A Culture of Thinking Like a Teacher: The Role of Critical Reflection in Teacher Preparation

Karen L. Lowenstein
klowenstein@pebc.org
Boettcher Teachers Program
Denver, Co.

Andra Brill
abrill@pebc.org
Boettcher Teachers Program
Denver, Co.

As teacher educators for an alternative urban teacher preparation program, we believe that because we cannot teach novice teachers everything they need to know in one year, our principal responsibility is to teach our novices to think like teachers. Central to this process is supporting novices to engage in critical reflection. Critical reflection is a kind of teacher reflection where teachers examine issues of equity and power as they play themselves out in schools. In this article, we conceptualize the work of critical reflection and then offer an in-depth look at how two new teachers critically reflect on their students, their curriculum, and the purpose of schooling. We conclude that teachers must learn to critically reflect so that they might create more equitable spaces for their K-12 students.

Keywords: alternative certification, critical reflection, novice teachers

Introduction: Thinking like a teacher

No one seems to question that the purpose of law school is to train attorneys to think like lawyers or that the purpose of medical school is to train doctors to think like diagnosticians. Many have written about learning to think like a doctor (e.g., Dowie & Elstein, 1988; Groopman, 2007; Montgomery, 2006) and learning to think like a lawyer (e.g., Fidel & Cantoni, 2004; Mertz, 2007; Schauer, 2009). However, there seems to be some debate over a similar purpose in educating teachers. We believe that both teacher education and teachers’ professional development should serve a purpose that parallels that of law or medical school: training teachers to think like teachers. In other words, just as other professionals are trained into a particular culture of thinking, teachers need to be trained into a particular culture of thinking. If this is the case, what does it actually mean to think like a teacher? What might teachers need to know above and beyond the content and methods courses that are the cornerstone of many teacher education programs? What might the content of teacher preparation entail if teachers are to ensure equitable educational experiences for our urban students who need strong teachers the most? And
given that teacher preparation programs cannot teach novices all that they need to know in one year, how might teaching novices to think like teachers set novices up for longer-term success?

In this article, we conceptualize thinking like a teacher as critical reflection. We then describe our own work as teacher educators with novice teachers in an alternative teacher preparation program to highlight examples of what critical reflection looks like in practice. Finally, we conclude by inviting teachers across contexts to use critical reflection as a tool to build a culture of thinking that enacts education for all teacher and students.

**Conceptual framework: From reflective practice to critical reflection**

We believe that creating a culture of thinking is what distinguishes teachers as technicians from teachers as professionals. We intentionally use this term, professionals, to describe the idea of teachers as members of a particular culture of thinking and practice, and to distinguish teachers from those who simply execute scripted lesson plans. In this article, we build upon a widespread notion of teachers’ reflective process with the concept and practice of what we call critical reflection. Critical reflection involves teacher thinking about issues of equity and power as they relate to students, curriculum, and education writ large.

When teachers take a deeper look at what they experience in their classrooms to think about or notice what is working and name what might be improved, they are engaging in reflective practice. Reflective practice is not a new concept in the field of teacher education. In the last 20 years of teacher education literature, teacher as reflective practitioner has become a common notion when describing what good teachers do (e.g., Adler, 1991; Loughran, 1996; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). While this article is not intended to be an exhaustive review of the literature on teachers as reflective practitioners, we note from Schon’s seminal work (1983) that reflective practice requires that teachers step back to examine their classrooms and the decisions that they make. Reflective practice has even been touted as the central process by which schools can change for the better (McEntee et al., 2003).

One way to engage in reflective practice is by following a cycle of observing and describing practice, searching for what drives practice, and revising or changing pedagogical processes (Wellington, 1991). Wellington offers four questions that outline the process of reflective practice: (a) What do I do as a teacher? (b) What does this mean for me and for students? (c). How did I come to act in this way? and (d) How might I do things differently? Often, this kind of reflective practice is focused on the technical aspects of what happens in the classroom. For the purposes of creating more equitable school experiences, we believe that technical reflection is not sufficient. Reflective practice must become critical.

We argue that if teachers ask themselves the questions that Wellington offers, this reflection is by definition not necessarily critical and can remain centered upon the more
technical aspects of teaching. In other words, “it is quite possible to teach reflectively…focusing solely on the nuts and bolts of classroom practices” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 8). Critical reflection matters because teachers are not simply technocrats and teaching is not simply a technical enterprise. While thinking and discussion about the technical experiences of teaching can lead to better teaching, we believe that teachers need to become critically reflective practitioners because the process of critical reflection serves as a way for teachers to think of their practice in light of issues of equity in schools. In other words, critical reflection is a means of integrating issues of equity into teachers’ thinking. This serves as a necessary precursor to meeting the needs of diverse learners (Howard, 2003).

We believe that critical reflection is a way for teachers to create more democratic classrooms where all students have access to powerful content. Critical reflection aims to create classroom and school spaces where all voices are respected and valued. To clarify this distinction between technical and critical reflection, we cite Brookfield’s examples. He notes that teachers can reflect on

- the timing of coffee breaks, whether to use blackboards or flip charts,
- the advantages of using a liquid crystal display (LCD) panel over previously prepared overheads, or how rigidly we stick to a deadline for the submission of students’ assignments. All these decisions rest on assumptions that can be identified and questioned, and all of them can be looked at from different perspectives (1995, p. 8).

Brookfield explains that these reflections can become a more critical way of knowing if teachers and administrators begin to question the assumptions behind these details. Specifically, critical reflection on the merits of blackboards, flip charts, or LCD panels would name and investigate educators’ and students’ unequal access to technology. Reflection about the deadlines for students’ submissions of papers that led to an investigation and questioning of the sources of authority underlying the establishment of criteria of evaluation would be reflection that was critical.

Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) offer an example of a teacher setting up a particular room arrangement without thinking about possible effects of her arrangement. They note that critical reflection requires that the teacher consider how a particular seating arrangement might foster a more cooperative and equitable community in the classroom. These examples from Brookfield and Sparks-Langer and Colton highlight how critical reflection is a process that locates teachers’ questions within concerns about the distribution of power and students’ access to learning opportunities.

In sum, we conceptualize that teacher reflection becomes critical when it has two distinctive purposes. The first is when teachers work to understand how power explicitly and implicitly frames educational structures and interactions (Freire, 1970; Johnston, 2004). The second is when teachers name and revise their own assumptions and practices that seem to make their teaching lives easier but actually end up working against students’ own best long-term interests (Wink, 1997). Critical reflection helps teachers
make decisions that rest on more developed examinations of assumptions about power and fairness. It is this kind of thinking that offers a path toward teaching and learning as a means to a more equitable society.

Before offering examples of critical reflection from our own alternative teacher preparation program, we provide information about our program that highlights what we as teacher educators do to support and spark critical reflection as a way of knowing. Although our context is alternative teacher preparation; we believe that the process of critical reflection is possible across teacher preparation and professional development contexts for teachers. Moreover, we conceptualize critical reflection as a life-long process for teachers as professionals throughout their teaching careers.

**Classrooms as places for thinking: The contexts of K-12 schools and an alternative teacher preparation program**

We, the teacher educators conducting this study, have been K-12 classroom teachers and have served together as co-directors for an alternative teacher preparation program, The Boettcher Teachers Program. The program is a unique collaboration among a private foundation, a non-profit organization, two local school districts, and a university. All partners share a primary goal: the provision of an alternative pathway for the recruitment, preparation, and retention of thoughtful teachers who create more equitable educational experiences for students in the partner districts’ Title I schools.

As part of serving the students in our districts’ Title I schools, our alternative teacher education program is based on an apprenticeship model of learning to teach. We place novice teachers in classrooms for an entire school year with mentor teachers who model best practices. We borrow from the medical model of preparation and call this year a residency year for our novices.¹ Our program relies heavily on our mentor teachers to provide classroom experiences during this residency year that combine theory and research with the reality of what it means to create a culture of thinking in their classrooms. In our mentor classrooms, teachers believe in educational equity, working to offer all of their students access to rich academic content. Just as our mentor teachers put thinking at the center of their K-12 classrooms, we propose that it is critical to put thinking at the center of the alternative teacher education program that we create.

As teacher educators, we teach a yearlong seminar that meets once each week. One of the central goals of this seminar is to create a culture of thinking for teachers that sparks, supports, and sustains our novice teachers’ critical reflection. We aim to open a dialogue around our K-12 students’ access to educational opportunities that includes the role of schools in a democratic society and examination of common practices such as tracking, grading, and teacher control (Anyon, 1983). We want our novice teachers to begin to articulate their own beliefs about the purposes of education, which involves their exploration of the hidden lessons about the equity and power of particular methods and strategies often used in classrooms. Because we value this kind of work, we have

¹ For more on the residency model of teacher preparation, see: [http://www.teachingquality.org/utr](http://www.teachingquality.org/utr)
purposefully structured the program to support the use of critical reflection to create a culture of thinking.

To foster a culture of thinking about issues of equity in our teacher preparation program, we use particular pedagogical tools and practices that support critical reflection. By completing coursework and field experiences during this year, our novice teachers are immersed in a culture of thinking that integrates theory and practice, and that focuses on issues of diversity and power. In all the assignments and activities we design, we specifically ask our teachers to do the work of noticing and naming their experiences (Johnston, 2004). This kind of work is critical because they continually dig deeper to issues of access, identity, and power. We ask our teachers to consider multiple perspectives, we require narrative interpretations of the consequences of pedagogical choices, and we require that they provide cases of teaching and learning dilemmas that they experience. We also ask our students to produce weekly electronic journal writings, self-analyses of teaching videotapes, and multiple projects regarding what their K-12 students are learning. As a heavily field-based program, we structure field experiences to support teacher learning with an emphasis on developing reflective capabilities (Zeichner & Liston, 1987) with a critical orientation.

It bears noting that these practices do not inherently build critical reflection; we structure these assignments and experiences in ways that require our students to consider the connections between larger structures of education and their K-12 students’ rights to a rigorous education (Wink, 1997). We want our teachers to examine the norms of classrooms and the conditions of schools, noticing and naming what is often taken for granted in order to create more equitable schooling experiences for all students (Freire, 1970). To illustrate the work of critical reflection, we highlight snapshots of two of our teachers’ critical reflections during their first year of becoming teachers.

**Mike and Kathy: A snapshot of two novice teachers and their critical reflections**

**Mike**

After working in the business world for eight years, Mike made the decision to become a high school English teacher. Mike is white, middle class, and in his early 30s. He has a keen interest in local and national politics and a quick sense of humor. His critical reflections demonstrate his thinking about issues of equity; he often asks larger questions about why things are the way they are in his apprenticeship experience. Mike continually wonders about the deeper purposes for particular activities, school curriculum, and education.

**Kathy**

Kathy is a Spanish language teacher in her late 20s. Prior to entering our program, she spent time working in the business world, taught for a year in a public

---

2 Pseudonyms have been used for the teachers described in this study.
school, and worked with college bound high school students during summers. She is Latina and brings a strong sense of culture and identity to her work as a teacher. Throughout her work all year, Kathy talks about the need to navigate between home culture and school culture and strives both to uncover hidden structures of inequity and empower her students. She also thinks about the multiple identities that her students bring to school, including their racial, linguistic, and cultural identities.

Mike and Kathy offer critical reflections in the following three major areas: knowing students, knowing curriculum, and knowing the purpose of schooling. We now turn to each of these themes.

**Knowing students**

Throughout the year, we talk about what it means to know students well. As a group we discuss the multiple roles that students take on as they move among home, school, and spaces with their friends. We discuss school as one of many contexts that students experience and we talk about how the role of student is just one of many roles that students play. As our understanding of students becomes more complex, we revisit what it means for all students to be literate. If we define literacy as ways of knowing and interacting in the world, we begin to talk about the kinds of literacy students need to be successful in school, at home, in social situations, and in the professional world.

For Mike, critically reflecting on his students’ lives, both in and out of school, leads him to notice and name the differences between his students’ experiences and his own life and schooling experiences. He notes:

This week, two of my students were busted by the cops for smoking weed. Two others were friends with someone who accidentally shot himself when, playing with what he thought was an unloaded gun, he put the weapon in his mouth and pulled the trigger. One came in late to class after spending the night in jail for probation violations. She is the only member of her family not currently serving time in prison. One of the students in Nine Again [freshmen English class for those who failed the first time] will soon turn twenty. What motivates these kids to come to school? If a friend of mine shot himself, I don’t think I’d go to school the next day. If I was busted for weed, I don’t think I’d go to school the next day. Spend the night in jail? I might not care so much about school (of course, in her case, jail is what she gets for not going to school). How would I feel if, on the verge of my twentieth birthday, I was taking remedial English classes with high school freshmen?...I’m amazed that kids persevere. My students have skills and know lots of things I know nothing about. And if school is to serve these students, I need to figure out how to make that so (2.2.05).

These reflections on his students’ lives lead Mike to wonder what motivates students to come to school. He expresses amazement at his students’ abilities to actually show up to school. He describes their resilience and the knowledge and skills that they
possess. Mike’s reflections are critical because he continually works on knowing his students in a more complex, holistic way – one that recognizes that students must use very different kinds of knowledge to survive. In addition, as Mike takes into account a larger view of what it means to know his students, he recognizes the logic behind students’ choices and honors students’ ability to persist in the face of adversity.

In another critical reflection, Mike specifically ties knowing students as individuals with different learning styles to the choices teachers make. In this excerpt, he grapples with the idea of differentiation and demonstrates his thinking about literacy as a civil right for all students.

We always talk about differentiating our teaching for second language learners or for students of varying ability levels, but we never talk about differentiated learning for different genders. In one way I suppose it’s something of a touchy subject. As a society we’re supposed to believe that everyone is equal and that differences in performance can be attributed to differences in how hard a particular person is willing to work. Perhaps we’re scared to acknowledge that, when it comes to learning, people are not created equally, and that, across cultural and gender-based lines, we do learn in different ways. Actually, that’s probably a lame statement. The question isn’t whether or not we’re aware of different ways of learning, but what to do about it in schools…and again, I wonder what my role as a teacher is. If I am to serve students, I must take their differences into account. (2.10.05).

Here, Mike reflects upon what it means to differentiate for various learners, especially for female and male students. Moreover, Mike situates the idea of differentiation in a larger discussion about equality and achievement. He questions the belief that students are all created equal and that success is based on how much effort students put into their work. This kind of big picture thinking exemplifies critical reflection, as Mike grapples with how social beliefs impact how differences are named and the decisions teachers make to accommodate these differences.

Kathy thinks about the knowledge her students bring into the classroom and its implications for literacy. She looks to make connections between the literacy that students bring from home and the literacy students need to be successful in school. Throughout the year, she draws heavily upon the work of Freire (1970) to name the knowledge that her students bring with them into the classroom. She wonders how teachers might tap into the vast amounts of knowledge students hold and writes,

Students are not empty containers that need information poured in. They have the ability to bring their home knowledge into the classroom and should be utilizing it to further their knowledge in all of the subjects that they are learning (10.13.04).
Like Mike, Kathy also believes that knowing students means knowing them both in and out of school. She goes beyond simply knowing what students like and don’t like, their hobbies and their interests, to a deeper understanding of the different kinds of literacy that students bring to school.

Kathy talks at length in her critical reflections about what it means for teachers to know their students in what she calls their “various worlds.” She explores how teachers might help students make connections by being aware of and incorporating “out of school knowledge” in classrooms. Specifically, Kathy asserts her belief that literacy materials in the classroom should reflect students’ lives outside of the classroom. She notes,

Students should be taught literacy through reading materials that reflect themselves and their lives… Considering the various worlds students live in, incorporating [that] out of school knowledge may increase self-esteem of the students and help students develop personal ownership of assignments (11.8.04).

Kathy’s language about personal ownership demonstrates her belief that knowing students well is a key to motivation and engagement. For Kathy, knowing students means knowing the kinds of literacy students bring to the classroom and this allows her to think about how to set up good literacy practices in her own classroom.

For Kathy and Mike, knowing students is at the heart of what it means to teach well and they both talk about what it means for them as teachers to create an environment that supports their students’ learning and success. Kathy and Mike believe that taking into account their students’ lives in and out of school honors students and ultimately supports students’ engagement in learning. Kathy clearly states that she needs to engage in literacy practices that honor and build bridges to her students’ experiences and knowledge. Both Mike and Kathy begin to critically reflect on the different kinds of knowledge, skills, and identities that students bring to their classroom experiences.

**Knowing curriculum**

In addition to critically reflecting upon knowing students, both Mike and Kathy spend a lot of time reflecting upon what it means to know their curriculum. Both write extensively about this, specifically exploring how the content of the curriculum that they are required to teach defines literacy for students. They write about why students ought to be literate in English or Spanish. When Mike and Kathy critically reflect upon English or Spanish literacy, they describe how decisions about what gets taught intersect with students’ identities in the world.

As part of his independent teaching, Mike taught Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*. His critical reflections about the curriculum include his questions about the rationalization for choosing Shakespeare. In understanding the choice to have students learn Shakespeare, Mike identifies messages about literacy connected with a particular culture. He shares,
Half of my independent teaching involves *The Taming of the Shrew*, and I’ve spent a few hours this week trying to justify this unit. There is, however, a problem: I can’t come up with anything solid. I can think of dozens of rationalizations – Shakespeare’s plays explore universal themes, reading his works is an opportunity for students to practice their recognition and understanding of poetic tools, exposure to Shakespeare helps build cultural literacy (which raises questions about the culture in which we’re teaching kids to be literate), the state requires an exposure to drama, reading Shakespeare is an ideal opportunity to practice reading comprehension strategies – I just can’t think of a solid reason that explains why these ideas need to be taught through the Shakespearean lens. What is it about Shakespeare that makes it such a universal high school experience? What place does that experience have in an urban setting? What impact does Shakespeare’s work have on ‘urban students’ or on 21st century students in general? Do we teach his work because it has an impact, or do we teach it simply because we’ve always taught it? (01.20.05)

This kind of thinking goes beyond simply planning how to teach Shakespeare or when to teach Shakespeare. Mike critically examines why we teach Shakespeare for students’ literacy and what value this content has for these students in his particular context. He wonders about the relevance of Shakespeare for his students in an urban setting and what counts as the English literacy students get in schools and need. Mike’s critical reflection leads him to consider the possibility that teachers do things in schools simply because this is how things have been done for so long.

Similarly, Kathy turns her attention to what content gets covered and counted as Spanish literacy in her curriculum. She notices,

I would have liked the students to learn more about what Frieda Kahlo and Diego Rivera were really famous for and why their work is so significant, especially Diego Rivera’s idea that making art accessible to the working poor was extremely important. However, this was not a part of the mandated curriculum. So what might I do about what gets taught? Who gets to decide what is in our curriculum? I don’t know the answer to this question. (09.26.04).

Here, Kathy observes that the students were not offered the chance to understand issues of equity as they relate to the work of particular Mexican artists. She wrestles with what counts as knowledge as her students become literate in her Spanish class.

Kathy also highlights issues of students’ access to quality literacy curricula when she examines the different curricula offered to the multiple classes she teaches. For her
independent teaching, Kathy taught classes designated for advanced students and classes designated for all other students. She asks why groups of students work under different sets of expectations regarding their Spanish literacy. From her perspective, all students are capable of doing what she names as “the more challenging literacy work.” She writes,

I’ve already seen what ‘sorting’ does (i.e. lessons of advanced students vs. ‘regular’ Spanish I students). The expectations for ‘regular’ Spanish students don’t seem to be as high as for advanced students in everything from attendance to being able to handle tougher lesson or more complex planning on the part of teachers. This does not seem right. Aren’t all students capable of advanced work? And when do we give up on this notion, since we track students from the start of high school? (8.15.04).

Kathy often wonders who makes curricular decisions about what material students are offered. She ties this to students’ differential access to high-quality literacy curriculum and argues that all students merit advanced literacy content.

Both Kathy and Mike critically reflect on how school curricula identify what literacy students should be exposed to. They raise important questions about definitions of literacy. Kathy also suggests that all students deserve access to high-quality curricula that builds their literacy knowledge.

**Knowing purpose of education**

Finally, Mike and Kathy both critically reflect upon their understandings of the purposes of education. Mike wonders whether high school is necessary for all students and articulates his belief that school should enable students to see choices in their lives. Kathy names her belief that school should both honor students’ home languages and knowledge and use these to build bridges to the knowledge that students need to succeed. These beliefs mesh with Mike and Kathy’s critical reflections on who gets to define what it means to be successful and who gets to define the purposes of education.

As part of Mike’s wondering about the purpose of education, he wrestles with whether school is really intended for all students, noting both the power of a high school education and societal norms for completion of high school. He explains,

I wonder about making some kids come to school. My mentor talks all the time about students for whom school isn’t right, students who need to be out in the world, working, traveling, doing anything but wasting their time sitting in classes they hate. I think she’s right – a traditional high school isn’t the right thing for plenty of people – but there’s also a nasty stigma associated with dropping out. And what about the consequences of not

---

3 The high school where Kathy did her apprenticeship places some 11th and 12th grade students into an International Baccalaureate program and also separates freshmen and sophomores who are headed into this program into separate classes at the start of high school.
having a high school education? So what’s the right answer? Maybe I put too much emphasis on a high school education and not on what’s right for different people. Why are these four years such a big deal? Why do they define us and influence us is so many ways? They’re such a small piece of our lives and yet they set the stage for so much (2.2.05).

Mike grapples with the tension between school as a process that does not benefit some students and the power of school to influence the direction of students’ lives. His questions go beyond why a student is not succeeding in a classroom to why a student is not succeeding in a system. At the same time, Mike’s questions about the purposes of education suggest questions about whether a high school experience is necessary for all students and about what his role as a teacher is.

In another critical reflection about the purposes of education, Mike begins to name his own beliefs. He notes,

More and more, I think this education thing is about helping students recognize that they have options, helping them believe in themselves and their thinking so they see that their lives are truly theirs to control. The less education we have, the less likely we’ll be to really control what it is we do with our lives. When it’s all said and done, when no one remembers a single thing about identifying epic similes or extended metaphors or how to sketch a plot summary (which are valuable skills), I want my students to feel as if they have options, that they have control over what happens in their lives, that they don’t need to work a demoralizing or soul-deadening job because that’s all they think they’re capable of doing (1.27.05).

Through the process of critical reflection, Mike articulates one of his core beliefs about education: empowering students to have control over their lives. His reflection also shows that he believes his responsibilities as a teacher include guiding students to believe in themselves and wanting students to know about possibilities for their lives.

Kathy’s understandings of the purpose of education reflect her own experiences and beliefs about culture and identity. For Kathy, the purposes of schooling are twofold. She explains,

Delpit writes what I’ve come to believe what education should be – that student work in their home language should be validated and honored, and that they should also be taught and expected to produce work in the dominant discourse as well. We need to support students to develop multiple literacies – one of their home community and one that is about power in the real world (9.26.04).

Kathy uses “dominant discourse” to refer to the ways of communicating that are valued by the larger society. In her critical reflections, Kathy often describes the differences
between home culture and dominant culture. When she uses the word dominant, Kathy acknowledges differences in power or status among various ways of communicating. She ascertains that a teacher’s job is to support students to know their home language and to know the language of power in the world.

**Conclusions about Mike and Kathy**

What distinguishes Mike and Kathy’s critical reflections from reflective practice is their consideration of how larger systems and power affect students’ engagement in school, their roles as teachers, and the larger purposes of education. This kind of teacher thinking grants students the power to reflect on how they see the world and how they are seen in the world. Teachers benefit from the same learning that they want their students to experience. In other words, we maintain that a culture of thinking for teachers ultimately supports teachers to create a culture of thinking for their students. This culture of thinking involves students and teachers in what Johnston describes as a process of noticing and naming. Johnston explains, “Ultimately, children must notice how naming is done, who is named in which ways, and who gets to do the naming” (2004, p. 19). Moreover, Johnston articulates the connection to the role of the teacher: “Through our [teachers’] noticing and naming language, children learn the significant features of the world, themselves, and others. These understandings influence how they treat each other and their environment” (2004, p. 20). We believe that this kind of teacher noticing and naming is central to fostering thinking and to creating more equitable schooling for all students.

**Conclusion: Critical reflection as a foundation for trust**

It is our belief that educators in any alternative teacher preparation program must conceptualize and identify the kinds of thinking they wish to foster in their teachers. In our program, we have conceptualized a culture of thinking for teachers through the process of critical reflection. In this article, we have shown examples of this kind of thinking from two of our teachers during their residency year.

To conclude our work, we add, as Brookfield does, that the power of critical reflection lies not only in asking teachers as professionals to “openly question [their] own ideas and assumptions—even as [they] explain why [they] believe in them so passionately” but also in that when teachers engage in this kind of thinking, “[they] create an emotional climate in which accepting change and risking failure are valued” (1995, p. 25). According to Brookfield, this kind of emotional climate increases democratic trust between teachers and students. He elaborates on what this trust entails.

Teachers who have learned the reflective habit know something about the effects they are having on students. They are alert to the presence of power in their classrooms and to its potential for misuse. Knowing that their actions can silence or activate students’ voices, they listen seriously and attentively to what students say. (p. 26)
This kind of attentiveness is a foundation for teachers to build relationships with their students on, understand students’ experiences and perceptions, and work for their students’ academic and social achievements. This attentiveness creates a pathway for the emergence of a culture of thinking in teacher education and, ultimately, in K-12 schools.

References


