lovers of learning." Bobby Jo wanted to be like her favorite teacher, Mrs. Southfield, from second grade. She said,

I want to be the Mrs. Southfield for every student I have. I want to reach out to the students and help them discover new, exciting interests; to create an environment where all feel welcome and safe so that they can be comfortable in their learning. But, most of all, I want to be thoughtful and reflective enough to see my weaknesses and mistakes I make in order to correct them. This is what I believe a good teacher does.

At the end of October 1992, during her final field experience as a student teacher in fourth grade, Bobby Jo chose to teach a multi-week unit focused on the U.S. Presidential election. She did so because Morris Elementary, the site of her student teaching, was located in the politically active eastern corridor of the city and the children in her class talked continually about the election. Many of the girls in the class were especially concerned about the stand that each candidate took on a woman's choices to control child-bearing. On their own initiative, several girls were tracking how the candidates represented their views at various campaign stops and with different constituent groups.

As she began planning the unit, Bobby Jo asked the children to write down questions they had about elections. She used the girls' questions about the candidates' stands on women's choices in child-bearing as an example of the sorts of things the children might wonder about, and once all students had posed their queries, she used these as jumping-off points for the centers that would be developed.

Eight centers were developed for the two classes of children. One featured campaign booths for each candidate where the platforms of Bush, Clinton, and Perot were present for students' reading and analyses. Later, the children would stage a mock Presidential debate with the data they gathered from this center. At other centers, children could design and construct campaign buttons, banners, and slogans for their favorite candidate to highlight an issue such as children's rights to vote. In other centers, children voted in mock election booths, read biographies of each candidate, and analyzed data from various nations regarding who could vote and how voting rights had been determined.

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As the days passed and the actual election drew near, Bobby Jo observed that most of the fourth graders appeared very interested and engaged in the activities. She also observed that the children who had been labeled emotionally disturbed, four of whom were students in her class, seemed to be having fewer problems than usual with self control—fighting, name-calling and general off-task behavior. Bobby Jo said:

I know we have talked a lot about starting from what kids know and like and do and all that. But, for the first time, I saw how putting everything together... in one big unit for over an hour a day made all the difference for kids who usually can't make it all day in our room without some scene and Bob [the guidance counselor] or Laurie [the educational assistant] coming on the run. Kids like Marvin and Corry and Danny who are always popping off at someone or yelling, "I ain't gonna do that [four-letter word]! " are hanging in there. Now, maybe they're not reading all of the words in the biographies or the campaign literature, but they are listening to the tapes I made and sitting there and when we talk about the centers, they have something to say. They're not just hanging over their desks with their heads down or trying to make Rollie cry or get angry by snapping a rubber band her way. Marvin [an African-American boy] was here all day for three days running. Amazing!

What gets me is how during all of this good learning, I hear how we're going to do more testing with Marvin so we can label him CD (cognitively disabled) along with ED (emotionally disturbed). I got so excited today because the learning disabilities staff is trying to tell us that he's down so low on the testing for learning disabilities that... I don't want to say it, but that he's *mentally retarded.* And I'm like . . . there's no way [that is so]. I said that I can prove they are wrong. For one thing, I mean I've watched him listen to a tape and follow along to the reading. I mean I cued him for the first few lines. And when I looked back, he was already on the second column. And, you know, he is able to follow and write the words. This election unit [I taught] really helped me to see how smart he is because all the different learning stations let him use what he knew and what he was interested in knowing. I am going to go to the team meeting and argue for Marvin. We need to be better teachers. It's not Marvin--yes, he's certainly got his problems--but we shouldn't label him and say it [not learning] is his fault.

Bobby Jo's descriptions of Marvin as a child who *could* learn and her analyses of who should take responsibility for teaching that would help him build on his interests and the ways he learned best unleashed a torrent of conversation from her listening peers. Several other students also gave examples of children of color in their classrooms who were currently "in a queue" for appointments with various psychologists and learning specialists that would almost certainly result in being bested and labeled as cognitively disabled or emotionally disabled.

Belinda Davis, for example, told stories about an African American child named Latanya in her kindergarten class who was struggling with many challenges in her life, including young parents who were jailed in another city. Latanya loved school and was a favored friend of many different children in the class. She was small in stature and always in motion, and had a sweet disposition. She and some of her siblings were lovingly cared for by their grandmother.

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Latanya could not identify any alphabet letters when she came to school in September and did not know how to read or how to write her name then. By December, Latanya could identify many, but not all of the alphabet letters and could write her first name (inconsistently), but not her last. Nonetheless, Belinda saw Latanya as making great progress in both her development of the traditional compartmentalized kindergarten skills of reading and writing and in the ways that she talked about and drew about her understandings of the books read to the class, the trips they took around the city, and the classroom activities of measuring, counting, and cooking in which the children took part. Like Bobby Jo's pledge to Marvin, Belinda vowed to stop Latanya's becoming labeled *disabled.*

Disabled, yeah let's be honest, they want to call her retarded and put her in a special class away from the other kids! I'm going to fight as hard as I can. I'm so disappointed you know. Even my principal (an African American woman whom Belinda greatly admired) seems to support this testing. I think people just kept talking to her about what's wrong with Latanya and she has started to believe it or wonder about it, too.

Belinda felt sad and angry, but also stronger in understanding (through the storytelling of peers like Bobby Jo) that she was not alone in challenging how low-income children of color in her school were slotted for labelling and "treatment." Knowledge that she was joined by her peers in her distress and in their collaborative certainty that Latanya and Marvin were smart and could do well in school made Belinda confident that she could struggle with Bobby Jo on the children's behalf.

Bobby Jo summed her learning from the unit and the story she had told about it to us all a few days after it was completed.

I chose to teach this unit about the election because it was all around them. Lots of kids' parents were campaign workers and the news about the election was everywhere--on their lawns, in their mailboxes, on television, at their dinner tables. What I did not anticipate was how teaching about the election helped me understand how I could stand up and fight for a child's rights not to be called disabled. I actually had records of what Marvin could do when he was interested in what he was learning.

Bobby Jo's story helped her understand what had made the difference in literacy learning for Marvin. He could read and write when he was interested, when the tools to support his reading and writing were in place, and when he could contribute to the class conversations. Bobby Jo's story helped her peers like Belinda see more clearly how they, too, might question ongoing school practices of slotting and labelling learners--especially children of color who were often testing targets--and to find ways to act for children's benefit. Together, they saw how different meanings and responsibilities for literacy teaching and learning could be assigned that might not result in some children's categorization. Via their storytelling, these prospective teachers reflected on what teaching for literacy meant and on how they might enact a pedagogy that supported their best intentions, despite the societal and institutional constraints on doing so.

8**Telling Teaching Stories: Conclusions**

The personal story with which I began this paper represents how the relationships between tellers of stories and their listeners--the contexts in which the stories are told--are as important as the content of the stories. Much of what has been written to date concerning the use of narrative in teacher education has focused on the uses of stories or cases extracted from the contexts in which these were lived or told. I argue that the contexts in which stories are told--the places, occasions, and audiences for their telling--are inextricably tied to their meanings and purposes.

Just as my daughter and I experienced sharing stories in safe and supportive settings--in our home in the evening and in my writing for trusted colleagues--the weekly seminar meetings our teacher education program provided for prospective teachers offered them ways and places to

considered acceptable practices in their schools and classrooms--places that ordinarily do not sanction vulnerability, ambiguity, or the airing of uncertainty. Rarely do teachers come together for the purposes of puzzling through what they do not yet fully understand or for questioning accepted teaching and school practices. The on-campus seminar provided a place for this to begin.

Throughout their years in competitive classroom environments, prospective teachers have learned to hide their feelings of self-doubt and to defend themselves against critique, even from their peers. I believe that, like Lily and me, teachers need to feel safe to both tell and receive stories. Just as my colleague and I challenged prospective teachers to find ways to make learning experiences meaningful and relevant to children's lives, we were committed to do the same for them. In the seminar, then, we did not ask that they tell stories with neat conclusions or morals; rather we asked that the stories be "in process"--important to them personally, open to critique, and aimed toward future action.

The storytelling occasions in this paper illustrate how sharing teaching stories enhances prospective teachers' understanding of themselves--the strengths as well as the limitations of what they bring as perspectives on "others" to teaching.' As Haberman (1991) points out, experiences with "others" in school settings cannot alone challenge the perspectives of White, middle-class teachers toward diverse learners. University seminars conducted during field experiences may be one of the only available sites for engaging prospective teachers in such a process. As Barone (1992) states, the role of critical storytelling is to break down the barriers that exist in educational settings--between teachers and students, between Whites and "others," between teachers and their students' families, between university faculty and prospective teachers--that prevent us from "hearing each other's heartbeats" (p.142).

**A Postscript**

What potential does telling teaching stories hold for teacher development, outside of seminars such as those I have described here? Recently, I began to explore the possibilities for telling stories of teaching in two other places. In 1994, I asked the 27 undergraduate prospective teachers enrolled in my required course focused on Teaching Language Arts in the Elementary School to bring written stories of their teaching to class on three occasions. The students met with me for an entire morning once per week and were concurrently enrolled in an eight-week long, three-morning-per-week practical experience in a local elementary school. Students were asked to bring stories to class that showed how they were attempting to enact the multicultural, social reconstructionist orientation of the course, and to share the stories with one another in small groups. 9

In many ways, this experiment in using teaching stories in an undergraduate course was successful. It provided students with an opportunity to hear from one another the encouragements and constraints of practicing a pedagogy about which we read and talked in class. The two graduate students supervising the students' field experiences voluntarily came to my class each week. Together, we were able to bind the university coursework and classroom fieldwork in a dialogic relation that these do not ordinarily have for many prospective teachers in our traditional program.

In another way, the experiment was less successful. It was several weeks into the semester before many students were comfortable in telling teaching stories, especially those who showed their own vulnerability as novices, in the presence of their somewhat unfamiliar course instructor and supervisors. The mutual trust that we were able to develop over multiple semesters with students in our experimental program was built over time and across many occasions. A one semester course that met weekly, led by an instructor not formally connected to students' field experiences, was not adequate for such trust to develop for all participants. The graduate student supervisors were experienced and talented teachers who were nurturing and supportive of prospective teachers' first formal classroom teaching, but, they, too, were new to the students. These factors contributed to students feeling uncomfortable about sharing their tentative understandings of a multicultural and social reconstructionist approach to teaching and how they were trying to practice it. This discomfort, combined with the brevity of the course and field experience, did not allow students to rethink or reenact lessons that challenged their understandings of what literacy teaching and learning is about.

I participated in a second activity where teaching stories were used as tools for reflective practice in the winter of 1994 when I was asked to become involved in the University of Wisconsin-Madison Institute for Multicultural Science Education (IMSE). This project brings middle and high school science teachers to campus for several weeks each summer in a cohort group working towards making science teaching more multicultural. For their winter meeting, teachers were asked to bring written stories of their successful multicultural science teaching and to tell these to one another, including analyses of why and how the stories showed a multicultural approach taught in the previous summer institute. While the teachers had neither told such stories nor requested mutual critique about them before, they appeared very comfortable and enthusiastic about the storytelling process, and open to asking one another questions about related teaching issues. At the close of the day, many said that they had learned something new about their teaching that would enhance their future practices.

Perhaps the IMSE teachers were able to tell one another their stories and welcome the critique of their peers because they, like students in our experimental program, knew one another and their teachers well. They were already judged by their peers in the group as "good" science teachers and welcomed the opportunity to share how and what they had taught since they had met the prior summer. They also knew that they would meet again in the coming summer and would be able to follow-up on these mid-year conversations aimed at improving their teaching.

Three criteria seem important if telling teaching stories is to affect prospective and in­service teachers' thinking and actions. First, clear goals for telling the teaching stories should be established. Second, an atmosphere of mutual trust and support should be developed over time. Third, telling such stories appears to have the greatest potential for impacting classroom activities when teachers work together for a length of time that enables the rethinking, revision, and continuing consideration of teaching practices that enhance all students' learning.

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**End Notes**

A draft of this paper was presented at the American Educational Research Association meeting, April 1994. For an elaborated discussion of telling teaching stories for their potential with inservice as well as prospective teachers, see Gomez, M. L. (1996).

Iuse the term diverse learners and "others" to encompass groups of people often disenfranchised by schools and schooling, e. g., those who are persons of color; who live in low-income families; have limited proficiency in English; are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Grumet (1988) uses the phrase "other people's" children to heighten our sense of responsibility for teaching all children in the ways that we would teach our own. Delpit (1988) uses the same phrase to challenge teachers to acknowledge how their participation in the "culture of power" constrains their understanding and teaching of diverse children.

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**Mary Louise Gomez** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin Madison, where she co-directs Teach for Diversity, a graduate program in teacher education.

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