

# Presence in teaching

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This article articulates a theory of ‘presence’ in teaching and seeks to establish a theoretical foundation for presence that can serve as a platform for further research. It seeks to address the current educational climate that sees teaching as a check list of behaviors, dispositions, measures, and standards, and to articulate the essential but elusive aspect of teaching we call presence. Presence is defined as a state of alert awareness, receptivity, and connectedness to the mental, emotional, and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments, and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step. The article is divided into four sections and explores existing conceptions of presence: presence as self-awareness, presence as connection to students, and presence as connection to subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. Within each section the role that context plays in a teacher’s ability to be present is also explored. The authors draw upon papers and stories from student teachers, interview data from children and experienced teachers, and stories from a study group of experienced educators that explored the notion of presence on three different occasions. They conclude by connecting presence to the essential purpose of teaching and learning, the creation of a democratic society.

**Keywords:** *Presence; Relational theory/relationship; Self-awareness; Reflection*

## Introduction

The present ... the real filled present, exists only in so far as actual presentness, meeting, and relation exist. The present arises only in virtue of the fact that the *Thou* becomes present. (Buber, 1970, p. 12)

Today’s imperatives for standardized achievement take us further and further from a complex and nuanced notion of what it means to teach. Teaching and learning have come to be described in simple terms: good teaching causes good learning, which is equated with high test results. Bad teaching causes bad learning, which is evident in low test results. As less time, money, space and value are given to a more complex notion of teaching, the voices of both teachers and students are being squeezed out and we are losing sight of what it means to teach. This article suggests an alternative paradigm and views teaching as engaging in an authentic relationship with students where teachers

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know and respond with intelligence and compassion to students and their learning. We define this engagement as ‘presence’—a state of alert awareness, receptivity and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step. We hold that reflective teaching cannot be reduced to a series of behaviors or skills, but is a practice that demands presence. As such, it involves self-knowledge, trust, relationship and compassion. This article seeks to bring the idea of presence in teaching to the foreground, to begin to define it and to advocate an explicit acknowledgement of its importance in students’ learning and teachers’ education and to claim its centrality in the experience of both. We aim here to explore and define presence in teaching, establishing a theoretical foundation for presence that might later serve as a platform from which to explore the implications for teacher education and professional development.

Why presence? Why now? Given the current climate of education, one that is receptive to and indeed enamored with positivism, standardization and quantification, what is the place of a discussion that centers on the subjective, qualitative experience of the human beings who inhabit schools? It is precisely in such a climate that this discussion is essential. Paying attention to the fundamentals of classroom life—the relationships, the affective and cognitive interactions between students and teachers, the construction of genuine learning experiences and a hospitable school climate—is essential because these are the very elements of classroom practice that are threatened by the current educational trends. Past research suggests that the relationship between teacher and student is a keystone in student achievement, motivation and engagement and in their capacity to trust what they know (Midgley *et al.*, 1989; Pianta, 1999; Roeser *et al.*, 2000; Rodgers, in press; Raider-Roth, 2005a,b). This research has demonstrated that the quality of these relationships is not a frill or ‘feel-good’ aspect of schooling, it is an essential feature of learning. What allows this relationship to flourish is complex and calls upon the mental, physical, emotional and relational resources of the teacher.

As vital as presence seems to be in the mutual acts of learning and teaching, and as widely acknowledged as it is in various literature, it is not often explicitly taught in teacher education programs, mentioned on lists of qualities for certification nor talked about by pre- and in-service supervisors (Garrison & Rud, 1995; Liston, 1995). It is difficult to study (How is presence visible? What counts as evidence of presence? How does teacher presence affect student learning?) and little empirical research exists.<sup>1</sup>

In this article we will attempt to put words to this elusive but vital quality. The paper we have written is conceptual in nature. The concepts articulated here grow organically out of our collective experiences with teachers and learners. These include experiences with students, student teachers, experienced teachers and non-teaching professionals whose practices also demand presence. The data we draw upon include: papers and stories from student teachers in our courses and under our supervision at a large state university in the northeastern USA; interview data from a small group of students whose discussions of relationship and self-assessment practices directly address the notion of presence;<sup>2</sup> data from a group of 12 experienced teachers interested in exploring the notion of presence.<sup>3</sup>

We frame our discussion in an interdisciplinary theoretical context, drawing on literatures from philosophy, psychology and pedagogy. We have divided the paper into four sections: existing conceptions of presence; presence as self-awareness or connection to the self; presence as connection to students; presence as connection to subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. Within each section we address the role that context plays in a teacher's ability to be present and the force it exerts in shaping the dimensions of presence. We address context more broadly at the end of the article.

### Existing conceptions

The experience of presence is one most will recognize, particularly from their experiences as learners. Many of us have come across a teacher who, with the metaphorical touch of a finger, could give us exactly what we needed, neither more nor less, exactly when we needed it. A teacher who was present to, who could apprehend, make sense of and respond skillfully to, our needs, strengths and experiences as learners. From the learner's point of view the moment is one of recognition, of feeling seen and understood, not just emotionally but cognitively, physically and even spiritually. It is a feeling of being safe, where one is drawn to risk because of the discoveries it might reveal; it is the excitement of discovering one's self in the context of the larger world, rather than the worry of losing one's self, in the process. As one learner, in describing her experience in a pottery-making class, put it:

So what [the teacher] did was to acknowledge [my] strength and [my] way of being, and [my] way of making meaning [with words]. She let me know there was another way [of making the pots] that we were just going to try. And that we were going to do it together, and that it was going to be hard for me. But she wanted me to extend myself and just see. She didn't say 'We can make this work another way' or 'Do it my way'. She let me put [my other] way of being aside and gave me a door into understanding that maybe there were other ways in me that weren't as accessible that were going to be helpful sometimes and that I could begin to know them.

Presence from the teacher's point of view is the experience of bringing one's whole self to full attention so as to perceive what is happening in the moment. Returning to the Latin roots of 'attend' and 'perceive' we find the kernel of the essence of presence. The Latin root of attend, *attendere*, is 'to stretch toward'. Definitions include: 'to listen or pay close attention to; to accompany; to remain ready to serve'. The Latin root of perceive, *percipere*, is 'to seize wholly, to see all the way through', and definitions include: 'to become aware of directly through the senses, especially to see or hear; to take notice of; observe, detect'; 'to become aware of in one's mind; achieve understanding of'. The image of an alert mind, ready to 'seize wholly', in concert with a compassionate heart that stretches toward, ready to serve, captures much of what we mean by presence.

We are aware, in attempting to define a word that touches upon awareness, perception and consciousness itself, that we are in the vast territory of the history of philosophy (e.g. Arendt, Descartes, Dewey, Noddings and Sartres), psychology (e.g. Freud, William James and Jung), religion (e.g. Buddha and Lao Tse) and art (e.g.

Rudolf Arnheim and Henry James). While the scope of this article makes it impossible to explore these ideas in depth, we think it important to cite the fundamental ideas that have fed directly into our own thinking about presence, beginning with John Dewey.

John Dewey (1933), in *How we think* used the adjective 'alive'. The teacher, he wrote, must 'give full time and attention to observation and interpretation of the pupils' intellectual reactions. [She] must be *alive* to all forms of bodily expression of mental condition...as well as sensitive to the meaning of all expression in words' (p. 275, emphasis added). By including attention, observation and interpretation, he addressed both attending and perceiving as described above. In *Art as experience* (Dewey, 1934) he further alluded to aliveness as 'an active and alert commerce with the world', in short, an aesthetic experience:

Experience in the degree that it *is* experience is heightened vitality. Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events. ... it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is aesthetic experience. (p. 19)

Such aliveness comes when one is fully in the moment, in the present: 'only when the past ceases to trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive' (p. 18).

The realm of art and the artist further deepens our understanding of presence, calling as it does upon a certain sensibility. American novelist Henry James (1884) wrote of the capacity to attend to reality with an 'immense sensibility'. One must write from experience, he declared and equated experience itself with that sensibility.

Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web, of the finest silken threads, suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative ... it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations. (p. 5)

Dewey (1934) wrote similarly of the power of the artist and art to transform the 'faintest hints of life' into perceived but unarticulated 'wholes' that are 'expansions of ourselves': '...the work of art', he wrote, 'operates to deepen and to raise to great clarity that sense of the enveloping undefined whole that accompanies every normal experience. This whole is then felt as an expansion of ourselves' (p. 195). Taken together, James and Dewey described a heightened sensibility that apprehends and perceives the world in such a way that the self is expanded and its connections to the world increased.

Echoing James and Dewey, contemporary poet and teacher educator Anne McCrary Sullivan (2000) drew connections between the artist, the teacher and the researcher, citing their mutual need to 'bring their whole organism' to their tasks. Quoting Stenhouse she wrote 'It is by virtue of being an artist that the teacher is a researcher'. She then continued:

The artist is a researcher with his or her whole organism, inquiring, testing with the body as well as the mind, sensing and seeing, responding and retesting—a multitude of functions performed simultaneously—registering complexity, then sorting, finding pattern, making meaning. (p. 226)

Maxine Greene (1973), borrowing the language of Merleau-Ponty, wrote of 'wide-awakeness'. Through the act of reflection the human being confronts and becomes aware of 'his relation to his surroundings, his manner of conducting himself with respect to things and other human beings, the changing perspectives through which the world presents itself to him'. Such awareness requires that a person 'achieve a state of wide-awakeness ... a plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements' (p. 162). She also evoked Henry David Thoreau (1863), whose conception of awakens and aliveness pushes towards something like enlightenment, when someone sees things fully as they are: 'To be awake is to be alive', he wrote. 'I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face' (p. 163)?

Other contemporary writers have turned to philosophies of religion in an attempt to grasp the elusive nature of presence. Robert Tremmel (1993) turned to the Buddhist idea of 'mindfulness'. 'Mindfulness, in its simplest terms', he wrote, 'means to pay attention to "right here, right now" and to invest the present moment with full awareness and concentration'. The notion of being 'right there' is echoed in many of the stories of presence we have heard, including one related by Ellen, a teacher and singer in a community chorus. In describing the director's ability to be present she said:

At 6:00 she's ready to go. She's right there, right there, right there. [She punctuates each word with her right index finger hitting the palm of her left hand.] She isn't at all imposing. She's just *right there* with the music and with us as a group.

Tremmel also drew a parallel between mindfulness and Donald Schön's notion of reflection-in-action. Tremmel pointed out that the mind of the reflective practitioner is, according to Schön,

the mind of the athlete, the jazz musician, or the poet (1983, pp. 53, 54), which is flexible and pliable. It is a mind that can attend to what is happening in the moment and respond directly, not by means of 'research based theory,' but rather with its 'repertoire of themes and examples,' 'transforming moves,' or 'exploratory probes' (1987, pp. 78, 79). It is, moreover, the mind that has the capacity to reach into the center of confusing situations, to see itself, and to shift the base of its operations or pull up stakes altogether and follow the flow of the action. (Tremmel, 1993, p. 438)

Mindfulness, like reflection, Tremmel said, is a 'smooth, free thinking way of observation' that demands that the practitioner 'pay attention' not only to what is going on with students, but inside the self.

Leonard Waks (1995) also referred to Buddhist philosophies when he wrote about 'emptiness' and the mind's ability to stay open to what is. The mind of the teacher is empty in that it is attached to nothing but is free to seeing everything 'as it is, here and now, without clinging or distortion. ... [teachers] have no need to reject, deny, dissociate, or project any aspect of themselves'. He also described this openness as a necessary condition for compassionate interaction. 'And because of this radical self-openness, they can also face and accept others. ... Thus, emptiness is the standpoint not merely for profound intellectual penetration of reality, but also for compassion and unconditional love' (pp. 94–95). Anthony Rud (1995), in the same volume,

studied what monastic practices might offer schools and teaching. Drawing upon the teaching of Henri Nouwen (1975), he explored the notion of ‘hospitality’.

Hospitality ... means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. ... Teaching therefore, asks first of all the creation of a space where students and teachers can enter into a fearless communication with each other ... . (Rud, 1995, p. 123)

A prerequisite state is ‘the achievement of a hospitality toward and knowledge of oneself’ so that one can listen fully to the other.

Max van Manen (1994) came at the concept of presence from a more integrative perspective, one clearly grounded in teaching. Borrowing from the Dutch (and, more broadly, European) notion of ‘pedagogy’, van Manen wrote about the particularly relational quality of being a teacher:

Pedagogy as a form of inquiry implies that one has a relational knowledge of children, that one ‘understands’ children and youths: how young people experience things, what they think about, how they look at the world, what they do, and, most importantly, how each child is a unique person. A teacher who does not understand the inner life of a child does not know who it is that he or she is teaching. Moreover the concept of pedagogy not only refers to this special knowledge it also includes an animating ethos. A pedagogue is an educator (teacher, counselor, administrator, etc.) who feels addressed by children, who understands children in a caring way, and who has a personal commitment and interest in children’s education and their growth toward mature adulthood. (p. 5)

Like van Manen (1994), several other writers have emphasized the relational nature of what we are calling presence. Nel Noddings (2003) is one. Noddings viewed presence as a fundamental feature of ‘care’, which she argued is an essential stance in teaching. In describing the relationship between a caring teacher and her students she chose the word ‘presence’, distinguishing it from the kind of connection found in more personal relationships: ‘I do not need to establish a lasting, time-consuming personal relationship with every student’, she wrote. ‘What I must do is to be totally and non-selectively present to the student—to each student—as he addresses me. The time interval may be brief but the encounter is total’ (p. 180).

Teacher educators Katherine Shultz (2003) and Lous Heshusius (1995) described a similar stance when they spoke of the power of listening. Schultz, who placed listening at the heart of what it means to teach, defined listening as ‘an active, relational, and interpretive process that is focused on making meaning’. As with other thinkers and practitioners mentioned here, she saw the teacher’s job as one of closely attending. Attending to students in this way, she wrote, ‘implies becoming deeply engaged in understanding what a person has to say through words, gesture, and action. Listening is fundamentally about being in relationship to an other and through this relationship supporting change or transformation’ (pp. 8–9). When writing about her own experience of listening, Heshusius (1995) captured much of what each of the aforementioned writers had described:

I feel quiet but very alive; completely attentive to the other. There is a sense of opening up. The self is forgotten; there is no ‘I’ with whom I am preoccupied or who is judging. I become something larger than myself – something that is, for that moment, undefined. (p. 118)

In our own experiences of presence we have noted a slow motion awareness and wide open acceptance of the learner that is free of judgment and filled with awe of his capacity to learn. There is also a feeling of passion, not just for the subject matter, but for the human endeavor of learning itself. There is energy and curiosity associated with this passion that keeps teachers alert and engaged with the learner and the learning, accompanied by a feeling of longing to connect with the learner and the learning in the sphere of questions that matter, not just to us personally but in the world; to connect with what is essentially human in us. Our attention is not only on the learner but also simultaneously on the group, the environment(s) in which they all work, the directions in which the individual and group might go next, the variegated terrain of the subject matter(s) at hand and the place and value of that subject matter in and to the larger society. Presence is no small thing.

### **Presence as connection to self**

As suggested by Greene (1973), Tremmel (1993) and Rud (1995), a key aspect of presence is being present to oneself. Teaching demands connecting with students and their learning, and the health of that connection is nurtured or jeopardized by the teacher's relationship to herself. For the purposes of this discussion we understand self as an evolving entity, continuously constructed and reconstructed in relationship to the contexts, experiences and people with which the self lives and functions (see Miller & Stiver, 1997; Damasio, 1999; Moore & Lemmon, 2001; Gilligan, 2003; Zaff & Hair, 2003; Cook-Sather, in press).<sup>4</sup> The process of knowing oneself is, of course, a never-ending process, especially as these aspects of self are 're-storied' (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Cook-Sather, in press), shift and evolve over time. Kegan (1982, 1994) noted that evolution of the self is a process of moving from 'embeddedness' (in our beliefs, prejudices, values, history, culture and feelings and the various contexts that give rise to these) to 'differentiation', where we can observe these beliefs, prejudices and so forth as objects, rather than being subject to them. A critical self-awareness is key to such growth (Dewey, 1938; Palmer, 1998; Agne, 1999; Hamachek, 1999; Lipka & Brinthaup, 1999; Zembylas, 2003). When we as teachers allow ourselves to be present both with and to students, such awareness can be accelerated, as students' responses to us are so often the windows to our own self-knowledge.

### *Risks of a divided self*

In our work as teacher educators we often encounter among new teachers a perceived split between themselves as 'teachers' and themselves as 'persons'. There is a perceived (and perhaps real) prohibition against the presence of one's personal self in the classroom (Nias, 1996). The 'emotional rules' (Zembylas, 2002) of school tell teachers who they are allowed and ought to be, and this often stands in tension with the personal self. Pre-tenured teachers in our programs, for example, often hold their 'real' selves in reserve until tenure is granted. They construct a teacher self, the image of whom, in their minds, their institutions expect them to be or society at large

expects a teacher 'should' be (Goodson & Cole, 1994). Fearful that their personal selves are not acceptable or appropriate, they try to be who they 'should' be and often lapse into a state of anxiety about this unfamiliar teacher self making a misstep at any moment. As Beijaard *et al.* (2004) noted:

What is found relevant to the profession, especially in light of the many education changes currently taking place, may conflict with what teachers personally desire and experience as good. Such a conflict can lead to friction in teachers' professional identity in cases in which the 'personal' and the 'professional' are too far removed from each other. (p. 109)

This distance between personal and professional selves can cause a tentativeness, beyond the tentativeness that naturally exists for new teachers, that undermines both their trust in themselves and, thereby, their students' trust in them. The existing values of the institution in which teachers must survive tend to have 'greater pragmatic value' than their own set of values, the values that comprise their moral and spiritual selves (Hargreaves, 1994; Moore *et al.*, 2002; Noddings, 2003). The pragmatics of acceptance by their institutions becomes paramount, as Smagorinsky *et al.* (2004) observed, and the teachers' goal becomes one of being 'judged proficient in terms of the values that govern the school' (p. 10), rather than bringing the depth and richness of their selves to the classroom.

When a teacher acts solely from an artificially constructed notion of who she should be, she becomes remote from herself and presence becomes difficult. There is a disconnection, a disintegration of self, that precludes bringing focused attention to bear. With this disintegration, there is a subsequent lack of what Parker Palmer (1998) called integrity. By integrity he means an integration of the self and the subsequent strength that results. A building has integrity when its elements fit together in a way that each part of the structure supports and reinforces the other parts, such that the building is sound, safe and can be trusted to sustain itself and those within it. Integration, wholeness, reliability and groundedness in a person all speak to what is required for a teacher to be able to trust herself and the actions which are an extension of that self (Nias, 1996; Palmer, 1998; Goldstein, 1999; Zembylas, 2003).

John Dewey (1938), in *Experience and education*, also referred to a divided self. When there is continuity and wholeness in one's life and learning, he argued, an individual passes from one situation to the next and 'does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world' (p. 44). In contrast, '[a] divided world, a world whose parts and aspects do not hang together, is at once a sign and a cause of a divided personality. When the splitting-up reaches a certain point we call the person insane' (p. 44). When there is a lack of continuity between a teacher's professional life and personal self such that a teacher refers to herself in opposing terms—'me as a teacher and me as a person'—the apparent lack of continuity between her worlds can become worrisome and her ability to be present is compromised.

One small example comes from one of our student teachers who was told by her cooperating teacher never to sit down. She needed, she was told, to 'loom' over her students in order to establish her authority. Not being a looming sort of person, the

student teacher felt split between her obligations to an expert's notion of teaching and her obligations to herself and what she believed was her obligation to her students.

When teachers' knowledge of themselves, their students and their professional skills do not align with the contexts in which they work, there is little energy or psychic space left for being present to the learner and his learning. Both teacher and students are then deprived of creative exchange and connection between themselves, subject matter and context. Talbert *et al.* (1993) pointed out that as teachers are called upon to align their instruction to state and national policies (No Child Left Behind and state and nationally mandated tests come to mind) 'classrooms [become] emotionally flat and teaching and learning processes are characterized by the routine presentation and consumption of facts' (p. 53), what Dewey referred to as routine versus intelligent activity.

### *The moral imperative of self*

While we focus here on connection to the internal sense of self, there is also a larger moral dimension to presence, which necessarily points to the self as connected to the larger society to which it is responsible. Andy Hargreaves (1994) noted the importance of rooting self-knowledge in 'conceptions of the good and the welfare of others':

When the search for the authentic self avoids becoming insular and self-enclosed, when it remains rooted in and connected to conceptions of the good, and the welfare of others, important moral benefits can be gained. In particular, the search for authenticity can enhance the development of personal integrity and fidelity when people want to pursue and clarify their social and moral ideals. In teaching, taking just such an interior turn towards self-development and greater authenticity can have extremely positive educational consequences when teachers are able to connect the personal and interpersonal satisfaction they have with their students and their colleagues to social and moral purposes of a broader nature and to the micropolitical realities of the organizations in which they operate. (p. 72)

Teaching must have an 'end-in-view' that is moral (Dewey, 1933, 1938), not only in terms of the immediate lessons being learned and taught but the ends to which education itself aspires. In Dewey's (1916) view, these ends are realized in a democratic society. Presence, in the end, is not neutral, nor is it bounded by the persons of teacher and student, but reaches toward and is grounded in such a moral imperative.

Ultimately, however, a teacher's effectiveness and authority are embedded in those relationships that she builds with her students. David Hawkins (2002) theorized the connection between authority and relationship as residing in the human experience of trust: '...the teacher is one who acquires authority through a compact of trust, in which the teacher seeks to extend the powers of the learner and promises only to abridge them transiently and to the end of extending them' (p. 9), to the good, we would add, of the child and the society in which he resides. As a teacher sustains his connection to self, he is able to bring his whole self to attend to the learning processes of his students by seeking to 'extend' their powers, helping them to construct their knowledge. In this pursuit he builds trust with his students, which forms the

foundation for his authority as a teacher, learner and human being committed to the development of compassionate hearts and critical minds in his students. In short, he becomes present to his students. In examining the teacher–student connection we reach the relational dimension of presence.

### **The relational dimension of presence**

José, a 12-year-old boy, passionate about acting and worried about mathematics, described his teacher, Samuel.

Samuel was a big actor, too. He, he totally like, he took time to rewrite the script of last year's play. ... We were always talking about acting and stuff. ... I wrote [to him] that I wanted, ... to work on drama and he said, 'If you do a good audition I promise you I'll give you a good part and I will work with you and you'll become a great actor'. And he didn't only focus on that, he focused on my math and he gave me all those tips and he wrote down the formulas on the sheet and he said you cut these out and you put 'em in your folder and tape them there, and just leave them there for whenever you need them, you can go look. And ... he helped and he ... stopped the problem [of math]. He stopped where I was and fixed it.

José's description of Samuel holds the image of a teacher 'seeking to extend' a student's learning. We see a teacher who taps a student's passion, understands the student's challenges and creates a relational context in which learning can occur. In turn, José felt safe, protected and guided. In José's description we can vividly see an I–Thou–It (teacher–student–subject matter)<sup>5</sup> relationship and an image of what it means for a teacher to be present to a student's experience of learning.

In this section we fill in this image by describing the qualities inherent in a teacher's capacity to be fully present in a relationship with her students. In essence, we describe a relational stance. Fundamentally, this relational stance can best be described as being psychologically 'connected'.

### *Dimensions of connection*

Over the past two decades relational psychologists have closely examined the concept of connectedness. A key aspect of connection is what Janet Surrey (1991) described as mutual empathy: "Being with" means "being seen" and "feeling seen" by the other and "seeing the other" and sensing the other "feeling seen," which is the experience of mutual empathy' (p. 55). Surrey's understanding of mutual empathy suggests that to be connected to another human being each person must be visible or 'seen' by the other and receive some sense that the other can see her. Hand in hand with mutual empathy is 'relationship authenticity', which she explained as 'the need to be seen and recognized for who one is and the need to see and understand the other with ongoing authenticity' (p. 61). In these interwoven concepts is the notion of vision or seeing. To be in connection with another human being a person needs to see and be seen by the other. The person needs to both recognize the other in all her complexity as well as sense that her self is also seen and accepted (Jordan, 1995; Miller & Stiver, 1997).

When bringing this notion of connectedness to the world of the classroom we begin to understand the qualities that contribute to a teacher's capacity to connect to her students. In studying the ways that connectedness shapes classroom life, Belenky *et al.* (1986) contributed to this understanding. They identified 'connected teaching' as a primary way that teachers come into relationship with students. They argued that 'connected teaching' means 'to enter into each student's perspective' (p. 227). In assuming a student's perspective the teacher is able to see the world as the student sees it. It is a state of inter-subjectivity, i.e. a state of 'attunement to, and responsiveness to the subjective inner experience of the other at both a cognitive and affective level' (Jordan, 1991, p. 82). In assuming such a stance, teachers assist students in making connections to their own lives, in order to construct their own knowledge. Belenky and colleagues likened teaching to midwifery, defining connected teaching as assisting 'students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating upon it' (p. 217).<sup>6</sup> Within this connected stance students are able to make meaning of their own experience.

Finally, Belenky *et al.* (1986) suggested that trust is at the heart of connected teaching. 'Connected teachers are believers. They trust their students' thinking and encourage them to expand on it' (p. 227). Indeed, contrary to the prevailing notion of this era that teachers should help students 'get it right', this kind of trust asks teachers to support, scaffold and help students build their own ideas.

Just as trust in self is central to a teacher's capacity to be present to herself, trust between teacher and student is fundamental to a teacher's capacity to be present to a student's experience. McDermott (1977) saw trust in the teacher-student relationship as 'a quality of the relations among people, as a product of the work they do to achieve a shared focus. Trust is achieved and managed through interaction' (p. 199). For McDermott, in order to create trust in a relationship, teachers and students need to engage in work together and create a common focus of interest, just as acting and mathematics became a shared focus for Samuel and José. This shared type of work shifts the teacher role from a 'giver' of knowledge that is received by the student to a 'collaborator' who works side by side with the student in the learning process. This kind of interpersonal trust engenders confidence in the student's capacity to trust herself as a learner, thinker and creator.<sup>7</sup>

Just as trust, empathy, authenticity and intersubjectivity are central to the state of connectedness, so is mutuality. To explain mutuality the parent-infant literature offers a useful paradigm. This research argues that the strength of the parent-infant relationship stems from the 'mutuality' or trusting reciprocity between infants and their caregivers. Tronick and Weinberg (1997) theorized a 'Mutual Regulation Model' that focused on the 'interactive nature of development'. In this model mutuality requires expression, reciprocal appreciation of intentions and active work together allowing the partners to help each other achieve their desires. Through the active work of mutuality, parents and infants co-create the meaning embedded in their joint experiences, the meaning of a cry, the joy of tickling or the worry of separation.

In the world of school the notion of mutuality can be understood as the ways in which teachers and students read and make meaning of each others' actions and

intentions. It is this kind of mutual meaning making that allows students to make their needs and desires known, that assists teachers in reading students' cues and invites both teachers and students to take action that facilitates the learning process. This can be as simple as an error correction or as complex as a discussion of race. In the process of mutuality both parties watch the other to see how their expressions and actions are received. Students wonder if the teacher can hear what they have to say. Is she working to understand them or is she looking for the response that she already has in her own mind? Will she be willing to entertain views that are different than her own? Is she able to see students whose life experiences differ significantly from hers? Our own research has shown that students watch the teacher's responses to their offerings quite closely in order to monitor the extent to which she is open to their experiences (Raider-Roth, 2005a,b). Similarly, teachers observe students to see if their (the teachers') actions support a student's capacity to learn, to make connections, to take a step forward. Processes such as student self-assessment and descriptive feedback assist teachers in honing this vision (Raider-Roth, 2005a,b; Rodgers, in press).

Nel Noddings (2003) addressed this notion of mutuality directly when she discussed the place of reciprocity in a caring teaching-learning relationship. She avered that the circle of care is only complete when there is student acknowledgement, 'response', 'delight' or 'growth' that the teacher can discern (p. 74). While this aspect of Noddings's theory has been controversial, the significance of her theoretical framework here is that the caring teaching-learning relationship requires a feedback loop, where teachers can take action, can watch how students respond and can be moved and changed by these responses, thereby shaping their next caring act.

#### *Disconnection: an opportunity for repair*

Interestingly enough, a key learning moment in the teacher-student relationship occurs when the connection falls apart. A teacher cannot humanly be present to all her students all the time (though we all may wish we could). It is important to ask what causes a teacher to fall out of connection with her students. What pulls her away from being present to their experiences and their learning? What are the consequences of this retreat? How does she re-enter after a disconnection? How does she notice that she has fallen out of connection at all?

Kayla, a first year high school Spanish teacher, recounted a recent episode in her classroom where she fell out of connection with her students. In some sense it was a common high school scene. Students were misbehaving, a few had not completed their homework, the disengaged few were distracting the rest and Kayla was furious. Kayla described how 'I felt like my classroom had spiraled out of control, the students had lost respect for me and I, in turn, was behaving like I had lost respect for them'. The next day, after considering her options, she moved the chairs and desks from line formation to a circle and began a conversation with her students. Her students were stunned to be included in a conversation about how the structure and climate of the class needed to be changed. They were subsequently surprised to have their ideas included in the changes Kayla made. As Kayla implemented the changes that she and

the students co-constructed, the climate of the class shifted dramatically. 'We still struggle every now and then', Kayla reflected, 'but the respect that we have gained for each other has completely changed the classroom environment'. As Kayla and the students found the language to re-connect, the nature of their relationship deepened, accompanied by the essential quality of respect that emerges from this kind of mutual attentiveness (Raider-Roth, 2005b).

Another example comes from Rick, a student teacher of social studies, writing about a presentation he had given on the Civil War.

In the midst of a short presentation, I felt all the energy drain out of the subject, myself, and the students. Afterward, my [pre-service teaching partner] said, before I could comment, that it went well. I think his part went well, but I think mine went wrong somehow. It went wrong, I think, because I had no idea what the students were thinking. I just *felt* that the whole moment, well, it sucked.

This feeling of disconnection, which Rick characterized as a draining of energy from himself, his students and the subject matter, led him to change his practice slightly the following week. Although he still lectured, he also took time to inquire into his students' understanding.

Last Friday I gave a lecture. It was a power point presentation (my first), so it was a little jazzier than a straight talk, but I still needed to know what they were getting from it. What I did was warn them beforehand that I was going to inquire about their learning along the way. I did it a couple of times. Unfortunately, we were really pressed for time, so I did not get as much feedback as I would have liked. But I felt good about the attempt, and I sensed that they at least knew I was serious about their being able to understand the material.

Rick's feeling of not being present to his students' learning prompted him to devise a strategy to stay connected with it (in this case checking in with them along the way). Later he asked for feedback from at least one student on how much she retained. While he may not yet have devised the best way to deliver the material, he is devising ways of staying connected to students and their learning, which, in turn, is taking him down the road to more effective teaching strategies.

Psychological theory and research can again be useful in understanding the meaning and power inherent in the moments of disconnection like these that inevitably occur between a teacher and his students. Again, research on the parent-infant relationship offers a useful paradigm. The Mutual Regulation Model suggests that these moments of disconnection or asynchrony offer an important opportunity for 'reparation'. Reparation means the ability of the parent and the infant to 'fix' or repair an interaction in which the infant's cues have been misread. A parent may not be sure what is ailing his wailing baby. The infant may not understand a parent's furrowed brow. With consistent efforts at repair, parents and infants learn the signals that help them return to a state of synchrony. As infants become more masterful in reading their parents' cues and expressing their needs in an effective manner, they learn that they are effective communicators and that their caregivers are dependable. In discussing Tronick and Weinberg's work (1997), Gilligan (2003) commented,

...trust grows when babies and mothers establish that they can find each other after inevitable moments of losing touch. It is not the goodness of the mother or relationship

*per se* that is the basis of trust; it is the ability of the mother (or father or caretaker) and baby together to repair the breaks in relationship that builds a safe house for love. (p. 40)

Gilligan helps us understand that in the teaching–learning relationship ‘moments of losing touch’ are inevitable and important. As the teacher and student learn what it takes to reconnect, they build the foundation of trust in their relationship. This foundation holds the potential for love. In the classroom this would mean both student and teacher bringing the whole of themselves, wide open, to the endeavor of teaching and learning.

These moments of asynchrony also offer both the teacher and students opportunities to develop communication strategies that can help them regain their connection, as was the case with Kayla and Rick and their students. By doing so, students learn that they are effective communicators and that their teachers are responsive. Similarly, teachers can view moments of asynchrony as ‘teachable moments’. Some might wonder if this kind of repair is as possible at the high school or middle school level, where departmentalization is common and students see teachers for short periods during the day, as it is at the elementary level, where teachers have more time with their students. Yet, when we look at stories from high school teachers such as Rick and Kayla they tell us that their efforts at reconnection changed everything, both in terms of their relationship with their students as well as their capacity to teach. Their stories resonate with current research on the centrality of the teacher–student relationship in students’ experiences of schooling, at both the elementary and high school levels (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Roeser *et al.*, 2000).

How can teachers help students develop adaptive communication strategies to let teachers know when they perceive a disconnection? Indeed, students quickly create less than healthy strategies, such as acting out or tuning out when they perceive that their teacher does not care about their work or does not understand their struggles. It is from this vantage point that we can see the importance of opportunities for student feedback, self-reflection and self-assessment that is communicated to the teacher and to which the teacher responds (Raider-Roth, 2004, 2005a,b; Rodgers, *in press*).

While the Mutual Regulation Model helps us understand the inevitability and usefulness of disconnections and the importance of repair, we must still examine how teachers recognize the disconnections when they occur and how they come to understand the reasons that they disconnect from their students. Teachers like Rick show us that in order to engage with their students they must stay connected with themselves and recognize the parts of themselves that can short-circuit the connection, from insecurity with the subject matter to lack of awareness of what students know. Here we return to self and the importance of teachers’ presence to themselves as teachers and learners.

A key aspect of being present to students’ experience means assuming a connected stance. In this stance students must have a sense that their teachers can see them and their learning, their strengths and their weaknesses. Not only do they see but they also accept what they see without judging it as good or bad. It is mutuality that strengthens the vision. When students sense that they have really got to know their teacher, that their teacher allows herself to be known, the relationship becomes real. It is the

authenticity of the relationship that permits students and teachers to see each other and know that what is being shared is real. In authentic connection teachers and students can bring their feelings, experiences, memories and hopes to one another. From this standpoint students can know that teachers are ready and available to participate in the learning enterprise with them. They know that they will go on the journey well accompanied. They know that they can extend themselves to the very edges of their learning, to the borders of their known world, because they know that someone will be there to meet them. In short, a teacher who is ‘present’ is a real learning partner.

### **The pedagogical connection**

Like the leaves and branches of a tree, a teacher’s pedagogy is the most visible aspect of presence. It includes interactions between the teacher and her students, among students, and between the students and the subject matter. In this third dimension of presence the teacher pays close attention to the subject matter and her students’ engagement with it. She is attending to the learning process itself, observing students at work, analyzing what she sees and responding with what Dewey referred to as ‘intelligent action’. This process of observation, analysis and intelligent response embodies the reflective process of teaching (Rodgers, 2002a,b). If the connection between the teacher and any of these three areas is weak, the ability to be present to students is compromised. It is, in fact, the process of reflection in action, in the moment, that embodies the notion of presence (Rodgers, 2002b). In order for the teacher to be free to be present to learning, it is necessary to have a deep knowledge of the subject matter, children and learning and a repertoire of pedagogical skills (from classroom management to lesson planning to curriculum design to design and execution of appropriate activities). Mastery of any of these does not precede presence nor vice versa. Instead, there is a dialectical relationship between them. The more experience, coupled with reflection, a teacher has, the greater is her capacity for presence. We examine the impact of knowledge of subject matter, children and learning and pedagogical skills below.

#### *Subject matter knowledge*

Preparation is knowing the subject matter—how to set it up, and set activities that will do the kind of things I want people to do and allow me to see learning in all of that so ... if I have a sense that that’s in play, then I go in and I just let it happen. I relax and open and it doesn’t ever work the way I planned it—and that’s fine. I know this stuff. I want to [be able] to respond to the moment and what everybody is doing. And I need to be present.

Jack, a veteran teacher and teacher educator, here identifies the critical piece of deep subject matter knowledge and preparedness in order to be fully present. Perhaps the most eloquent advocate of the importance of deep subject matter knowledge has been educational philosopher David Hawkins (2000, 2002). Hawkins wrote that to know one’s subject matter deeply (be it mathematics, chemistry or Shakespeare) is, for a teacher, more than simply knowing the polished surfaces of a field of study—knowing not just the Pythagorean theorem but how Pythagoras might have come to that

understanding. Many a teacher is knowledgeable of his or her subject matter without necessarily being able to decompress it in a way that makes it accessible to their students. Hawkins (2000) lamented '[academicians] pass by the genuinely elementary aspects of subject matter ...' (p. 59). By this he meant that teachers must be able to reorganize subject matter, i.e. to forget for a moment the ordered, synthetic, textbook-like logic of it and reconstruct 'the process and order in which it has been evolved and, more importantly, form the diverse sorts of process and order by which it might be evolved again in the minds of individual learners' (pp. 98–99). Imagining these 'diverse sorts of order', a teacher can more easily conceive of the various potential entry points to the subject matter for learners. It is a kind of meta-knowledge: knowing how the finished and orderly knowledge that one has might be variously constructed by the naive mind. Hawkins called this knowledge 'elementary'. It also includes an awareness of how the domain of one's subject connects to other subject areas and how those subjects might provide still other ports of entry.

In terms of subject matter and presence we again turn to Dewey (1933), who explained how being at home in one's subject frees the teacher's attention to be 'alive' to the students and their learning.

*The teacher must have his mind free to observe the mental responses and movement of the student. ... The problem of the pupils is found in the subject matter; the problem of teachers is what the minds of pupils are doing with the subject matter. Unless the teacher's mind has mastered the subject matter in advance, unless it is thoroughly at home in it, using it unconsciously without need of express thought, he will not be free to give full time and attention to observation and interpretation of the pupils' intellectual reactions. The teacher must be alive to all forms of bodily expression of mental condition—to puzzlement, boredom, mastery, the dawn of an idea, feigned attention, tendency to show off, to dominate discussion because of egotism, etc.—as well as sensitive to the meaning of all expression in words. He must be aware not only of their meaning, but of their meaning as indicative of the state of mind of the pupil, his degree of observation and comprehension. (p. 275, original emphasis)*

Complete mastery of subject matter is, of course, never fully achieved, but a knowledge that is deep enough to free the mind of the teacher from preoccupation with it and that is able to connect students to an appropriate point of entry is a prerequisite for presence.

### *Knowledge of children, learning, and pedagogical skills*

In addition to knowledge of subject matter, presence is predicated on the teacher's ability to translate the aforementioned points of entry into curriculum, activities and learning environments and to link these to the hearts, minds and abilities of children.

[The] principle concern [here] is that important subject matter be introduced to students as a challenge to their own investigative curiosity and art, with enough diversity of ways into that subject matter to match that of the students' talents and potential interests, their different strengths and trajectories of curiosity. (Hawkins, 2000, p. 128)

The trick is that no textbook can possibly determine ahead of time this trajectory for any one child, much less a group of them. While texts can serve as resources,

they are not determinants of learning. It is the children and their questions, comments, actions and puzzlements that are the guides to teaching, that give the teacher the necessary clues about when and how and how much to intervene. Being present to them and their sense making is essential. In Duckworth's (1987) words, the teacher must 'understand the child's understanding' (p. 85). To be able to understand children and their learning, i.e. how they make sense of the world around them is, Hawkins (2002) argued, the art of diagnosis. He wrote 'The function of the teacher, then, is to respond diagnostically and helpfully to a child's behavior' (p. 55). If children are sitting passively in rows listening quietly to the teacher talk '[she] won't get very much information about them, [she] won't be a very good diagnostician of what they need. Not being a good diagnostician, [she] will be a poor teacher' (p. 55).

Once students are engaged with the subject matter there remains the problem of sustaining that engagement. If the first step is diagnosis, then the next is responding to and thereby nurturing students' learning according to that diagnosis. This process of observation, diagnosis and compassionate response is at the heart of presence. It is iterative and ongoing, and the essence of reflective teaching. Diagnoses that are incorrect can be as useful and important as those that are accurate. Each gives information about what students know and do not know, need and do not need. Ideally, a response should aim at keeping the students invested in their inquiry by helping them to uncover, rather than cover, the nature of the phenomenon in which they are involved (Duckworth, 1987; Hawkins, 2002).

The key here is that in order to be able to be present to students' learning, the teacher needs to be free to observe. This suggests that students must be involved in experiences that will reveal their learning. Experiences that offer students opportunities to experiment, make mistakes, journey down paths of knowledge of their choice, interact with experts (including teachers) who will entertain their questions in dialogue with them will reveal learning. Students' learning is revealed in their doing and the teacher needs to be free from other preoccupations in order to see clearly.

The teacher must also be free from her own mental chatter. As Jack, the veteran teacher and teacher educator, put it, what causes him to become not present is this mental noise.

It's [my] thoughts. In teaching it happens when I'm doing a new course—totally new—when I'm not sure what is going to happen next and how long it's going to last and all of that. I think for beginning teachers it's there all the time; they can't be present because they're not sure about what they're doing so they have to be with [attentive to] the content. If they design [the lesson] in ways that they're not on center stage it helps a lot.

Evident in Jack's words is the understanding that the kind of 'emptiness' that Waks (1995) referred to is only possible when the self is free from preoccupation.

The learning that a teacher is able to observe, along with her ability to correctly diagnose what is understood and needed, will suggest a response. As a teacher gains skill and experience and collects strategies that work, her ability to respond grows appropriately. Like a skilled pianist whose fingers know just where to go in order to produce a particular sound or harmony, a teacher who is present deftly employs a

strategy that rings true for each learner. Thus, presence, along with subject matter knowledge, also demands knowledge of child development, the ability to design and manage learning activities that will reveal learning, the ability to correctly diagnose this learning and, finally, a collection of adequate responses; the right question, piece of information, activity or other intervention that will allow a child to take his or her own best next step.

It is important to note that the teacher is always simultaneously attending to the individual and the group. Her attention is both tightly focused and cast like a net over the group, reading individuals and at the same time sensing the energy and understanding of the class as a whole. The ability to listen and stay in tune with the group is, in fact, honed by deep knowledge of the individual. Schultz (2003) suggested that teachers'

focus on the particularity of the individual child ... also provides a way for teachers to listen to the whole class and each child's possibility within the larger group. Knowledge of a single child can be the basis for understanding and teaching a class. (p. 36)

Clearly, presence requires flexibility and demands a context that supports responsive teaching. Such a context trusts teachers' ability to diagnose the needs of the individual and the group, to design curriculum according to those needs and to implement that curriculum skillfully and creatively. It also provides the resources (money, time and materials) with which to do so. Sadly, we recognize the rarity of such contexts and the barriers that oblivious or hostile contexts place in the path of teacher presence. The role that context plays cannot be ignored.

### *Context*

Talbert *et al.* (1993) defined 'context' as 'any of the diverse and multiple environments or conditions that intersect with the work of teachers and teaching—such as the school, subject area, department, district, higher education, business alliance, professional networks, state policies, community demographics' (p. 46). They note that context 'matters fundamentally to conceptions of teaching that assume an active role for students and their teachers in the construction of knowledge' (p. 46). The confluence of teacher, students, subject matter and the multiple contexts in which they interact paints an exceedingly complex picture. It is rare that a classroom represents a perfect synergy of all of these factors. Teachers usually work within the confines of the classroom, hoping for a harmony within that semi-controllable context.

McDermott (1977) argued that the context in which the teaching–learning relationship occurs is pivotal for the development and growth of this relationship. What is true between student and teacher also needs to exist between teachers and the environment in which they work. In this case we can speak of connectedness between the context and its teachers and students and, therefore, the school's presence to their experiences. McDermott wrote,

I am suggesting ... that in contexts that offer teachers and students enough resources to work together to establish a trusting environment, children will have sufficient time and

energy to devote themselves to the intellectual tasks set before them. In other words, trusting relations are framed by the contexts in which people are asked to relate and where trusting relations occur, learning is a possibility. (p. 199)

Extrapolating from McDermott's (1977) argument, we suggest that relationally healthy teaching–learning contexts are essential to teachers' capacity to be present to their students' learning. This is not to say that presence cannot exist in untrusting institutions; it is often found behind closed doors in isolation, in protected spaces (Lortie, 1975; Johnson, 1987; Rosenholtz, 1989). Over time this underground and hidden stance takes a toll on the teacher, often leading to teacher burnout (Rosenholtz, 1989).

The forces that militate against presence are daunting. These include: a national and state level push to 'cover' set amounts of material within predetermined time frames at each grade level, causing teachers to 'cover' material regardless of whether students learn it; under-qualified teachers teaching outside their subject areas severely limiting how present teachers can be to the sense that children are making; a lack of awareness on the part of teachers of the assumptions they make about the children they teach; unequal funding of schools across racial and class divides (Oakes, 2004) that further divert teachers' focus and energy; overcrowded classrooms, that hinder a teacher's deep knowledge of individual learners. These and other contextual factors pull teachers' attention away from attending to the learner and the learning and the end-in-view of a more educated and just society.

We began this article by saying that today's imperatives for standardized achievement take us further and further from a complicated notion of what it means to teach. This is the context, the environment, in which teachers are trying to make possible the kind of connected teaching we talk about. Many of them, even before they are out of their student teaching experiences, have already resigned themselves to stunted teaching. They see the imperatives of the local and national contexts in which they work as too strong to fight and so they slip into covering rather than teaching, going along with rather than creating. Johanna Hadden (2000), a teacher writing in the *Harvard Educational Review*, put it this way:

I, like many teachers, entered the field of education with high ideals and a firm commitment to educating. Also, like many teachers, I found myself on an endless treadmill of training students to unquestioningly accept overt and hidden measures of control. In my case, the treadmill ended when I realized that I had been putting the interests of the institution ahead of the interests of my students. (p. 535)

Presence may live but it cannot thrive in a hostile environment. The same trust and deep knowing that are necessary for presence to live between a teacher and her students are also necessary between and among teachers and principals, parents, school boards and even presidents, who make policy. Teachers are aware of those things that compromise presence in the classroom: policies that link their salaries and student diplomas to test scores, that mandate a 'one size fits all' mode of professional development and that reduce teachers' expertise and wisdom to a checklist of behaviors. None of these policies communicate trust in teachers. They are the toxins that poison the air and pollute the ground in which presence grows.

## Conclusion

We have spoken here of what it means to be present as a teacher, to be wide awake to one's self, to one's students and to their learning in such a way that that learning is served through skillful and compassionate analysis and access to both subject matter knowledge and pedagogical strategies. We have suggested that trust is essential to presence. Teachers need to know and to trust themselves and they also need to know and trust their students and the contexts in which they work. Equally important, students need to know and trust themselves and their teachers, as well as the schools in which they learn. For teachers, this knowledge and trust are created every day by staying connected to themselves, their students, their students' learning and their communities. The connection is created: through slowing down to observe students' interactions with the subject matter, rather than racing to cover it; through observing one's own reactions to students and their learning; through dialogue with students, their parents, colleagues and community members.

If we want teachers to create classrooms that are, in Gilligan's (2003) words, 'safe houses for love', then we need to speak out loud about it and not be embarrassed by the non-technical-rational (Schön, 1983) nature of presence. Likewise, schools need to be safe houses for love, not only for the sake of the children they temporarily house, but also for the teachers who are their long-term residents.

We began this article with a quote by Martin Buber (1970): 'The real filled present exists only in so far as actual presentness, meeting and relation exist'. To be present is to come into relation, into connection, with students, their learning, subject matter and oneself. Presentness, he theorized, arises when the '*Thou* becomes present', when one comes to see the other and allows one's self to be seen. This kind of seeing is an act of love. Presence is no less than this. Like love, presence offers us a moral imperative, a psychological stance and an intellectual trajectory that can root the world of teaching and learning in its essential purpose, the creation of a just and democratic society.

## Notes

1. Empirical work is beginning. Katherine Schultz's (2003) work with listening is one example.
2. All quotes and stories of teachers and students are used with their permission.
3. They were instructed to recall experiences of presence that they then related as short 'recollections' or stories. This is a practice developed by Patricia F. Carini and her colleagues at the Prospect Archives and Center for Education and Research, in North Bennington, VT (see Himley, 2002). The teachers who participated in the group were members of the New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Study Group loosely affiliated with the Prospect Center in North Bennington, VT.
4. It is not the purpose of this paper to explore the various conceptions of self. Such a discussion would necessarily span the fields of psychology, religion and philosophy and is beyond the scope of this discussion.
5. David Hawkins (2002), from his essay 'I, thou, and it' where 'I' represents the teacher, 'thou' the student and 'it' the subject matter in which both are engaged. Hawkins' essay has provided both authors of this article with a fundamental framework for understanding the world of teaching and learning.

6. While Belenky *et al.* applied their theory to female teachers, we believe that this notion of connectedness is equally key for male and female teachers. Indeed, current research on boys' development and male connections to boys supports this approach (see Pollack, 1998, 2000; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Chu, 2000; Gilligan, 2003; Raider-Roth, 2003).
7. As this article focuses on the teacher's experience of the teacher-student relationship, we look at the teacher's experience of trusting herself and the trust necessary for the teacher-student relationship. For a more detailed discussion of students' trust of self and the interconnections to the teacher-student relationship see Raider-Roth (2005a,b).

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