

## **Living and telling stories of parent engagement that lead preservice teachers to create new narratives of parent teacher relationships**

Currently, in preservice teacher education programs in colleges and universities, there is very little attention being paid to the development of teacher candidates' thinking around engaging parents in their children's schooling. While the topic may be touched on briefly in some courses, it is a topic which is largely absent in the curriculum of teacher education. The curricular commonplaces of teacher, student and subject matter are common content in teacher education programs. The commonplace of milieu, particularly as it pertains to parents, family and community, is not. It is not any wonder, then, that new teachers surveyed by the Metlife Foundation in 2005 "report that engaging and working with parents was their greatest challenge" (Constantino, 2005). It is not any wonder, then, that teacher candidates returning to the university after their extended field experience have often adopted the dominant plotline common in education, frequently telling stories of parents as interfering, demanding or deficit. They position parents in their stories as outsiders and perhaps even individuals to be wary or fearful of. They position themselves in their stories as vulnerable in relation to parents' demands or emotions and to what parents do – or do not do – to support their children's schooling. I see my work with teacher candidates as work to interrupt this plotline. Interruption, for me, is the thoughtful and deliberate act to break in on well-known and well-rehearsed stories of schools, and of parents' positioning in relation to schools. It means to challenge teacher candidates to consider what opportunities are missed, and what harm may be done, when they as educators continue to live out these stories of parents in typical, historical and taken-for-granted ways. It means to challenge them to consider who is rendered visible, who is validated, who finds schooling an educative process in these dominant stories – and who is/does not. Narratively inquiring alongside teacher candidates into conflicting and competing stories of parents enables an explicit rethinking of beliefs and assumptions, trust and relationships, and the place and voice of parents on school landscapes. It presents the possibility of transformation.