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Recently, Leslie has spent quite a bit of time in schools, collecting data on literacy coaches’ work with junior high and high school teachers on integrating literacy instruction with their content area instruction. Similarly, in 2010, Lisa co-taught ninth-grade English in two different high schools with her interns and methods students. Our goals, despite being geographically different, were similar: to learn about what the coaches and teachers do and to piece together what their potential impacts might be on the teachers and colleagues they work with and, in turn, on the students they teach. In the process of this work, however, we learned so much, both from the instructional coaches Leslie shadowed and from Lisa’s younger “students,” that we can put into place for our own work with preservice English teachers. We were both reminded—through observing literacy coaches as they work with teachers and through collaborating for instruction with preservice and inservice teachers—about the importance of relationships to learning: relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents. Negative, fractious, or angry relationships can put a stop to any good work, while positive ones can make miracles happen. For us, it is these connections, these relationships, that revitalize us and make our jobs meaningful. As Kunzman (2002) has said, “the moments of authenticity and connection with my students and colleagues fuel the passion that brought me to teaching in the first place” (p. 92).

We knew this, and we are sure that all good teachers know it as well. Reminders, however, are always welcome and helpful. This semester, as we began anew teaching English methods and literacy courses, we worked hard with students to develop a sense of classroom community. We talked, laughed, collaborated on projects. In so many ways, the relationships that we
develop in methods courses and student teaching are precursors of those that we hope they will develop as they move into professional teaching positions.

However, as we are all aware, the contexts into which new teachers move when they complete our programs and become gainfully employed as first-year educators leave much to be desired. Both the climate—high-stakes testing, standardized accountability, attacks on teachers’ unions—and the weather—adaptations of state and district curricula to meet Common Core State Standards, cuts to personnel and school budgets, increasingly prevalent use of value-added measures of teacher evaluation—are threatening the collegiality, collaboration, and joy that should be part of teaching. How can we, as English teacher educators, help ourselves and the preservice teachers with whom we work to handle the problems we all face and to maintain the joy that should be part of our profession?

Perhaps one way we can maintain stability, and even joy, is to take advantage of opportunities provided by the professional organizations to which we belong to be together, to think and plan together, to be renewed and rejuvenated. At the 2011 CEE summer conference in New York City, attendees heard about a new project from NCTE called the National Center for Literacy Education (www.ncte.org/ncle). This site for collaboration around improving literacy instruction in schools will highlight the work that teachers, literacy coaches, and other educators are doing to encourage, support, and pay attention to collaborative work in schools. This organization has the potential to not only improve the literacy learning of students in U.S. public schools but also to assist in stemming the tide of disapproving rhetoric aimed at U.S. public school teachers and at teacher educators.

We can also join together to improve our teaching and support each other by attending the NCTE Annual Convention and the CEE-sponsored events and workshops held at the Convention. In 2012, the NCTE Annual Convention will be held in Las Vegas. The conference theme, “Dream, Connect, Ignite!,” is meant to encourage us to dream big, join with others, and ignite passion in our students and among our colleagues.

For educators and teacher educators who would like to expand their network to an international circle, there is the International Federation for the Teaching of English (www.ifte.net/), which CEE has been affiliated with for numerous years along with the Canadian Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (CCTELA), the UK’s National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (NZATE), and the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE). The conference location rotates among member sites and in 2015 the IFTE conference will be held in the United States (location TBD). Several of our
friends and colleagues have regularly attended the IFTE and NATE conferences for many years. In this issue, CEE members Marshall George, Louann Reid, and Melanie Shoffner have collaborated with Andy Goodwyn (NATE) and Sean Hawthorne (NZATE) to reflect on the state of English education here and abroad.

To collaborate with others regarding the joys and tribulations of teaching, teachers and teacher educators can also participate in a variety of online modes of support, including weekly twitter conversations (#engchat), the NCTE Connected Community, the English Companion Ning, and the English Education group on Facebook, among others. These modes of collaboration and collegiality both extend the reach of educators and provide timely feedback on questions. Even when we disagree, there are good things to come from banding together, perhaps the most important of which is the potential for renewal, connection, and continued good work.

In this issue, Amanda Haertling Thein, Megan Guise, and DeAnn Long Sloan address the importance of attending to social class as part of our consideration of diversity in English classrooms. This study, “Exploring the Significance of Social Class Identity Performance in the English Classroom: A Case Study Analysis of a Literature Circle Discussion,” centers on students’ discussion of social class in relation to Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina*. The authors indicate that their collaborative work on this study has prompted them to rethink how they go about preparing preservice English teachers:

As English educators, we three authors all realized that although we often talked about “diversity” in our courses and used texts that touched on social class as part of that consideration of diversity, we rarely spent any focused time grappling with social class in our courses. Since the culmination of this study, each of us has made efforts to more fully explore social class in our English education courses by including literary texts that take up social class identity as a primary thematic issue. (p. 244)

As we continue to examine how we think about diversity, we must also reexamine our understanding of the confining and confined ways in which we imagine *adolescents*. Robert Petrone and Mark A. Lewis, in their article “Deficits, Therapists, and a Desire to Distance: Secondary English Preservice Teachers’ Reasoning about Their Future Students,” examine how preservice teachers think about adolescents. In doing so, they hope to help create spaces within English teacher education for prospective teachers to think anew about how they make sense of their future students, their identities as teachers, and the function of the secondary
school subject English. In other words, by examining common, naturalized discursive practices, it is possible to disrupt the systems of reasoning preservice teachers have formed and are forming about adolescence and adolescents in terms of teaching. (p. 283)

Keeping our joy in this difficult time for educators and teacher educators is important but, as Leslie’s grandfather used to say, “a tough row to hoe.” However, we believe strongly in the value of staying connected and of helping students to be and to remain connected with each other. This is vital not only to us as teacher educators but to our society as well:

If we hope to transform this new century into one we can survive, the world is going to need young people who themselves are able to make durable connections: connections between various domains of knowledge; connections between thought and action; connections between competency and ethics; connections across generations, across cultures, across town, and around the globe; connections that honor our radical interdependence with all living things. (Walsh, 2002, p. 272)

References
