Teaching and Learning as Negotiation

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The last few years have been especially challenging for teachers in elementary schools in the United States (U.S.). Since the onset of COVID-19, teachers in U.S. elementary schools have had to address changes in instructional delivery, swings in public opinion toward their work, and issues of student access to academic content, among many others. All these concerns have altered the educational landscape in ways which will no doubt last beyond the term of the pandemic. One of the possible repercussions of these challenges is the alteration of the student-teacher relationship. Whether it be from masking policies, remote learning, or again, public perception of the teaching profession, the ways in which teachers and students relate to each other in academic settings may no longer resemble what came before. What's more, the popular discourse surrounding teaching has coarsened to a point where teachers are suspected of indoctrinating students in ways that parents and policy makers deem unacceptable and possibly unlawful (McCaughey, 2022). In fact, advocates for parent's rights nationwide argue their needs and the needs of their children are not being met by state and local education systems so profoundly that policy makers have enacted a wide assortment of regulations governing education and its presentation (Walsh, 2022). These policies range from regulating the nature of the academic content students can access to policing the very interactions teachers and students can have in the classroom. Accordingly, examining the current nature of student-teacher relationships is of vital importance.

Indeed, attending to how students and teachers build, maintain, and learn through their relationships in the classroom is nice in a vacuum, where student academic achievement is assumed. However, recent reports from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2022a; 2022b) show that students in the U.S., in both fourth and eighth grade, evidenced significant drops in both mathematics and reading scores from 2019 to 2022. These drops in student achievement exist across the entirety of the U.S. Any number of COVID-19-related factors could have contributed to these declines, but no doubt, COVID-19 and subsequent education policies (e.g., school closures, remote learning, technological requirements for students) have led to unprecedented challenges for students and teachers in schools. As such, this paper examines one of these challenges, namely, the ways in which students and teachers relate in the classroom and the purposes of such relationships.

Teacher and Student Relationships

The relationships teachers build with students are paramount in education. Beyond simply presenting academic content to children in classrooms, teachers need to

foster relationships with children that support academic achievement (Baker, 2006; Roorda et al, 2011) and create a sense of community and well-being (Russell et al, 2016). In fact, teachers who develop conflictual relationships with children and demand control create classrooms that are described "as seething with resentment" (Haberman, 2010, p. 83). On the other hand, Hamre and Pianta (2001) argue that teachers who develop positive relationships with children are more willing to engage them more fully, spending extra time in support of their academic pursuits. These kinds of relationships with teachers result in greater academic achievement in mathematics and reading (Baker et al, 2008). Other benefits of positive teacher-student relationships include an increased trust in school and the adults that staff them (Milner, 2013), improved attendance (Anderson et al, 2004), and increased self-efficacy (Liew et al, 2010).

Conflictual relationships between students and teachers, by contrast, have a markedly different effect on students. In addition to lower student achievement (Crosnoe et al, 2004), students who have conflictual or otherwise negative relationships with teachers can disengage from academic endeavors (Birch & Ladd, 1997) and fail to build positive relationships with future teachers and other educational personnel (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Ultimately, the nature of the student-teacher relationship is incredibly meaningful in reaching the myriad purposes toward which schools and teachers put their efforts. In fact, the research clearly shows the effects of teacher/student relationships in terms of desirable academic outcomes. However, many of these outcomes are those sought by educational institutions and personnel. What is missing in this discussion are the specific purposes students bring to schools. These purposes could include concerns regarding

what to learn and how to apply it, as well as more interpersonal goals such as how and who to interact with to achieve various ends. While these purposes may not be known to teachers or to the students themselves, it is important to identify how teachers develop instruction based upon what they know, or at least presume, are their students' purposes for being in school. In this post-COVID era where the interactions between teacher and student are being regulated in unprecedented ways, identifying and supporting generative interactions between teachers/students can open opportunities for innovative practice, regardless of the content of instruction.

Teaching and Learning as Negotiation

The first theoretical framework that guides this study is sociocultural theory, which posits that learning is substantiated through social interactions and interpersonal relationships. Sociocultural theories of learning rely on interpersonal relations to forward learning and development through the use of particular tools that mediate the internalization of new content (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1998). The constructs most associated with sociocultural perspectives on learning are mediation, internalization, and the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

This study, in particular, hinges on the ZPD, which, despite its name, implies a spatial notion. While spatial contexts do affect learning, the ZPD truly identifies a relational stance between the learner and others. Within the ZPD, learning occurs through the interaction between two parties. As Breen and Littlejohn (2000) suggest, "This concept of scaffolding derives, of course, from the work of Vygotsky who explicitly located learning both within social activity and as social activity" (p. 16). This does not mean that every interaction results in learning. Chaiklin (2003) explicated this point further with an elaboration on what he

termed the assistance assumption. This assumption presupposes that anyone can assist another simply because she/he is more capable. Additionally, the ZPD isn't inherent in an individual; it is very much contextually driven (Chaiklin, 2003). Lantolf (2000) agrees and argues that the ZPD "is not a physical place situated in time and space; rather it is a metaphor for observing and understanding how mediational means are appropriated and internalized" (p. 17). Each new interaction opens the possibility for the co-construction of a new ZPD. Indeed, it is not spatial at all; the ZPD is purely relational. "This view of relations between teacher and learner, expert and novice, is a radically proximal one in which there is a conjoint participation and influence, one in which no mover is unmoved" (Erickson, 1996, p. 29). As such, the ZPD is "constructed and, indeed, negotiated through interaction…, a socially constructed dialogue that has the potential to push development" (Rose & Teague, 2008, p. 313).

While this theoretical framework explains broadly how the interactions between student and teacher can result in learning (i.e., learning occurs by mediational means, within a co-constructed ZPD, leading to internalization), this paper presents a singular possibility of how students and teachers can co-construct a ZPD. Many metaphors and analogies exist when trying to capture the essence of the teaching & learning relationship. Educational philosophers Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (2015) and Nel Noddings (The Public Voice Salon, 2018) often compared the caring nature of teachers to gardeners and students to flowers. Paolo Freire (2000) describes how many educators might apply a banking metaphor wherein educators make deposits of knowledge or place import on having funds of knowledge. Literary ones (e.g., bucket filling or candle lighting as a

relational view) perhaps more traditionally held but more negative in nature, is the metaphor of teacher as boss or overseer of students, or underlings (Clarken, 1997). One comparison which may not be applied as frequently is comparing the act of teaching and learning to the art of business negotiations, which we hold as the second theoretical perspective guiding this study.

When determining what negotiation could mean, there are many variations and manifestations to consider. According to Richard Shell (2006), negotiation is any "interactive communication process that may take place whenever we want something from someone else or another person wants something from us" (p.6). Negotiation involves complex combinations of tasks, outcomes, and cooperation and is also defined as, "the process of two individuals or groups reaching joint agreement about differing needs or ideas" (Mcalister-Kizzier, 2000, para. 1). Breen and Littlejohn (2000) further refine negotiation into three types - personal, interactive, and procedural. Their work specifically connects negotiation as the act of reaching mutual agreements within the educational contexts. Personal negotiation is defined as "a psychological process because it engages such mental capacities as discriminating, analysing and synthesizing, memorising or recalling, and so on" (p. 6). Interactive negotiation is "overtly social and occurs when people use language either to indicate their understanding or their failure to understand...what another person has said" (p. 7). Procedural negotiation focuses "less on upon meaning than upon reaching agreement" (p. 8). Breen and Littlejohn present procedural negotiation as integral to managing the teaching and learning experience, from the content taught, to the context within which it is learned. These authors argue further that negotiation with students as learners come to the learning

context with their own purposes and priorities. These acts of negotiation, however, are complicated due to the conflicts that often arise when trying to reach mutual agreement or understanding. Often compared to conflict resolution, negotiation includes the resolution of demands from multiple parties.

At the heart of negotiated spaces are the concepts of social interactions and dynamic relationships. As Dinnar and Suskind (2019) assert in their work: "Entrepreneurial negotiations involve a difficult mix of emotion, uncertainty, complexity, and relationships" (p.158). In order to garnish any success, a negotiator needs to understand not only their own resources, values, priorities, and objectives, but also what views their counterpart holds on those elements as well. The most successful negotiations necessitate defining those aspects and adjusting accordingly as the interdependent relationship develops (Lewicki et al., 2011). Within the scope of teaching, this would be akin to educators who carefully research the various needs (e.g., cultural, language proficiency, learning ability) of students within a classroom and strategically adjust instruction based on those identified needs (e.g., grouping strategies, questioning techniques, and the address of the standards of practice within individual lessons and across larger units of study).

Theory suggests that learning and negotiation are similar in that they are rooted in mental relationships as well as social contexts, but practice would also consider the specific needs that must be considered in either dynamic. Both are nuanced and layered constructs. In attempting to study teaching dialogues and artificial intelligence, Baker (1994) reveals that "a large range of different things may be negotiated (topic, problem to be pursued, level of difficulty, interaction style, ending

dialogue, etc.)" (p. 212). Given the extent and depth to what can be negotiated in general, it stands to reason that when negotiations are considered successful in the classroom, learning occurs, and relationships are firmly established. However, given the nature of negotiation as a mechanism for communication and mutual agreement (Baker, 1994; Breen & Littlejohn, 2000), there is more than ample room for additional concerns between two or more negotiating parties to be addressed.

By integrating both sociocultural and negotiation theory the interactions between teacher and student can be seen as mediational means themselves (Werstch, 1998), leading to learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). In other words, we argue that the negotiative nature of these interactions leads to the internalization of new concepts. Further, while sociocultural theory itself is less specific on the exact nature of the interactions within a ZPD, viewing the relationships between students and teachers as a negotiation helps illuminate one of the specific strategies through which classroom interactions can result in learning. Coupling this theoretical framework with the lack of research on how teachers can address not only their own professional goals, but also the goals of their students, this hybridized framework provides an opportunity to explore how classroom interactions account for the needs of teachers and students alike. Accordingly, the research questions that guided this work were 1) in what ways do teachers understand their work with children as a negotiation and 2) how do their negotiations with students manifest in classroom interactions.

Research Methodology and Data Sources

The participants in this study were teacher candidates enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a midsized university in the Western United States. Five teacher

candidates participated in this study, and each of them was engaging in a field practicum course, which occurs prior to their final, student teaching experience. During this experience, the teacher candidates are in their field placement two days each week, and when in classrooms with the students, participate fully in all instructional activities. The candidates are also expected to lead classroom instructional lessons, for which they are observed formally by both their mentor teachers and their university-assigned supervisors. These lessons can focus on any academic content (e.g., language arts, mathematics, social studies, or science), but one of the required observations must include a reading-based lesson. The teacher candidates' instructional experiences can include whole-class lessons, small group instruction, or any other instructional configuration as deemed appropriate by the mentor teacher.

The data sources collected in this study were a series of two (2) interviews. Questions were designed to capture each participant's perceptions of their classrooms and whether negotiation was apt to describe the interactions between themselves and their students. Questions for interviews were tested with another group of educators to help ensure validity. Each interview focused on a different aspect of their teaching and learning experience. The first of these interviews allowed the teacher candidates to specifically define negotiation in classroom settings and to identify the range of purposes they had in their classroom as well as the purposes they perceive the children had when they come to school. The second interview focused on specific episodes the teacher candidates identified from their own classroom work during their Practicum experience illustrating the ways in which the candidates engaged teaching and learning as a negotiation.

These data were initially analyzed through open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), focusing on the ways in which the teacher candidates viewed their work with children as a negotiation. Again, we asked them specifically to define negotiation and whether they could identify if and how their classroom instruction was truly a negotiation. All references to defining negotiation were coded as such and situated in relation to the theoretical framework outlined above. In addition, all classroom examples provided in interviews were coded along with their corresponding definitions. In this way, we were able to confirm the consistency in the ways the candidates defined negotiation and how these negotiations manifested in classroom work with children.

Results

Across participant responses, all agreed to various extents that teaching and learning can be considered a negotiation and that teachers negotiate with their students in diverse ways. Perhaps most telling of the participants were the ways in which negotiation manifested within their examples from the classroom. Just as there are many strategies for negotiation in the typical business world, negotiation in the classroom takes on the individual approaches driven by the undergirding philosophies and values of teachers.

For the following teacher candidate participants, their stories reflected that teaching and learning is an act requiring negotiation on the part of both parties. For each story, however, the way that negotiation occurred was very personal and stylized based on each teacher.

Kristen

For one participant, Kristen, negotiation in the teaching and learning

relationship was very straightforward. Kristen worked with younger elementary students and expressed the importance of respect as a two-way street in her classroom when it came to negotiation. "I do think that it's very important for teachers to give a certain amount of respect to their students, so that their students are then able to come back and show respect to their teacher." She further explained her view of negotiation as a function of respect not just in her classroom, but also as a skill her students will need to develop for life after they have left her classroom. "I think respect is really a term of empathy, and teaching is empathy, and how to be. How to agree or how to disagree: agree to disagree. How to be respectful of people that they may not agree with." She expected this view to become a priority in her classroom from the beginning of the year, wishing to instill a mutual respect among all members of her classroom. Kristen set the tone for respect, but it was important for her to understand what respect looked like. Just as the conception of negotiation is individualized, the concept of respect also is a term where the definition becomes a bit subjective. When asked to elaborate on respect within her classroom, Kristen's perspective revealed the need to connect with students on a personal level. "It's very important to take the time to interact with at least every student every day in some way, shape, or form that is personal, whether that's some sort of praise, or, even talking about like their pets." She presumed these interactions would provide confirmation of her respect for her students, thus opening the door for them to respond in kind.

For Kristen, respect not only undergirds her sense of care for her students, but also sets the foundation for other negotiations within the classroom and beyond. Kristen elaborated that this ideology manifests in examples, big and small, in the

classroom, but she also provided an example of working with a student who was hesitant to engage in classroom activities. She described a student who did not like to do many of his assignments and preferred simply to read. Kristen described how she backed off the push to complete the classwork and engaged the student in a conversation around organization and prioritization of work. The student identified a reading assignment, but also stated that he was not capable of doing the work. Kristen decided to use encouragement and broke down the work for the student. Despite his continued protests, Kristen asserted he was capable of completing the work. By offering more manageable starting points, she was able to find a way for him to work independently. This option allowed her to more fully gauge his understanding of the content of instruction, albeit in smaller increments. Once the student had begun his work, she could check on the other students. Periodically, she would check in on him and offer more encouragement, stating something along these lines, "You did this perfectly. Better than I would have done. Good work. I'm going to circle back, and I'll check up on you." She believed that for this child the respect she showed him by honoring his ability to do the class work resulted in him meeting that goal.

In her example, Kristen exemplified how personal attention and encouragement allowed for a negotiation in how the assignments were completed. With this student, Kristen demonstrated the ability to home in on what encouragement this student needed and to make alterations to her interactions with him to ensure the learning happened and assignments were completed. Essentially, this example showcases how personal understanding and respect become the foundation of the negotiation process.

This foundation of respect for negotiation was very clear in Kristen's

individual teaching, but she did express some factors that could not be negotiated from a teaching standpoint.

> You know we have to follow the standards, and we have to follow the curriculum, and there are things that the students need to know…You know there are things that we have to do, and that I have to do, even as a teacher.

For Kristen, even the variables that cannot be negotiated were still a matter of respect for the larger system she served as a teacher. The non-negotiables of standards to address and curriculum to teach did not appear as a barrier for Kristen, but rather created the structure she would try to lead the students toward. She emphasized that her manner of personalizing interactions with students, respect through individualized choices, was the path of negotiation she would create to help them meet those standards and navigate the curriculum.

Nick

Nick worked with older elementary age students and was able to showcase that negotiation in his classroom is a fluid process. "Negotiation for me would be more of a give and take." He expressed, like Kristen and the other participants, an understanding that there were some things that cannot be negotiated, like the curriculum and standards. He also shared with us the ways he negotiates with his students to build trust within the learning relationship.

> It's absolutely a two way [street]. I mean if they don't trust me to give them a safe place to learn, if they don't trust me that I know the information and can give it to them. If they don't trust me that they

can ask me questions…They're not going to want to learn from me. Yeah, it's a negotiation.

Nick held that he needed to be accountable to his students and uphold his responsibilities within the relationship he was building with them. The responsibilities included creating classroom structures and/or rules, as well as identifying times to flex the classroom structure/rules. His notion of a give and take also presumed the breaking of these structures/rules in the face of varying student needs (e.g., students having a bad day, unplanned interruptions, or school-wide drills).

For Nick, this give and take supported negotiation in his classroom and manifested in all interactions between teachers and students. This approach applied to rules and structures, the learning process itself, and how his students treated each other and him as their teacher. He further elaborated on negotiation as a way to navigate his work in the classroom, comparing it to negotiating traffic. "Because even when you're negotiating traffic, you still have an end goal in mind." This alternating of terms between *navigate* and *negotiate* was meaningful to Nick. He viewed these kinds of teacher-student interactions as a collection of actions that facilitated not only his goals but those of his students. He specifically identified the role of lesson planning as integral to identifying these actions. "With lessons and lesson planning, that's planning for that negotiation. Now, what happens in the in the middle. Yeah, you can negotiate, give, and take, but you still want to get to that destination eventually." The concept of arriving at the destination, or achieving a purpose, was expressed across all of Nick's responses. Teachers have a purpose to teach and for their students to learn. While some structures cannot be avoided, such as

mandated curricula or standards, the ways in which each teacher might create negotiations with students to achieve their purpose varies. Nick elaborated that it takes maneuvering to address topics that are not as engaging for students. In his view, modeling how an interest in certain subjects might look, providing a meaningful application for academic content, and instilling a sense of wonder in his students provided his students the greatest access to his instruction. He explained, "I try to bring out my inner child…to show them that I still wonder about these concepts. Fractions absolutely are not fun, but they're super useful. If we can bring that enthusiasm…they're more likely to internalize that [content]." This consistent focus on student learning as the end goal of any classroom negotiation was, for Nick, the main purpose of his work as a teacher.

Part of the trust that Nick seemed to build with his students was being on their level as much as possible to show that he was an equal partner in the relationship, and he was invested in their growth as learners. He used that perspective to create ways of reaching goals based on student needs and interests. Nick revealed an example similar to Kristen where he knew that his students who are Multi-Language Learners would need assignments broken down in different ways in order to access the material. He recounted an experience with a couple of students in his classroom. The students were having difficulty with an assignment they felt was too complex for them. Their response to this challenge was unfortunate, but Nick persisted based upon his knowledge of the students. "They had a meltdown and just did not want to even try. So, I let them cool down. I brought them aside and started stepping them through it a little bit at a time." Like Kristen, he stepped away, periodically checked in on them, and ultimately was surprised at their progress by

the end of the day. He stated, "They had surprised even themselves, getting it done in that simple breakdown." Nick revealed, as did other participants, the need to individualize instruction to meet the needs of the students. Without this negotiation – the identification of and accounting for students' needs – students may shut down, not even attempting to learn. He showed that it was imperative to be able to adapt lessons and slow learning down and bolster students with encouragement, lest the learning become too overwhelming.

Emily

Emily shared that the negotiation that occurs in her practicum classroom was a function of student abilities and needs. She describes one of her purposes as a teacher: "I would aim to have...students that are better, academically, socially, and just like a like a better person at the end of the day at the end of the school year." In Emily's view then, negotiation was a compromise between what students were able to do and what they needed to accomplish. She needed to constantly manage and assess the knowledge students bring from previous classes, from their homes, from their cultures, and how they work with different groups of people. She said, "The learning process is [a] negotiation. Kids are forming opinions based on their environments, so, that can be a part of the negotiation…helping them form their own fact-based opinions."

Additionally, she described the students in her classroom as having a wider range of different abilities than she was expecting. She explained, "[I have] kids with IEP[s]…and kids with behavioral plans. So, the compromise is definitely greater. It looks a lot different than for the kids who are performing right where they should be." Emily spoke of the need for a greater compromise with these students, indicating that it would take more on her

part as a teacher to help them access the learning she hoped for them. This was not a problem for her, of course, but she did say that we needed to approach her work a little differently. She needed to understand what they all knew and could do, and with such a highly variable classroom, this work was more complex. She stated, "the fact that they know this thing, or this is what they're coming with, and then either trying to then blend in through inquiry and other work, more information than to help reframe and reorient [was the challenge]." The negotiation, for Emily, came through in clearly recognizing where students were positioned mentally, emotionally, and socially during the learning and attuning herself, as the instructor, to best strategize how they might be able to navigate the learning process. "I think academic-wise you always want them to increase, and you build off previous knowledge and become stronger academically. That looks different for every student. So then, you're kind of negotiating like that learning process, and how it occurs." Emily explained her role as a teacher was to help them navigate a plurality of opinions and views and learn through inquiry, other work, and information finding to help them reframe their thinking as needed.

During the interview, Emily elaborated on the variables at play for each student and what a teacher must consider when deliberating what negotiation might look like in the classroom. She separated these variables into academic and cultural categories. As far as the academic variables were concerned, Emily considered a student's perception of school in terms of good/bad to be meaningful. "If you have a kid who's not had a positive experience…then they might get frustrated a whole lot faster and associate school and classroom as like a negative experience." Culturally, she endeavored to learn about a

student's perception of school in terms of benefit as she noted schooling is viewed differently through a cultural lens. "Different cultures view education [with] different levels of benefit and priority." She also tried to identify the nature of her students' lives outside of school. "If that child doesn't have a safe space at home, or doesn't have support at home, I think that can influence one way or the other, so they might view schools [as] a safe space." She argued that if a child's academic pursuits are not supported at home, it may imply that schooling, generally, is not a priority as its presence isn't explicitly seen beyond the classroom.

As much as ability and these perspectives were represented within Emily's responses, she also spoke to the purposes that drove each student's negotiation. Emily explained her role as a teacher is to help them navigate a plurality of opinions and views and learn through inquiry, other work, and information finding to help them reframe their thinking as needed. She recounted a moment in a geography lesson when a student brought up the death of the Queen of England. The conversation started blandly enough – a discussion of the news of the day. This discussion ended up becoming an introduction to the larger lesson, "We were able to take that conversation and talk about our continents, because that's what we were learning. So, it's like that was an interesting connection for them, and that makes it interesting." Emily also mentioned a negotiation that wasn't as concrete as a direct interaction, yet a negotiation, nonetheless. She considered the nature of compulsory education and how she could mitigate the implicit purposes inherent in schooling in which children simply are required to participate. "I think being that positive role model and creating that strong classroom culture can make them want to be

there. So, I think if they're excited to come in in the morning…that's like a win." Emily went further to consider additional abstract purposes children may have for being in school despite the requirement that they attend.

> They might not understand why they're there to learn, but I think that's the start of it. I think if you're presenting curriculum in an interesting way, and you're using inquiry, and project-based learning and investigation, I think that can kind of like help them assume to like taking role in their learning, and maybe make them more invested.

Emily captured the manner in which a teacher has to navigate the purposes and abilities each student brings into the classroom. In addition, she speaks to the way in which a teacher serves as a guide that allows students to understand their various perspectives to form deeper understandings of the pluralities that exist within the classroom, and in a greater sense, society.

Lisa

Where Emily focused on classroom negotiation as a form of navigation between student abilities, needs, and emotions, Lisa described the negotiation that occurred within her classroom as a pathway to be co-created alongside her students. "I think it's more of creating a path almost of what you think students are going to be taking out of it... looking at your lesson plans and crafting them so that they fit the students best." In her interviews, Lisa explained the importance of recognizing the needs of students and how they manifest in the moments of teaching and learning. Working with younger elementary school students, she described how paying attention to their

ability to focus becomes a negotiated act. "They get tired so fast, and they get wiggly so fast, and so you have to figure out how to get them, not wiggling and not paying attention and trying to negotiate them back into the lesson". She saw the importance of viewing student needs, such as movement, as crucial to the negotiation. If students cannot sit still, they can't listen. Knowing how to respond to these needs while also addressing the curriculum becomes the negotiation.

Lisa spoke of maintaining the teacher's purpose, that is, to deliver instruction, and how negotiation-as-building-a-pathway functions. "Negotiation is managing...traffic, creating this path... 'Oh, I have this. You have that. Let's negotiate for some middle ground.'" Her view of negotiation considers that students might have different purposes that do not always align with other students' or the teacher's purpose of instruction. She described how attuned teachers must be to expressed needs, those that students state directly, and implied needs, those that the teacher might infer from behavior and interactions (Noddings, 2006). "There are just a lot of side conversations going on. That's probably a clue that we need to take [a] break. Or if there's not a lot of engagement anymore, probably time to take the break of some sort." Here Lisa recognized the importance behind a teacher's capacity to read the room and keep track of a variety of student behaviors and needs.

According to Lisa, in recognizing these needs, teachers need to be able to plan a pathway that gets students back on the primary instructional one, to redirect student energies when they become off-task. "I mean it's your job to control that environment so that they do have some time that is free, and then other times where they can get off task and just do what they need

to." In other words, teachers need to identify when their own instructional goals can be set aside for general free time for students, or moments of off-task behavior during instructional activities.

In similar ways as Nick, she described both of these options as a kind of give-and-take relationship in this negotiation wherein a teacher might allow for diversions in class as well as ways to change lessons to account for student disengagement. "You can also just let them know. 'Hey, we need to get back on topic. We're going to move forward. We can't move forward until everyone is listening'." The former strategy, such as brain breaks, address students' need to move around or talk. These tactics might be delayed until students participate in learning activities. This is a pathway that diverts but comes back to the instructional course.

The other negotiated pathway addressed students off-task behavior when they are unchallenged. Lisa described how a teacher needs to also plan for the manifestation of off-task behaviors due to material not being challenging enough for some students. She stated that in her planning she accounted for how she might initiate a pathway back from off-task behavior during a lesson. "You reintroduce new discussion questions, change it up so that they are re-intrigued. They're thinking of new topics. If you've read a story and they're getting off topic, maybe move forward and ask another guiding question." These ideas provide some basis for how she could engage her students more effectively and provide renewed access to her instruction.

Lisa repeatedly addressed negotiation with her students as creating a pathway back to learning, whether that pathway was necessitated by the limited attention span of younger learners or by

disengagement due to lack of challenge. In her experience, being keenly aware of her students in real-time and being flexible with instructional planning were the best ways to meet student needs and create a pathway that keeps in mind both teacher and student needs and purposes.

Rachel

In the interviews with Rachel, another teacher who works with kindergarten-age students, the idea of negotiation within different classrooms came up early in the conversation. "I think negotiation... it doesn't happen in every classroom. It doesn't happen with every teacher." For Rachel, negotiation in the classroom was a function of teachers' understandings of students' purposes, expectations, and needs. In contrast to the other participants, Rachel deemed the more teachers held that students were mere receptacles of knowledge, the less room there was for negotiation. Her ideas about negotiation became clearer within an example she presented from her classroom. Students were tasked with a directed drawing of a real person, George Washington Carver, and were instructed to make their drawings accurate and respectful because they were drawing a real person. Most of the class was doing well with the task, but one of Rachel's students needed more direction. He had decided to draw George Washington Carver as a dinosaur, and not a real person whose description he had read in texts. Rachel gave him support but after a while needed to offer a more drastic solution – the use of Friday fun time. On Fridays, students who were caught up with their work can have free time, and those who haven't completed assignments needed to make up work during that time. She explained to the student his options to

complete the work during that current lesson or use free time on Friday. This option was not what the mentor teacher wanted on this day, and the student was increasingly obstinate, not wanting to complete the work during the lesson nor complete it during Friday fun time. The child finally did relent, but upon reflection, Rachel was not pleased with the outcome.

> It kind of came down to the point where he had to sit down with the aid and have the aid walk him through every single step. It ended up getting done. It was kind of a situation where the compromise turned into not so much of a compromise. He just was kind of like forced to do it.

When Rachel was asked about the objective of the lesson, she said that it was tied to their overall unit about plants, which was why George Washing Carver was the focus of the directed draw. She also provided the context that students were to focus on curves within their drawings to help with fine motor skill development and lettering. Rachel insinuated that this directed draw was meant to combine the overall theme of the plant unit with the more specific aims of fine motor skills. This example brought into relief the ways in which teacher purpose and student purpose might sometimes clash and the ways in which negotiation plays out in the classroom. This interaction highlighted the distinction between compliance, or a relinquishment of individual needs, and the attainment of the teacher's explicit instructional goals.

According to Rachel, she would have negotiated with time to get the assignment completed, whereas her mentor teacher considered time non-negotiable then, and the student had to complete the work in the given time frame. This example showcases the numerous factors that impact even the smallest of interactions in the classroom. Concerns arose around how the object of fine motor skill and the overall theme of plants might be negotiated with the student purpose of wanting to draw monsters. Surely, it would take an individualized approach to address the student need, as Rachel commented, "You have to kind of compromise and come up with…sometimes unsuccessfully, sometimes successfully…things that you think they will be interested in to get them into learning." Shown here, Rachel's purposes necessarily included addressing the academic content of the classroom as well as accounting for her students' needs and interests as part of the negotiation.

Discussion

The researchers understand that they we asked these teacher candidates, point blank, about negotiation – to define it and to categorize their instruction as a negotiation, if applicable. Negotiation, again, is an interactive process that facilitates agreement between multiple parties with differing needs (Mcalister-Kizzier, 2014; Shell, 2006). Additionally, the negotiations between students and teachers help form a ZPD within which learning can occur (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1998). The results of this study suggest that teachers engage their student negotiations in their classrooms. These negotiations center around not only academic content, but also the ways in which students can access the content of instruction. Further, students and teachers negotiate interpersonal relationships and other behavioral concerns. Students and teachers negotiate in real time moments in classrooms as well as across time (e.g., across individual days, weeks, and units).

The main consideration in any negotiation, however, is the purposes that

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each negotiating party is trying to achieve, goals they are trying to meet. Each of the participating teacher candidates mentioned their professional need to present specific content as appropriate for their grade-level as well as their desired purpose to help students develop into knowledgeable, engaged, and empathetic people, capable of functioning in these ways beyond their time in the classroom. Only one of them, Lisa, mentioned that this purpose could be set aside at a well-considered time to address pressing students' needs. This relatively unwavering stance can render a negotiation as sub-optimal (Lewicki et al, 2011), as only the needs of one negotiating party can be met under these circumstances. Of course, teachers are bound to teach their grade-level content and indeed held accountable for how well their students learn it. This responsibility rarely allows for much deviation from this charge.

Further, these teachers responded to what they presumed were their students' needs, which ranged from the affective (e.g., tiredness, boredom, confusion) to the behavioral (e.g., off-task talking, physical outbursts, non-completion of schoolwork) to the more abstract personal and cultural (e.g., benefits of school, out-of-school support, similarities/differences between school and home practices). Sadly, these needs are in many cases, truly just presumed. It is difficult to know what these candidates identified as student purpose was, in reality, something the students needed to accomplish through school. In this vein, and to engage in optimal negotiations with children in schools, teachers need to know more about what children already know about what school and academic contexts can provide as well as how to introduce and model purposes yet to be discovered.

In the results presented above, negotiation, limited or otherwise, took many forms. For Kirsten, negotiation functioned

through mutual respect which allowed both the students' and teacher's goals to be met. This respect required both students and teachers to fully understand each other's purposes and offered ways in which everyone could interact to achieve them. In this way, both Kristen and her students needed to act in certain ways to create a ZPD within which they all could flourish in the classroom (Erickson, 1996). Nick viewed negotiation as a model for students to access their own as well as develop new interests and apply them to their learning and vice versa. Through this approach, he hoped to identify novel ways to present content to his students, despite the curricular constraints he knew to be nonnegotiable. His attempts to meet both his own goals as well as those of his students are the key to successful negotiations (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000).

Emily considered her work as a negotiation based upon the needs of her students. Her instruction, while planned for ahead of time, also included the various activities that catered to the specific needs of her students; needs that had previously been identified through assessment and interpersonal interaction. Indeed, this latter focus requires the development of relational efficacy (Milner, 2021), or an ability to learn from and connect with children in the classroom to both further academic achievement and create meaningful learning environments. Lisa negotiated with her students to co-construct pathways for learning in the classroom. In her mind, working with her students was a fruitful way to achieve everyone's goals. To be sure, as a ZPD was co-constructed (Chaiklin, 2003; Lantolf, 2000), Lisa needed to adjust her plans in real time to facilitate a successful negotiation (Lewicki et al, 2009).

Like some of her colleagues, Rachel negotiated with her students based upon their knowledge and interests. She created access to academic content in novel ways

that built upon what students already knew and wanted to do in the moment. In fact, she felt that negotiations wouldn't be possible without not only acknowledging the needs of her students but accounting for what they brought to the learning experience. Attempting to reach what Klaming, Veenen, and Leenes (2008) call an integrative agreement, or a negotiation resulting in optimal outcomes for all parties, Rachel leveraged her knowledge as well as the knowledge of her students to interact in ways that led to learning.

Ultimately, the teacher candidates' work represented in this study shows how interactions between student and teacher can lead to learning in classrooms. More specifically, however, in viewing aspects of their interactions with students as a negotiation, teachers are able to provide particular access to academic content and meet a wider range of personal and academic needs both over time and as they arise in real time in schools.

Conclusion and Further Research Considerations

Teachers could benefit from a deeper understanding of how negotiation can live and function in their classroom. While the teacher candidates in this study were at the beginning of their careers, and negotiation theory is not necessarily a part of their professional preparation, exploring various interactional techniques in full might provide them with a wider repertoire to pull from when interacting with their students. In this case, seeing value in identifying what children hope to gain from school experience, beyond academic learning, may provide teachers with ways to offer greater access to academic learning. As one of the teacher candidates mentioned, negotiation is not necessarily utilized at all times by all teachers. This being said, it certainly offers teachers a strategy through which they can

meet both their professional goals as well as the goals their students may have.

Indeed, there may be times in the classroom where negotiation between student and teacher is not possible or is not appropriate. However, these data suggest that teachers do see aspects of their work with children in classroom as a negotiation. Of course, there are still many unanswered questions that should be explored. As discussed above, the classroom teacher determines in many ways the nature of the student-teacher negotiation. Further research should be conducted to uncover how these determinations are made and what other influences on these instructional decisions exist. Researcher and policy makers alike must identify and manage both the limits of classroom negotiations, if any, and the affordances and constraints of such possibilities. To answer this question, research should also focus not on just what can be negotiated in a classroom but also who, when, how, and for what reasons negotiations are allowed. It is possible that some student purposes are more well received than others. It might be that certain individual student needs are accommodated more often than others. Are there times of day or times in the school year when these negotiations are simply unwelcome given the time constraints schools and teachers face?

Given how certain voices are being prioritized currently by school policymakers, research should also strive to identify the ways in which people advocate for their needs in classrooms. For instance, are students, or parents, for that matter, who can actively advocate for their needs provided for more often? Are there certain means through which students can advocate for themselves that are recognized as more valid in classrooms by teachers? Are there individual differences in teachers' ability or desire to negotiate with students? How do

these differences come about? Are they based upon experience, background, or professional development? All of these questions should be investigated to identify a more robust understanding of how teachers and students relate in classrooms and identify ways to support both students and teachers to negotiate more effectively. In pursuing this end, we may be able to support greater academic development in students and greater efficacy in teachers.

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