

SUPPORTING THE STUDENT TEACHER: COOPERATING TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

Deborah V. Blair, Ph.D., Oakland University
dvblair@oakland.edu

In this qualitative study, I explore the experiences of two cooperating teachers working with interns in general music classrooms. Using an “analysis of narrative” approach (Barone, 2007), data collected included the narratives of the cooperating teachers as written in shared email journals, in conversations, and in a recorded group discussion. Tensions emerged which revealed a struggle for self-efficacy in the role of mentor. The teachers supported each other with strategies for mentoring interns as we jointly negotiated ways to protect the teacher-intern relationship when a tough love approach was needed. Both teachers questioned 1) their ability to mentor despite previous positive experiences with interns and 2) their decision to “not give up” on the student teacher when given the opportunity. The numerous expressions of appreciation for university and peer scaffolding not experienced in previous internship semesters shed light on the need for support for mentors. Implications include a challenge for teacher educators to reconsider the nature of the mentoring experience for cooperating teachers and the ways that we, in teacher education, select, prepare, and support teachers for this important role.

Barone, T. (2007). A return to the gold standard? Questioning the future of narrative construction as educational research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13 (4), 454-470.