

Developing Caring Dispositions in Preservice Teachers

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Abstract

The researchers stress the importance of developing caring as a necessary disposition for working with children. According to Noddings (1992) and Mayeroff (1971) caring is developing the other person and helping him/her to grow or to actualize himself /herself. The four levels of caring that they pointed to are: experiencing caring, practicing caring, initiating and sustaining caring relationships, and continuing caring reflections and refinements (Freeman, p.161). To Mayeroff (1971), the necessary characteristics that a person must possess in order to care are: knowing the recipient, patience, honesty, trust, humility, hope, courage, alternative rhythms (alternatives in assessment and the methods of teaching). Adopting Noddings model (1992) of four components of caring, we assessed how our candidates **model** caring, show caring through **dialogue**, how they **practice** caring and have **confirmed** caring. In our pilot project, 35 candidates were involved and in the follow up project 117 candidates. The assignment on caring showed that the candidates were able to reflect on their caring experiences and on the necessity of developing caring dispositions in teachers and students. The cooperating teachers were pleased with the caring attitude demonstrated by the candidates and gave recommendations for the further refinement of their caring dispositions.

Researchers such as Mayeroff (1971), Noddings (1991), Freedman et. al. (2000), Rice (2001), and White (2001) stress the importance of developing caring as a necessary disposition for working with children. For Freeman et. al. (2000), “caring comes alive when students see, hear, feel, and then reflect on child and teacher functioning in the classroom”. (p.164)

Rice (2001) stressed the two levels of care on which the caring teachers operate. Those two levels are: caring for others and caring for self and others. The teachers taking part in this research manifested their caring by considering how the decisions that they are making will affect both themselves and others.

Research accomplished by Freeman et al. (2000) at the University of South Carolina developed a framework promoting a variety of experiences permitting students to develop the dispositions and skills to interact with children and families in nurturing and responsive ways (Freeman, p.161)

Four levels of caring that they pointed to are:

- (1).experiencing caring
- (2).practicing caring,
- (3).initiating and sustaining caring relationships, and
- (4).continuing caring reflections and refinements.

Caring is developing the other person and helping him/her to grow or to actualize himself /herself. (Noddings, 1992; Mayeroff, 1971).

Referring to the Developmentally Appropriate Practice, we can say that caring is helping another person to grow in four domains: physical, cognitive, emotional, and social. Rice (2001) also emphasized, “A teacher may be perceived to know everything about the subject he or she teaches, but if he or she does not act in a caring manner, students in that teacher’s classroom may report learning less from that teacher” (p.105).

The important factors influencing children’s learning are a sense of belonging and students’ perception to be caring (Rice, 2001).

To Mayeroff (1971), the necessary characteristics that a person must possess in order to care are: Knowing the recipient, Patience, Honesty, Trust, Humility, Hope, Courage and Alternative rhythms (alternatives in assessment and the methods of teaching).

A study by Collison, Killeavy, and Stephenson (1999) indicates that caring may have different characteristics in different countries. For example, in the United Kingdom recent National Curriculum promotes teacher responsibility for the spiritual, moral, and cultural development of their students; however, "the focus of teacher education and evaluation is almost exclusively on teacher competency in subject knowledge and skills. The caring side of teaching is no longer viewed as consistent with effectiveness"(p.352). In Ireland, where religion plays an important role in education, honesty, fairness, caring for others, tolerance, independence of thought, autonomy of individual, cooperation, and self-respect are valued by the teachers.

Lin (2001) stresses the relationship between caring and multicultural education practice in USA. For her, "multicultural education arises from an ethical purpose to care for and teach all children. Teachers who hold a moral commitment to caring students in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity see their contribution to societal equity in their efforts to create an educational system that places the academic, emotional, and social needs of children at the center of learning" (p. 108). In her understanding, caring is more fundamental than justice, fairness, and equity because when people sincerely care about others, they find ways to treat them justly, fairly, and equitably" (p.109).

Rationale

According to Noddings (1992), "A caring relation in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings—a carer and a recipient of care or cared for. In order for the relation to be properly caring, both parties must contribute to it in a characteristic way. Caring is a state of consciousness characterized by engrossment and motivational displacement" (p.15)

We are trying to develop in our candidate's the ability to care for children, colleagues, other professionals, parents, and the community. Adopting Noddings model (1992) of four components of caring, we will be assessing how our candidates **model** caring, show caring through **dialogue**, how they **practice** caring and have **confirmation** of caring. In order to understand these four components of caring, we are breaking them down

applying Mayeroff's (1971) eight necessary characteristics that a person must possess in order to care:

- (1) Knowing the recipient, (2) Patience, (3) Honesty, (4) Trust, (5) Humility, (6) Hope, (7) Courage, (8) Alternative rhythms (alternatives in assessment and methods of teaching).

In our research, those components are related to the candidate and cooperating teachers' evaluations in developing a caring attitude. Another avenue is to look at the recipients of care – the children being in care of the candidates.

This aspect is the most difficult since it would involve children's perspectives and an interview with all the children our candidates work with. For the purpose of this research we rely solely on the option of the cooperating teachers observing and working with our candidates and the college supervisors and their observations of how candidates manifest caring.

Method

There are few steps in developing and assessing our preservice teachers development of caring dispositions.

First, we as faculty are modeling, dialoguing, practicing and confirming caring through advising of students, scheduling meetings as needed, guiding students through college orientations and counseling, interacting with the students in the classroom, encouraging them to ask questions, helping them with their research projects and the preparation of presentations, as well as helping them in the preparation of an educational portfolio encouraging students to investigate, develop, and articulate care, as we discuss their experiences with and through caring.

Second, we are dialoging/reflecting on caring in our courses. For example, when we planned our curriculum for teaching social studies in early childhood, we decided that

one of the characteristics that we must try to develop in our students who are aiming to become educators will be caring.

We also asked our students to reflect on their own attitudes and experiences of caring. We asked students to complete the following questionnaire:

Third, we are helping our students to show their caring in the school setting by monitoring and guiding their development of caring attitudes. The cooperating teachers are asked to comment on our students' caring disposition using the previously prepared questionnaire.

Participants

The pilot project was conducted in a small college located in the eastern-central part of Ohio with 34 candidates. The candidates had their practicum in the different schools of their choice. Their duties included writing journals from observations, tutoring children, helping with the office duties, in some cases taking over part of the class.

Next, we repeated the same procedure with the larger group of 117 candidates at University also located in Ohio (just one hour from each other).

Procedure

First, we sent a questionnaire with our candidates Fall (senior year) term 150hrs of practicum required in the College and 50 hrs at the University. In their Spring semester, they all student teach for 300 hours. In the early childhood program they had two placements each five weeks. It involved working with preschool children in the first five weeks and with K-3 students in the second five weeks.

The questionnaire was distributed to the cooperating teachers from the field and analyzed with the students. Recommendations were given to each student.

Results

Pilot project (College)

Out of the 35 questionnaires sent to the schools, 14 were completed and returned. Out of those 14, one teacher refused to complete it even when the student asked several times, one teacher commented that she saw our students in too short a period of time to comment on her attitude.

Some of the teachers just use the Pathwise domains approach using check marks, some just qualitative, narrative comments, and some both.

Second setting (University)

Out of 117 questionnaires 72 were completed and returned.

We did not notice differences in the way the cooperating teachers described candidates in one setting or another.

Teachers' Comments from the setting number 1 (pilot project/College)

The comments were helpful in the way that the teachers thought what the students should improve. For example:

“(he) seems to care about the students but was a little timid.

He was trying to learn about the students, but did not set a great deal of contact with the students. Need work on explaining some ideas to the students.

Listens to the students, but needs to allow more time for student response.

He seemed uncomfortable with the material and didn't come across clear verbally.”

Other narrative comments focused on the strengths of the students.

For example:

” During the limited time that (name of the student) has been with us she has demonstrated caring through these 4 components/ 8 characteristics on a constant basis. I believe that she is on the right track and will continue to make progress as she continues with her education. She is off to a good start.”

Or;” (name of the student) lets the children know she is available at all the times and immediately responds. She speaks to the children in a caring manner.”

Or:” (name of the student) talks to my students whenever possible to try to get to know them better. She has worked very patiently and very well with several students who have great difficulty counting money. She listened to small reading groups helping them with word attack skills and offering different strategies to help them.”

Or;” She taught a lesson, read books, and involved the class in a culminating art activity. The children liked her and responded to her discussion. The lesson was timed within an appropriate length of time. She encouraged the gifted as well as those struggling.

Hung up all projects on bulletin board showing that all children’s work was valued.

Or;” She asked questions about students, backgrounds and abilities. Had good rapport with students. Treated students with fairness.”

Or :”She walked around helping students when they asked questions. She asked about different students. She talks with them and they tell her about themselves. She helps individual students. She taught a spelling lesson and was willing to teach anything asked her. She checked students’ work and tried to help them. When asked to speak louder she worked it out. She tried to find a student’s weakness and help him/her to do better.”

Or:” She helped students with their word-seeking, struggling students and she did a nice job. She promotes fairness as much as she can. She was consistent with one- on- one help.

Or:”. She was able to assist students and to try various methods to keep teaching until understanding occurred.”

Setting number 2 (University):

The comments were helpful in the way that the teachers thought what the students should improve.

For example:

“she was doing a coin lesson (too difficult) she must adjust expectations”

“She needs to remember that she’s the teacher not their best friend. Then she will find easier to handle the classroom better in the management area”

“She is working on what works and what does not”(Alternative Rhythms)

“She is continually asking for confirmation on whether or not she is on the right track”(Humility)

Other narrative comments focused on the strengths of the students.

For example:

“I was absent and therefore she took over my plans”(Courage)

”waits for students to process information she has given them and watches to see their response.”

Or ”sensitive to the various needs of students in my class“

Or: ”very accepting and adapts to various abilities, needs.”

Or; ”always saw the best of all students. The children felt they could trust her and take risks.”

Or. ”treats each child like a unique individual”

Or : ”modifies to meet needs of students.”

Or. “shows patience and understanding of the children’s needs as she models lessons and behaviors.”

Or: ”encourages students to do their best.”

“She always made positive comments to the students”

“ She taught math lesson and was always opened to suggestion”

Many teachers used Praxis III domains and pointed to the characteristics that have been already developed such as : becoming familiar with relevant aspects of students’ background knowledge and experiences (A1), creating a climate that promotes fairness (B1), establishing and maintaining rapport with students (B2), monitoring students’ understanding of content through a variety of means, providing feedback to students to assist learning , and adjusting learning activities as the situation demands (C4), using instructional time effectively (C5), making content comprehensible to students (C2), demonstrating a sense of efficacy (D2).

One skill such as “communicating with parents or guardians about student learning’ (D4) may not be met until they will have an opportunity of participating in the parent –teacher conference or doing student teaching.

Discussion

The assignment (reflective questionnaire on caring) showed that the candidates were able to reflect on their caring experiences and on the necessity of developing caring dispositions in teachers and students. In their opinion caring means listening, giving feedback, smiling, sharing yourself with others, helping, giving positive reinforcement, getting down on a child's level and interacting. They noted that caring is important because it makes one a stronger person. Some students commented that they felt cared for through their friends, without whom they would be lost. In most cases, mothers and grandmothers and /or baby-sitters were considered their primary caregivers.

As the secondary caregivers, these students identified their schoolteachers and their fathers. In some cases fathers demonstrated caring more than mothers. For those students, people who care always put them first and respect their decisions. For the question about caring for someone, many students talked about their grandparents in the nursing home. Some spoke of spending time visiting them, taking them shopping, cleaning their homes, and working in their gardens. Many babysat or were taking care of younger brothers and sisters. They all concluded that taking care of someone else makes one feel good and that caring is helping each other. Many students mentioned that they presently feel that their college faculty cares about them, especially their individual advisors. They also pointed out that parents and grandparents show their caring, through financial support and through interests that they show in their student's life. Friends also experience care especially, in particular, through the relationship of a sorority sister.

The cooperating teachers where pleased with the caring attitude demonstrated by the candidates and gave recommendations for the further refinement of their caring dispositions.

Since one of the most important dispositions is caring, it should be developed in the preservice teacher's and it should be emphasized in the teacher's preparation program as one of the major goals.

Recommendation

Each year our candidates should be introduced to the concept of a caring teacher in their first year, when they are taking Foundation of Education class. Each year they should reflect on their caring practice and dispositions. This process should be reinforced every year with new assignments.

For example, the course of "Teaching Social Studies to Young Children" and the similar classes should have a component of the reflective assessment of caring.

This process of developing caring should continue for four or five years into the program. The college instructors should collect all questionnaires as sent from the cooperating teachers to the Department and distribute them to the advisors.

Each year the advisor should analyze questionnaires, and the recommendations and expectations should be communicated to the candidates.

All cooperating teachers should be trained using Practice III to ensure reliability of the research tool (questionnaire).

As faculty model, discuss, practice and help candidates to understand the concept of caring the candidates should be asked, if possible, teach a unit on caring. Each year seniors leaving college should be asked questions helping them to reflect on the program's strength and weaknesses and their own caring dispositions.

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and veteran science educators. *Science and Children*. (March), 35-39.

Appendix 1

Developing a caring attitudes (reflective assignment)

K.Nowak-Fabrykowski & P.Caldwell (2000)

Did you experience caring? Who was your primary caregiver, secondary ?

1. Did you take care of someone? Describe your experience.

2. Are you experiencing (receiving) caring now?

3. What do you think are the best ways of showing that you care:

a) in the classroom (as a teacher)

b) as a colleague (with the teachers that you are working with)

c) as a student(with your peers)

My reflections after the class discussion on caring attitude.

Appendix 2

Operating definitions

Caring components (Noddings, 1992)

1. In the Modeling stage candidates should show understanding of caring and they must operate on or with model. According to Perkins as (1997) " A mental model is not enough for understanding simply because does not do anything by itself. For performances that show understanding, a person must operate on or with the model" (p.47)

2. In the Dialogue we connect to each other and dialogue helps to maintain caring relations, provides us with the knowledge of each other that forms a foundation for response in caring. The important are open-ended discussion. (Noddings, 1992, pp.22-23)

3. In the Practice attitudes and mentalities are shaped by experience. We are shaping minds of our students. Practice in caring should transform schools, and eventually, the society in which we live (Noddings, 1992, p. 25).

4. In the Confirmation, according to Buber (1965) as quoted by Noddings. "confirmation is an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others"(p.25). Confirmation cannot be done by formula. A relation of trust must ground it . Continuity is requested in teaching caring.

Caring characteristics (Mayeroff,1971)

Knowing--understanding the other's needs and being able to respond properly to them. Knowing of others and ours powers and limitations. Caring includes explicit and implicit knowledge how to help another person grow.(p.19-21)

Patience-- Enable the other to grow in its own time and its own way.(pp.23-24)

Honesty- -Integral to caring. Honest teachers are opened to correction and try to learn from mistakes. They see the other as it is and not as they would like to be or feel it must be.(pp.25-26)

Trust- the teacher trusts his students to find their ways in pursuing their own projects. Trust his ability to provide a climate friendly to learning, and to learn from student s' reactions what works and what does not. (pp.26-29)

Humility- -continuity learns about others. Caring teacher is humble, ready to learn more about the others and him and what caring involves. Is not pretending. Is not humiliated to learn from any sources including own's mistakes. Caring teachers take pride in a job well done (pp.29-32).

Hope-- caring teachers hope that other's will grow (will realize themselves) through his/her caring.

Courage-- has courage to go into the unknown.

Alternative rhythms—a caring teacher tries to explain some idea to a student, looks to see whether as or not she/he has succeeded, and if not, tries again in some other way.

Appendix 3

A CaringTeacher’s Components and Characteristics.

Date: _____ Candidate's

Name: _____

College year: _____ C o o p e r a t i n g T e a c h e r ' s

Name: _____

C o l l e g e A d v i s o r ' s

Name: _____

<p>Caring Components (Noddings 1991)</p>	<p>Caring Characteristics (Mayeroff 1971)</p>	<p>Pathwise Domains</p>	<p>Comments (Examples) Performance based on 4 years of field experiences - beginning with spring semester freshman year up to senior year of student teaching. Anecdotal notes from classroom (cooperating) teachers addressing the question: "How has candidate demonstrated caring to PK-12 students through these 4 components/8 characteristics and in what areas do you recommend a need for further development?"</p>
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<p>Modeling</p> <p>In the Modeling stage candidates should show understanding of caring and they must operate on or with model. According to *Perkins, (1997) ” A mental model is not enough for understanding simply because does not do anything by itself. For performances that show understanding , a person must operate on or with the model” (p.47)</p>	<p>Knowing Recipient</p> <p>Understanding the other’s needs and being able to respond properly to them.</p> <p>Knowing of others and ours powers and limitations.</p> <p>Caring includes explicit and implicit knowledge how to help another person grow.(p.19-21)</p>	A1 B1 C1 C4 D1		
	<p>Patience</p> <p>Enable the other to grow in its own time and its own way.(pp.23-24)</p>	A1 B1 C3		
	<p>Honest</p> <p>Integral to caring. Honest teachers are opened to correction and try to learn from mistakes. They see the other as it is and not as they would like to be or feel it must be.(pp.25-26)</p>	D1 D2 B2		
	<p>Trust</p> <p>The teacher trust his students to find their ways in pursuing their own projects.</p> <p>Trust his ability to provide a climate friendly to learning,</p>	B3 B5 C3 C4		
	<p>reactions what works and what does not. (pp.26-29)</p>			

*in Stone Wiske "Teaching for Understanding, Linking Research with Practice"

<p>Humility</p> <p>Continuously learn about others. Caring teacher is humble, ready to learn more about the others and him and what caring involves. Is not pretending. Is not humiliated to learn from any sources including own mistakes. Caring teacher takes pride in job well done. (pp.29-32)</p>	<p>B1 C4 D1 D2</p>	
<p>Hope</p> <p>Caring teacher hope that the other will grow (will realize themselves) through his/her caring.</p>	<p>C4</p>	
<p>Courage</p> <p>Has courage to go into the unknown.</p>	<p>C2 C3</p>	
<p>Alternative Rhythms</p> <p>Caring teacher tries to explain some idea to a student, look to see whether she/he has succeeded, and if have not, tries again in some other way.</p>	<p>C2 C4 C5 D1</p>	

<p>Dialogue</p> <p>In the Dialogue we connect to each other and dialogue helps to maintain caring relations, provides us with the knowledge of each other that forms a foundation for response in caring. The important are open-ended discussion. (Noddings, 1992, pp.22-23)</p>	<p>Knowing Recipient</p> <p>Understanding the other's needs and being able to respond properly to them. Knowing of ours and others powers and limitations. Caring includes explicit and implicit knowledge how to help another person grow.(p.19-21)</p>	<p>A1</p> <p>B1</p> <p>C1</p> <p>C4</p> <p>D1</p>		
	<p>Patience</p> <p>Enable the other to grow in its own time and its own way.(pp.23-24)</p>	<p>A1</p> <p>B1</p> <p>C3</p>		
	<p>Honest</p> <p>Integral to caring. Honest teachers are opened to correction and try to learn from mistakes. They see the other as it is and not as they would like to be or feel it must be.(pp.25-26)</p>	<p>D1</p> <p>D2</p> <p>B2</p>		
	<p>Trust</p> <p>The teacher trust his students to find their ways in pursuing their own projects. Trust his ability to provide a climate friendly to learning, and to learn from student s' reactions what works and what does not. (pp.26-29)</p>	<p>B3</p> <p>B5</p> <p>C3</p> <p>C4</p>		

<p>Humility</p> <p>Continuously learn about others. Caring teacher is humble, ready to learn more about the others and him and what caring involves. Is not pretending. Is not humiliated to learn from any sources including own mistakes. Caring teacher takes pride in job well done. (pp.29-32)</p>	<p>B1 C4 D1 D2</p>		
<p>Hope</p> <p>Caring teacher hope that the other will grow (will realize themselves) through his/her caring.</p>	<p>C4</p>		
<p>Courage</p> <p>Has courage to go into the unknown.</p>	<p>C2 C3</p>		
<p>Alternative Rhythms</p> <p>Caring teacher tries to explain some idea to a student, look to see whether she/he has succeeded, and if have not, tries again in some other way.</p>	<p>C2 C4 C5 D1</p>		

Practice

In the Practice attitudes and mentalities are shaped by experience. We are shaping minds of our students. Practice in caring should transform schools, and eventually , the society in which we live (Noddings, 1992, p. 25).

<p>Knowing Recipient Understanding the other's needs and being able to respond properly to them. Knowing of ours and others powers and limitations. Caring includes explicit and implicit knowledge how to help another person grow.(p.19-21)</p>	<p>A1 B1 C1 C4 D1</p>	
<p>Patience Enable the other to grow in its own time and its own way.(pp.23-24)</p>	<p>A1 B1 C3</p>	
<p>Honest Integral to caring. Honest teachers are opened to correction and try to learn from mistakes. They see the other as it is and not as they would like to be or feel it must be.(pp.25-26)</p>	<p>D1 D2 B2</p>	
<p>Trust The teacher trust his students to find their ways in pursuing their own projects. Trust his ability to provide a climate friendly to learning, and to learn from student s' reactions what works and what does not. (pp.26-29)</p>	<p>B3 B5 C3 C4</p>	

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<p>Courage</p> <p>Has courage to go into the unknown.</p>	<p>C2 C3</p>	
<p>Alternative Rhythms</p> <p>Caring teacher tries to explain some idea to a student, look to see whether she/he has succeeded, and if have not, tries again in some other way.</p>	<p>C2 C4 C5 D1</p>	

<p>Confirmation</p> <p>In the <u>Confirmation</u>, according to Buber (1965) as quoted by Noddings p. 25 “confirmation is an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others”. Confirmation cannot be done by formula. A relation of trust must ground it . Continuity is requested in teaching caring.</p>	<p>Knowing Recipient</p> <p>Understanding the other’s needs and being able to respond properly to them. Knowing of ours and others powers and limitations. Caring includes explicit and implicit knowledge how to help another person grow.(p.19-21)</p>	<p>A1 B1 C1 C4 D1</p>		
<p>Confirmation of caring is assessed during pre-and student teaching experiences as observed through the different domains of Pathwise.</p>	<p>Patience</p> <p>Enable the other to grow in its own time and its own way.(pp.23-24)</p>	<p>A1 B1 C3</p>		
	<p>Honest</p> <p>Integral to caring. Honest teachers are opened to correction and try to learn from mistakes. They see the other as it is and not as they would like to be or feel it must be.(pp.25-26)</p>	<p>D1 D2 B2</p>		
	<p>Trust</p> <p>The teacher trust his students to find their ways in pursuing their own projects. Trust his ability to provide a climate friendly to learning, and to learn from student s’ reactions what works and what does not. (pp.26-29)</p>	<p>B3 B5 C3 C4</p>		

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<p>Alternative Rhythms</p> <p>Caring teacher tries to explain some idea to a student, look to see whether she/he has succeeded, and if have not, tries again in some other way.</p>	<p>C2 C4 C5 D1</p>		