Making the Path by Walking It

By Francisco A. Ríos, Janet E. McDaniel, & Laura P. Stowell

Caminante, no hay camino. Se hace el camino al andar.
(Traveler, there is no path. The path is made by walking it.)

—Antonio Machado

The recent critique of teacher education programs (Lanier & Little, 1986; Goodlad, 1990) has spurred colleges and schools of education to undertake serious reform efforts—indeed, the theme of this issue places teacher education reform at center stage. Two approaches to reform mark the ends of the continuum regarding the role of the institution in this effort. One end is best exemplified by those who follow Goodlad's model, with emphasis on college-wide, comprehensive restructuring of teacher education in cooperation with local K-12 schools. This task is daunting, especially for larger institutions with numerous well-established, traditional teacher education programs and teacher educators.

At the other end of the continuum of reform in teacher education institutions is a smaller scale, grassroots effort characterized by piecemeal reform in small pockets of otherwise traditional colleges. While this approach is less systemic or comprehensive than the approach favored by Goodlad and his colleagues, its attractiveness to us lies in coming "from the bottom up." That is, avenues are provided for those who are enthusiastic about teacher education reform to pursue innovative program and curricular designs despite the efforts of

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those resistant to alternative approaches to teacher preparation.

Is it possible that systemic, comprehensive teacher education reform could result from small scale, grassroots efforts employed by a few beginning teacher education faculty members? How would such reform take place and who would be responsible for its impetus?

This article describes and analyzes our efforts at teacher education reform at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) via program development and innovation of curricular design in one teacher education program. We are untenured but tenure-line faculty members who have worked together to create a middle level teacher education program informed by the critique of teacher education, the vision for restructured middle level schooling, and the realities of our own institution. We have—without much intention—influenced practices outside of our program that have had an impact college-wide. We begin this article by describing the context of our work—"the woods," as it were, of CSUSM. Second, we trace the path we have made into the woods. Third, we note the ways in which our path has influenced the direction that others in our college have taken subsequently. Fourth, we discuss how taking this path together has served as the primary source of our socialization into the profession. Finally, we identify the challenges ahead and the lessons learned that will guide us in addressing these challenges.

Context for Our Work: The Woods of California State University San Marcos

The Place

San Marcos is located in north San Diego County; it is 60 miles north of the border with Mexico, 30 miles north of San Diego, and 75 miles south of Los Angeles. As a result of urban sprawl of these two large cities, the area is changing from rural toward urban/suburban. It was here that CSUSM, the 20th campus of the California State University system, opened its doors in 1990. As of Autumn 1995, there were 3,000 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the university. The College of Education (COE) consists of 23 tenured or tenure-line faculty members serving 450 students in elementary, middle level, secondary, special education, and masters degree programs.

The Professors

The three of us became assistant professors of education at CSUSM within a year of one another, with one-semester intervals between our arrivals. We were attracted to CSUSM because of the extraordinary opportunity to create programs, policies, and a culture in a new university. We had just completed our doctorates at major research universities in different states, and we did not know each other prior to our meeting in San Marcos.

Upon her arrival in the fall of 1991, Janet began work on the development of a middle school teacher education program. She chaired the Middle Level Teacher Education Planning Committee, comprised of school professionals and university educators. Francisco, who arrived for spring semester 1992, joined the committee in mid-year. The planning committee proposed a preparation program informed by reform reports on middle level education, reform reports on teacher education, and the mission of the college and university at CSUSM.

In fall of 1992, Laurie arrived and we launched the Middle Level Program, a full-time, two-semester, post-baccalaureate program. The three of us have been the core of the teaching team since its implementation, joined by other professors and a middle school teacher-in-residence for lesser periods of time or degrees of involvement. Our work with each other has been both broad and deep. Our collective goal is to model new ways of teaching we believe to be responsive to the needs of culturally diverse young adolescents. In doing so, we have become the principal agents in our mutual socialization into teacher education.

Making Our Path

When we designed a middle grades teacher preparation program at our new university in 1991, we wanted to respond to calls for reform of teacher education. We took seriously the concerns about traditional teacher education outlined by Lanier and Little (1986), Goodlad (1990) and others. We have enacted a program with a clearly defined vision:

Concerns:

Teacher education programs are generally:
- arbitrary,
- technical,
- fragmented,
- superficial,
- amoral,
- and static.

Vision:

Our teacher education program is:
- purposeful,
- theoretically grounded,
- integrated,
- authentic,
- ethical,
- and dynamic.

Further, our program is:
- collaborative,
- responsive to students,
- passionate,
- and politically contextual.

Enacting this vision led us into uncharted territory. Despite having an unparalleled opportunity to be creative and innovative in the new university, the college faculty had been proceeding along fairly traditional pathways in developing the college's first teacher preparation program in elementary education. The faculty

had made two decisions that were exceptions to the "traditionalist" path: (1) all programs would incorporate the state's optional multicultural/multilingual license, and (2) the teacher candidates would proceed through their programs in self-contained cohorts of 25 persons each. Those of us who wanted to push on in the direction of more cutting-edge teacher education program development were unsuccessful in convincing the majority of our colleagues to engage in substantial restructuring of the elementary education program. Fortunately, we were engaged in working with public school educators to create a middle level teacher education program (for grades 6-8) that would blend the theoretical base of middle school reform with teacher education reform and exemplary local middle school practice. The faculty gave us their approval to blaze a trail for ourselves.

The path we made in creating the program held some landmarks to help us find our way. We had not come to the college as *tabula rasa*. Our own prior experiences as teachers and graduate assistants suggested some of the features that would characterize the program. Through discussions with our middle school planning committee members about the implications of reform literature on teacher education and middle level education, other features emerged.

The middle level program we planned and have offered to teacher candidates for four years is like the elementary program in the inclusion of multicultural, multilingual education, and in the forming of a learning community via a cohort of students (for further description, see McDaniel, Ríos, & Stowell, 1995). But it has several distinguishing features:

(1) collaborative planning and teaching by an interdisciplinary team of teacher educators (a cohort of faculty); in 1995-96 the instructional team consisted of five untenured assistant professors and one teacher-in-residence at the college;
(2) thematic instruction, integrated curriculum, and joint assignments around the overall theme of social justice and democratic education;
(3) joint assessments of some student work, including a portfolio;
(4) service learning coursework to provide the knowledge, skills and commitment our candidates need to engage young adolescents in meaningful curriculum-based service;
(5) all coursework conducted on site at a middle school;
(6) selection of a small number of field experience sites through an application process;
(7) shared supervision and evaluation of student teachers by a team member and a designated school site teacher ("on-site supervisor");
(8) master teacher workshops;
(9) student participation in numerous professional development activities in professional organizations and conferences; and
(10) a concerted effort to foster team support and advocacy for the students.

The combination of all these features and our commitment to enacting them in an authentic, purposeful manner have resulted in a program that we find consistent with our vision of restructured teacher education.

We Are Joined in Path-Making

The apparent impact of the middle level program in our own college is, to us, pleasantly surprising. It was not our intention to mark a path for anyone other than ourselves; indeed, after initial faculty discussion where college-wide teacher education restructuring was discussed and rejected, we felt that a congenial parting of the ways was in the best interest of all parties. In these past few years, however, we have been noticed by many of our colleagues (and joined by several new colleagues) who have consulted with us about our innovations. In existing and new situations, features of the middle level program have appeared in familiar and modified versions. The identical combination of features has not been adopted (nor would we judge that a wise decision), but we have witnessed many instances of path making where our experiences have obviously served as landmarks for others in their efforts.

Consider the following. **Interdisciplinary team planning and teaching** has been emulated in the special education program as well as in a math-science-technology themed elementary cohort. **Thematic instruction** has also been emulated in the special education program. **Integrated curriculum, assignments, and assessments** have been adopted by the special education program and two of the elementary cohorts; examples include the use of integrated curriculum unit plans and portfolio assessments. The secondary program has implemented **service learning** as a feature. **On-site coursework** is currently being undertaken by two other programs that teach some or all of their coursework on site in public schools. Although no other program has been as formal as we have been about selecting field experience sites, **purposeful selection of a small number of sites** is becoming more common. In two themed elementary cohorts, the special education program, and the secondary education program, a few partner schools especially known for their exemplary practices have been chosen as sites. **Shared supervision** was one of the first practices to be picked up by our colleagues; this entails making arrangements with public school teachers to share faculty supervision responsibilities at their own school sites. Other cohorts have held meetings of master teachers, and one themed cohort (math-science-technology) has far surpassed the middle level program in its offering of **master teacher workshops** including developing hands-on science curricula with their student teachers at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and taking courses on educational technology. Finally, with respect to the notion of **teacher as advisor**, the college faculty as a whole noticed the care we take to advocate for our cohort of 25 students. This has contributed to an organizational restructuring of the administration of all teacher education programs. Moving away from an overall coordinator for the 300 students in the elementary education program, the college has devised a system whereby one faculty member is designated the "parent" for each cohort of 25 students in elementary education. The parent

receives a small amount of reallocated instructional time for administrative tasks and, in return, is responsible for ensuring that students in the cohort are "cared for" and experience a cohesive program delivered by teacher educators working in concert with one another. This is a modification of the middle level program approach in which each of us is advisor for four to six of our students.

We want to make clear that we do not attribute all the accomplishments and occurrences described here solely to the existence of the middle level program. But our program has definitely been instrumental in more widespread teacher education restructuring in our college. How did this happen?

First, although we did not proselytize, the word did get out about some features of the program—initially through the middle level program approval process which required college faculty endorsement. The program became better known when we described it at recruiting sessions for prospective teacher education students, and when we shared the program with college of education faculty members from four visiting universities in the Network of Innovative Colleges of Education that our college has joined. Too, we began to write for publication and to present on the programs of national conferences. The successes we have enjoyed in sharing our program on the national scene were noticed by our colleagues. In short, our colleagues have had ample opportunity to hear us and to ask questions about what we were doing.

Second, two new teacher education programs were created subsequent to the middle level program: special education (a dual credential program with elementary education) and secondary education. We three professors have been active participants on both program development committees, in part because the chairs of both programs were reform-minded colleagues (in fact, Francisco co-chaired the secondary education planning committee). At the program development meetings, we were often asked: How do you do this in the middle level program?

Third, the spread of some ideas into the existing elementary education cohorts was facilitated by our own teaching responsibilities in these other cohorts. Most faculty members teach in multiple cohorts, so there is a natural spread of ideas across programs and cohorts. Some other faculty members in these cohorts have been influenced by discussion about how some of the reform practices have been carried out in the middle level program.

Finally, our influence has been furthered by several fortuitous circumstances that were not our doing—or over which we had little control. For example, the rapid growth of the university and college meant that the size of the college faculty has more than doubled since our arrival. Each of us is on at least two faculty search committees every year, and we support the candidacies of applicants who demonstrate a commitment to innovative teacher education. Faculty searches have in fact resulted in the selection of reform-minded colleagues. As another example, a few senior faculty members, the college dean, and the university provost have become well informed about (and indeed, supportive of) our efforts. This is most apparent

to us in the review of our files for performance review and retention. Their evaluations specifically praise our efforts at innovation despite the fact that the college and university retention, tenure, and promotion documents **do not** support our effort (*e.g.*, by recognizing the value of collaborative work in teaching or publishing).

We believe that our intention to be non-proselytizing in enacting a reform-oriented teacher education program has been critical to the spread of our ideas. We made our path by walking it, but we did not characterize it as the only path, or the best path. The pleasure we took in our journey may have caused many (though not all) of our colleagues to notice us, yet they have not followed us exactly down our path. Many of our colleagues are making their own paths, but we now recognize a more common landscape. We believe that by finding our own way and then responding to others in the college, we have avoided antagonizing our more tradition-minded colleagues. We recognize that those who have adopted our practices have put their own spin on them. Some adoptions are still in the formative stages and are not yet proven successes. Other adoptions have taken off far beyond what we have been able to achieve. We would not recommend that our model be the one and only way of doing teacher education in the college. We are, in fact, convinced that a comprehensive approach to restructuring teacher education would not have worked in our college.

We find a parallel to our reform efforts in the whole language movement. The whole language movement has been a theoretically based, grassroots movement, spread from teacher to teacher, one at a time, who share a common vision of classrooms and learning. Because teachers believed in the reform, it empowered them and they spread the word through their practice. The reform was not top-down or comprehensive from the start. Because teachers who believed in what they were doing promoted the movement, they were willing to persevere and overcome the roadblocks and difficulties that inevitably arose.

These two examples, whole language and our own experience at CSUSM, have led us to believe that reform that targets an entire system is quite possibly flawed at its core. Broad programs tend to lose the focus on professional choices that teachers make as individuals. We, like whole language educators, seek to take control of reform by linking with others who hold similar visions and then creating a community of learners engaged in seeking ways to improve teaching and learning.

Our Mutual Socialization: Traveling the Path Together

As beginning untenured professors interested in teacher education reform, we know that our experience is somewhat unusual since our work has taken place in the context of a new university. We were among the first faculty members hired in the college and thus have more longevity than some of our more senior (in rank) colleagues. More importantly, early on, we have had the opportunity to influence the direction of the college. Second, as a result of financial constraints which have

limited faculty searches the last three years to untenured, assistant professors, we are part of the college **majority** of untenured professors. Finally, we have had the opportunity to participate actively in college level political decisions despite our untenured status because the small number of faculty necessitates that **everyone** be active in constructing new programs and in providing leadership and participation on numerous college level committees (such as faculty searches, curriculum, and governance).

Thus, we have been socialized into the profession not from our work under the guidance of more senior faculty, but rather from the ways in which the middle level program we created shapes us as teacher educators, from how and what we learn from each other, from the common commitment, values, and investment that results from being socialized and mentored together, and finally, from how working together empowers us as individuals.

We have been shaped by the program we created. We acknowledge that there are other socializing and mentoring influences; for example, the dean, university and public school colleagues, our prior teaching and graduate school experiences, and our students. But we feel quite certain that the single most interesting and powerful influence on us has been one another and the work that we have done together as team members. Working to create a middle level teacher education program in which we attempt to model particular characteristics of good middle level practice has helped shape who we are as teacher educators. The kinds of programmatic decisions we made fostered a commonality of experiences as we became university teacher educators.

As a team we make decisions at the micro and macro levels. At the micro level we are influenced by how each of us grades papers, makes decisions about the content of assignments, addresses issues that come up in class, *et cetera*. At the macro level we must articulate our beliefs and come to some agreement pedagogically in order to make programmatic decisions. We have learned from each other how to improve our teaching. As teachers we have demonstrated Vygotsky's (1978) apprenticeship model and Bruner's (1986) scaffolding to each other. Each of us brought certain expertise from which the others benefitted.

We share values, commitment, and investment. We share certain value and pedagogical orientations toward equity and constructivism, but this has not been sufficient. We also share a commitment to our collaborative work. Becoming teacher educators as a team shaped those shared values and shared commitments. So our transition to teacher education was facilitated by working with those who held common purposes.

We have become empowered as individuals through our collaboration. As untenured professors, we created the program in which we teach. We did not step into existing roles in established programs. We created our own roles. This was very empowering, and quite contradictory to what we had been led to expect as novices on a university faculty. This act of creation has emboldened us to create ourselves

in other professional spaces in the college and university. We have taken ownership of our careers. Although our senior colleagues and administrators may well determine how far we progress on our careers at CSUSM (through the tenure and promotion process), they will **not** determine the direction of our professional work. This we have determined for ourselves. For example, rather than waiting to be told that the route to tenure is paved with single-authored publications, we crafted a statement for our review files to provide a rationale for our joint authorship. Too, we have become proactive by participating (even taking leadership roles) in committees and governing bodies so that we contribute to the (re)structuring of governance documents, tenure, and promotion processes, *et cetera*. Because we have had to hammer out our beliefs and values in a "safe" place—within the team—we are more comfortable expressing those beliefs and fighting for them outside of the team. Being empowered is also more than just being part of a group because we as a team are more than the sum of three individuals. We know that with one another on the faculty, none of us is alone.

Our shared mentorship in this early stage of our becoming professional teacher educators has been an experience that, to our knowledge, few colleagues have shared. We hear from our former graduate school friends who have been finding their entry into the profession largely on their own, and largely through the active mentorship of senior faculty members or through the "conventional wisdom" passed down through generations of professors. In contrast, the earliest days of our professorships will be inextricably linked with one another and the experience will continue to impact us even if one day we travel separate paths.

Challenges and Questions: Fallen Logs and Briar Patches along the Path

As in all efforts to seek a different path, our efforts are not without challenge. For example, even though we are at a new university, not all of the faculty are excited about or interested in educational reform; some work to institutionalize "business as usual." Thus, we have learned that faculty members bring old ways of thinking about teacher education with them even to a new university. This makes them less than open to alternative approaches to preparing teachers. Add to this the strong value in higher education to allow "academic freedom" and its resultant interpretation that we cannot "tell anyone how or what to teach"—it is a wonder that educational reform is taking place anywhere at all. We would argue, by the way, that this resistance is less about academic freedom than it is about differences in values around collaboration, innovation, curriculum integration, social justice, *et cetera*.

With respect to our lead in educational reform, we have several specific challenges that we have become aware of and that we prefer to frame as questions to be resolved. The first of these is connected with the wisdom of engaging in such intensive work. Within our program, we have invested substantial time and effort to carry

out the programmatic and curricular practices outlined above. Team meetings, curriculum integration work sessions, and the need to be in each others' classes for team teaching create additional burdens on our already overloaded work sche-dules. Thus, we ask, "Are we being compensated fairly for our time and effort in this regard?"

Related to this challenge of compensation in our workload is the compensation with respect to retention, tenure, and promotion (known as "RTP" at our university). As it stands, our RTP document contains fairly traditional criteria for career advancement. Fortunately, the majority of our file reviewers have understood our work and the effort that has been required. Still, we wonder if there might come a time when reviewers might not value our innovative work and thus see all of our collaborative work as an indication of individual incompetence. Or perhaps these reviewers might not reward our collaboration because there is no category for it in the RTP document. So we ask, "How can we restructure the RTP process so that we are not dependent on the good will and like-mindedness of the reviewing faculty/ administrators, and so that the RTP criteria value and affirm efforts at reform?"

A second set of challenges is related to what happens when innovative program features are "adopted" by other programs. In some instances, we see these features being copied with neither the explicit understanding of why the feature was originally implemented nor any consideration for the value orientation upon which it rests. As a result, we have seen others attempt to implement program features, ending up frustrated since they do not work well. The decision is then made to suspend that feature or to implement it at a superficial level—the latter allows the program faculty to say that they are "doing it" when in fact the reality is far afield from meaningful implementation.

Another interesting occurrence is that certain practices of ours have not been imitated at all. An example of this is the middle level team's commitment to teaching about social justice, with its implications for the classroom and the educators who work in those classrooms. In the middle level program, our student teachers and team members read and discuss a set of articles dealing with fostering change in schools to promote social justice (see, Stowell, McDaniel & Ríos, 1995). This practice addresses our most fundamental core value and is, we believe, supported in the college's mission statement, yet it remains absent in other cohorts. We must also note that social justice is the value that we as a team have struggled with most to make explicit in our own practice. We ask, "What happens to our underpinning values when other programs adopt practices from our program?" And we ask, "What important values and innovative practices have other cohorts established that we have not explored in the middle level program?"

A third challenge addresses the question of effectiveness. Because we are only in the fourth year of program implementation, we have very few indicators (none that are long-term) to indicate whether the program is making a difference for our students. What early indicators we have collected have been favorable. Recent on-site visits by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and

state accrediting teams have resulted in positive reports. When asked, our students are usually very complimentary about their experiences, while acknowledging that they have no other experiences in teacher education to compare them to. Area schools are pleased with our graduates, about 90 to 95 percent of whom find teaching positions during the summer following completion of the program. A related challenge is finding indicators that suggest that our graduates, as a result of their preparation with us, are making a significant difference in the lives of the students they touch and in the schools where they teach. Thus, we ask, "How will we know if practices consistent with educational reform that we have implemented in teacher education are meaningful? What indicators should we use? How will we know what our impact is on students and schools in multicultural/multilingual middle school contexts?"

A final challenge revolves around our concern associated with institutionalizing some of the practices we have implemented. To date, no one program feature has been adopted by the whole college; however, attempting to do so raises some interesting questions for us and for others attempting educational reform via the institutionalization of reform-oriented practice. "To what degree are these practices in particular dependent upon who **we** are and therefore not suited to serve as an institution-wide paradigm?" We ask, "Is institutionalization critical for large scale reform? In college-wide reform, might program developers be asked to 'water down' their innovations? Would the very program that inspired the reforms lose something of its essence or power? And finally, How would we strike a balance between that which is innovative and that which is institutionalized?"

With respect to this final challenge and concomitant questions, we have come to believe that perhaps it is best not to institutionalize **practice** but rather to focus on the institutionalization of **values** associated with reform. For example, perhaps we could find a way to institutionalize values such as collaboration for simultaneous renewal of schools and universities, innovation aimed at educational reform, or commitment to educational equity. These values could in turn be made explicit in the college and university mission statements. New faculty candidates would be asked to speak directly to and be evaluated on these values, having been informed "up front" about their importance to the college. Students seeking admission to our teacher education programs would likewise be evaluated on their own commitment to these values. The RTP process would be revised to champion any and all efforts that speak to these values. Finally, administrative support of various types would be provided to any person whose efforts promote these values.

We argue that this has several advantages. For example, tenure and promotion review committees and the dean of the college can treat individuals differentially based on their work. A dean who believes in restructuring might well reward innovative faculty with research support, travel money, *et cetera*. This would provide sufficient leeway in how people carry out their work (that is, not impinging on academic freedom) since we envision multiple ways to initiate and sustain

collaboration, innovation for educational reform, and commitment to educational equity. We believe that this approach would allow a faculty member to describe the "degree" to which she or he is working in ways that are compatible with core values of the college, since carrying out one's values is a dynamic process.

Lessons Learned: Reflecting on Our Path-Making

Through all our path-making we have learned some lessons that we believe inform teacher education reform and the role of beginning faculty in that process.

First, reform is an ongoing process. We have concluded that our efforts are reforming, but the reform will never end. If we think reform is over, we become stagnant. Our work with the middle level program is a work in progress. This is not only a true depiction of what is, but it is also a perspective that invigorates us in our planning and teaching. We must also be careful that we do not just keep adding whatever reform seems new and good—while losing sight of the overall vision. For example, we have been adding new practices to the program every year without taking any away, and maybe it is time to do some pruning in the interest of coherence. We need to remind ourselves that, sometimes, less is more. Change for the sake of change is not our point.

Second, as we shape, so we are shaped. Reform is a recursive process, and as we develop the program, we are informed in new ways by our students, by our colleagues both local and (inter)national, and by papers we read or write. As we are made new, we make the program new in different ways.

Third, actions speak louder than words. We do feel that a good measure of our success is that we approached our reform tasks in a non-proselytizing manner. At no time did we say, "Look at us, colleagues. You should construct your program like our program." We let our enthusiasm and success speak for themselves. The ways that we live out our philosophy and the ways that our students do will speak louder than any presentations we give at conferences or college meetings. This is especially important given our untenured status, since we do not want to put ourselves at risk by providing unsolicited advice to our more senior colleagues about program development.

Fourth, administrative support is necessary, but not sufficient. Administrative support has certainly "greased the wheels" for us in a number of ways—course assignments, scheduling, *et cetera*. It is one less battle to fight, but it does not guarantee that reform will happen in other program areas of the college. Nay-sayers will not be won over, but some faculty members might be predisposed to take on innovative practices if they have some scaffolding, and/or if they see that their colleagues have been rewarded for their new practices.

Fifth, reform is a political act. It is not without its political consequences. We have to be sensitive to and always cognizant of our own political agendas. We believe that we are all situated politically and must make that explicit to our students

and our colleagues. Our political agenda is social and economic justice. We generally have little patience for those who do not share this agenda, and we need to remind ourselves to be sensitive to where people (students, colleagues) are in their own journeys. This is a journey for everyone—and for some, it is a longer, slower journey with different stops along the way.

Sixth, reform is difficult without a shared vision and shared values. We believe that faculty who work together need to share common values and work ethic. There must be some self-selection when it comes to teams of teacher educators working together. While all can benefit from fresh ideas and perspectives, the reality is that values need to be held in common by those who are building programs of teacher education for innovative ideas to be explored in depth. A common work ethic is important because no matter how much support the college administration provides, the dollars will probably never cover the amount of time and effort it takes for teams to create reforming programs of teacher education. We realized early on that to move forward, we needed to be explicit about our own values and come to consensus. Thus, socialization will have its greatest impact when we come into contact with those who share a similar vision of schooling for the future.

Finally, success is empowering. With success we have more efficacy in the college. We ourselves are more emboldened to take another risk and trust our own judgments. With this confidence, we have cajoled other untenured professors to join in our proactive, political stance, and we find with each year that we are taking greater strides down our path.

From Here to Where?

This article has detailed our efforts to create and implement a middle level teacher education program informed by a new vision of schooling and teacher preparation. We discussed the ways in which that program has influenced (and been influenced by) other programs and practices in the college of education. We find that as a result of our being beginning (untenured, assistant) professors, the most powerful agent in our socialization to the profession has been the program and the simultaneous inspiration of working with each other. This has not been without its challenges, its questions, and its concerns. But equally important, it has not been without its personal and professional rewards associated with feeling empowered in promoting a vision of schooling aimed at the 21st Century.

As we pause to reflect on the path we have forged, we are keenly attuned to the multiple paths we might have taken, the paths that others take. But we know there is much of our path that needs yet to be discovered. Our values and our vision serve as our compass; our collective responsibility to the program, the students, and each other serves as our guides. While we take the risk of walking through uncharted territory, we take pleasure in the journey since we continue to approach a more just and democratic approach to schooling.

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