ABSTRACT
This paper presents some of the issues in teaching social studies in urban elementary schools, specifically, the influence pre-service teachers may be able to have on social studies in urban elementary schools. Senior-level student teachers share their experiences of including social studies in creative and culturally responsive ways. Examples include interdisciplinary planning, community engagement, and service and advocacy work. A discussion follows with suggestions for in-service mentor teachers and university methods instructors to help empower student teachers to include social studies in their classes. Specific suggestions include: (a) teaching culturally responsive philosophy, (b) utilizing strategies of teaching for understanding in order to put culturally responsive theory into classroom instructional practice, and (c) fostering opportunities for student teachers to be models of participatory citizenship, leading by example.

Student Teachers Tackle the Lack of Social Studies in Urban Elementary Schools
The experience of student teaching is one that teacher education majors anticipate for years in college, often idealizing the experience in their minds before ever setting foot into a classroom for any meaningful length of time. As a professor of teacher education, I (Jessica Shocker) have often heard my students express expectations about teaching what they want to teach, spending time how they want to spend it, and having an unlimited toolbox of resources and technology at their disposal. Although teacher education courses and field experiences prior to senior year student teaching may begin to provide students with a more reasonable view of teaching in a public school, my experience has indicated that the full-time field experience, typically situated at the end of an education program, is the time when students begin to understand the realities of public school teaching.

The student teaching experience is particularly powerful for student teachers who are placed in an urban environment. Many of them, particularly when their previous experiences as students are in suburban areas of privilege, are shocked at many of the issues urban schools face. In the social studies methods course at our institution, methods professors discuss ways that social studies education may be the key to improving the elementary school years in an urban school environment. This paper shares some of my experiences in preparing student teachers to teach social studies at urban public elementary schools, and will highlight ways my students have made extraordinary efforts to affect change in urban environments through social
studies education. Five students provide four case studies of their experiences and opinions about student teaching in an urban setting in their own words. Finally, I provide suggestions for inservice mentor teachers and methods instructors to help foster a positive relationship with their student teachers through the implementation of thoughtful and creative social studies education.

Penn State Berks is located in Reading, PA, a city of 88,000 residents, which ranks as most impoverished in the nation for cities with over 65,000 residents, according to the United States Census Bureau in 2010. A stunning 41.3% of residents live below the poverty line in Reading (Tavernise, 2011; “Reading, Pennsylvania,” 2011). Penn State Berks’ student teachers are placed for a year-long internship in one of the local Reading elementary schools, where they spend two days per week in the classroom for the first half of the year and then every day in the classroom for the second half of the year as they assume more teaching responsibilities. The student population is roughly 75% Hispanic and 80% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch (“Test Scores for Reading,” 2011). Reading’s school district consists of a disproportionately high percentage of low-income students, which is a trend among urban districts nationwide (Frankenberg, 2009). The city of Reading consists of a large urban city center and the city limits cover a total of 10 square miles. A small cohort of Penn State Berks students is placed in the nearby Lebanon district, also an urban setting with similar challenges. The common characteristics of urban schools are well known among educators: class sizes are large, resources are small, transience is common, communication is poor, and graduation rates are low, to name a few.

Particularly troubling is that many urban schools that are in danger academically are probably among the least likely to prepare teachers for social studies instruction. Research indicates that schools invest time and resources on literacy and math, subjects tested on standardized tests. Teachers report spending very little time on social studies and most time on the subjects tested (O’Connor, Heafner, & Groce, 2007). Schools are led to believe that social studies is not important because it is not included on the mandatory state tests. Furin (2005) refers to this phenomenon as “the death of social studies” in urban elementary schools.

I suggest that elementary students in a high poverty, urban environment need social studies education just as much, if not more, than their suburban counterparts. Many children in Reading, for example, are immigrants or the children of new immigrants, learning to adapt to a new culture or to bridge cultural gaps between home and school. They are often English language learners (ELLs), learning a new language along with a new culture, something extraordinarily complex and daunting (Rieger & McGrail, 2006). They lack basic social studies content knowledge, which not only prevents them from becoming effective citizens, but also may hinder their reading comprehension, because they have trouble making connections to what they read (Kato & Manning, 2007). Although the aforementioned items, along with many more, are critically important in the daily lives of urban students and their families, student teachers are not often taught about this important social studies content in classrooms where the emphasis is on preparation for standardized tests (Furin, 2005).

The practice of culturally relevant pedagogy, which draws on the many resources available in an urban community and the strengths of students’ cultural groups, is essential for urban student success (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When teachers do not teach in a culturally responsive way, and issues such as racism or class privilege are not addressed, it sends a silent message to
children that their teachers do not understand or acknowledge their experience (Erikson, 2003). However, research has indicated that when urban students and parents trust the teachers in their schools, student achievement is higher (Goddard, 2001). Effective urban educators, therefore, should thoughtfully seek to encourage and incorporate the qualities offered by the rich and diverse cultural backgrounds of their students in an effort to encourage community unity while fostering group identity.

Five student teachers outline key aspects of their experiences with social studies in their urban elementary school placements. These students have enthusiastically accepted their call to bring excellence to their urban elementary classrooms, and are finding ways to do so, even where it is not easy. They have expressed a belief in education and in their students. Further, they have been impacted by highly motivated mentor teachers who model how to succeed as urban educators. I selected these students to write specifically for this piece, providing a sample of the extraordinary initiatives I have seen in the 2010-2011 academic year by student teachers to make social studies a priority in urban elementary schools. In the four cases below, student teachers show leadership by integrating social studies in their curricula, by encouraging community building and interdisciplinary studies, and by working to serve as models of participatory citizenship. Following each case, I provide a commentary.

STUDENT TEACHER CASE 1: PAMELA AND GABRIELLA

After collaborating substantially in our Penn State Berks social studies methods class and student teaching in the same school with first- and third graders over the course of several months, student teachers Pamela and Gabriella discovered a serious deficiency in general social studies knowledge. Many of their students were unable to name the current president of the United States; several guessed George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. Further, when students found out that the student teachers were in college, most of them were uncertain what “college” was. After Gabriella provided an explanation, she asked if any students might know someone who went to “a special school to become qualified for a certain job.” Not one student raised a hand. Upon learning this information, the student teachers questioned how students could become participatory citizens in the future with such a lack of basic social studies knowledge. In talking with veteran teachers at Penn State Berks, their concerns about the lack of social studies understanding were validated. The cooperating teachers expressed strong desire to incorporate social studies content into their daily routines, but pressures to increase standardized test scores often push social studies to the side, resulting in efforts to “squeeze” social studies in wherever they can. Determined to help rectify this lack in the curriculum, they were inspired to integrate interdisciplinary social studies throughout their student teaching experience in a variety of subject areas and routines, moving beyond a paradigm of squeezing bits and pieces into a cramped curriculum.

Gabriella’s classroom consisted of 22 first-grade children, ages six and seven. Each of her students lived within a 10-block radius of the elementary school, and a majority of them walked to school daily. Because there was a “collared-shirt required” dress code in the district, most of her students wore donated clothing. Nineteen of the 22 received free lunch; the others paid a reduced price. Luckily, most of the parents were actively involved in their children’s education, though several parents did not speak English, resulting in the child often serving as translator.
Pamela’s third-grade classroom consisted of 22 students, all of whom qualified for free breakfast and lunch every day. Nine of her students had family living in Puerto Rico and return there for extended periods of time over the summer. Due to the level of cultural diversity in her classroom (13 Hispanic students, two Asian students, six Caucasian students, and one African-American student), she believes they had a powerful opportunity to learn values of diversity at a young age. After learning from their social studies methods course at Penn State Berks the power of culturally responsive teaching, both of them (Pamela and Gabriella) drew upon the rich diversity of students in their classrooms to teach relevant social studies.

This experience prompted them to commit to challenging students to be critical thinkers and active problem solvers and to teach them meaningful and values-based skills and content. For example, Gabriella committed to integrating social studies, specifically cultural studies, with language arts, conducting regular read-aloud sessions with multicultural texts. During these readings, she asked well-crafted discussion questions that helped students make connections to the culture of focus, while meeting the expectations of the language arts standards. She deepened the social studies connection by giving the students related writing prompts. As an informal strategy of providing feedback and using students’ multicultural roots to teach social studies and cultural awareness, she drew upon students’ ideas during instruction, which resulted in feelings of pride and accomplishment among them. An unanticipated theme of cultural study and appreciation emerged in her classroom where the students and Gabriella celebrated cultural holidays and shared their family traditions. Gabriella regularly shared Italian traditions from her family’s cultural origins, and modeled how to compare and contrast one set of cultural traditions to others; the students especially enjoyed this activity, evidenced by hands waving eagerly in the air to participate in these comparative discussions.

Pamela has made special efforts to teach social studies through a thematic unit on immigration, as many of her students were immigrants or related to immigrants. The students listened to personal stories from immigrants to the United States from around the world, and were able to relate these stories to their own experiences or the experiences of their friends and family in the local community. This relevant content informed the students about the processes of immigration as well as the cultural and emotional impact of immigration on individuals and communities. The students used a number of interdisciplinary social studies and language arts skills to meet school standards as well as create authentic learning experiences, including communication, writing, and speaking skills, inference making, decision making, point of view, conflict resolution, accepting responsibility, and reading strategies. Further, identifying a need for her students and their families to be participatory citizens in their local community, she taught skills for reading and interpreting newspaper articles and for analyzing and understanding television news. The children regularly watched CNN Student news, where students broadcast for students.

Schocker Analysis of Case Study 1
I remember when Pamela and Gabriella presented the results of their assignment for their School and Community Inquiry class. This assignment required that student teachers conduct research about the communities where they teach, their students’ backgrounds, and the economic and social climate. They were stunned at the lack of social studies content knowledge of their students, and more inspired by this experience than they ever could have been by my insistence
as a methods instructor that social studies is indeed important. Both women took action based on what they found. In creating a safe environment for her students to share cultural experiences and learn from one another, Gabriella taught tolerance and the use of culturally responsive methods. She also modeled these skills by sharing her own experiences. This connected Gabriella to her students and created the perception of her as a teacher who cares about her students.

Pamela’s achievements were impressive: she learned to identify student and community needs and to adapt her planning accordingly. She seamlessly integrated social studies across the curriculum, which demonstrated high levels of critical thinking and perseverance in a climate where it could be easy to let the subject be lost in the midst of standardized test preparation. While most preservice teachers in a methods class demonstrate a passion for social studies, particularly when creating a product for a class grade, these student teachers embodied their passion by taking it beyond the class requirements, making these implementations in their classrooms of their own volition. None of the teaching experiences they expressed were mandated by class assignments.

**STUDENT TEACHER CASE 2: STEPHEN**

Stephen had a tremendous desire to make a significant difference in the lives of his future students. Prior to his senior year of student teaching, he believed his natural charisma and personality would create an amazing learning atmosphere where students would learn better than they have ever learned before. During his first meeting with his mentor teacher, he was excited to introduce a classroom website where students and parents could reference current and past topics, access academic resources, and communicate with the teachers. He learned quickly that it would be an ineffective tool; a majority of the students did not have Internet access. This perplexed him. How, in this day and age, could a simple website be ineffective? As Stephen spent more time there, he learned the reality of teaching in an urban public school, where he witnessed old, worn-out clothes that were too small or too large, a lack of jackets for weather conditions, and many students’ families relying on government assistance for food and shelter. From this eye-opening experience, he learned that these students are in survival mode. He realized that if he was going to be an effective teacher, he would need to meet students where they were and make lessons relevant to their daily lives. What better way to do that than through social studies?

Stephen’s methods professor (Schocker) had assigned a project that would give student teachers a better understanding of our students, school, and community. The assignment was to gather information on the local demographics, including graduation rates, unemployment rates, district revenues, and the cost of living. The goal was to reveal information about the school and community that would help student teachers make decisions in the classroom. With three other preservice teachers, he set out to tour the community surrounding the school, taking photos and making notes of the surroundings. It was a surprising experience to see firsthand what these students walk past everyday. The refreshing part for him was that despite all the poverty, poor housing, and decaying community, the students do not see it this way. He observed that they loved their school, their friends, and the community. This understanding transferred into his preparations for lessons in the classroom because he was able to prepare lessons that are more meaningful to the students.
Stephen was placed in a departmentalized classroom in an urban district where he taught language arts and social studies twice per day. About 15% of his students were ELL. According to the schedule guidelines, the students in his school spent 46% of their day on reading and language arts, 27% at special/lunch/recess/morning meeting, and the remaining 27% on social studies. However, more often than not, they extended language arts and never got to social studies; it was not viewed as a priority. Recently, Stephen had the opportunity to change that pattern when it was his turn to take over the classroom for the first time by himself. He reports having seized this opportunity to teach social studies, believing from his social studies methods course that he had the tools to develop a meaningful, interdisciplinary unit on patterns of weather based on the Teaching for Understanding Framework (Blythe, et. al, 1997). His overarching goal was to cover the skills and strategies mandated by the school district curriculum in language arts, while connecting everything to social studies and life skills that these students would benefit from, such as safety during storms, predicting and analyzing data, reading weather maps, conducting research, and speaking in front of their peers.

Stephen counted his unit as a huge success; the students were engaged, enjoying themselves, and focused. He successfully encouraged the students to write by asking them to explain with descriptive details a storm they experienced, when it took place, how long it lasted, and what was the storm like. All of the students had a story to tell, and it gave him insight to how they perceive storms. Next, to gather more data on students’ preconceptions, he had the students complete a Quick Draw Write (QDW) activity. The students were required to draw a picture of a storm of their choice, then explain what they already know about this storm. Through the use of cooperative grouping, he assigned specific storms to each group, used graphic organizers to guide their research, used the computer lab (for the first time this year) to conduct research on their assigned topic, combined each group member’s research to formulate a storm poster, and completed the project with a video presentation by each group. He reported never seen his class more engaged and excited to do classroom work than during this process, stating the best part was they were learning and utilizing the skill and strategy focuses without him having to stand at the front of the classroom to drill the material. He observed that many students used graphic sources on their posters, which was their reading skill that week.

What he found during his first classroom takeover was that students have a natural desire to learn social studies when it is presented in a way that relates to their lives and encourages their participation. It is his conclusion that very few kids enjoy being lectured to, and even fewer enjoy the repetitive nature that has become public school teaching in a high-stakes testing environment. He deemed his experiment was a success that solidified his belief that incorporating social studies into the reading and language arts lessons allows for authentic learning. It took a lot more work on his part to plan the instruction, but it was extremely rewarding. The values and information that can be learned through social studies are extremely valuable to elementary students, especially in an urban setting. Social studies teaches students how to function in daily life and how the world around them functions. He recalled learning about social studies as a kid not only in school, but also from outside role models and reflected on the fact that many of his students did not have role models who talked to them about the science of weather, or politics, government, or history for that matter, so it’s even more imperative that these students experience quality social studies in school.
Schocker Analysis of Case Study 2

Similar to Gabriella and Pamela, Stephen did not have to carry out this interdisciplinary unit in his student teaching placement because of a class requirement. Stephen was particularly inspired by our School and Community Inquiry assignment. He may have been among the most optimistic student teachers we sent into the field this year and then shocked by the realities of urban public education. Stephen is not alone in being surprised that many urban children do not have Internet access at home. He also reported being surprised by the lack of resources available based on what he had seen his own children have access to in their suburban school district. A believer in preparing children for productivity where they have the tools to be successful, he has sought to develop curricula that empower students with relevant knowledge that contribute toward positive life skills. What makes Stephen’s case atypical in my professional experience is that in spite of his particularly idealistic view of education before he started his student teaching, he refused to modify his expectations of what the students could learn as a result of their structured deficiencies. While he had to adjust his expectations of an online interactive component of the class outside of school hours, he did not budge on the expectations he held for excellence in research. Stephen not only taught students about the value of social studies concepts, but he did so while simultaneously imparting important and transferrable research skills. His reports of the results of this unit indicate that these students are empowered with new skills to apply not only to understanding the science of weather patterns, but to any other topic of research in the future.

STUDENT TEACHER CASE 3: MELISSA

The majority of Melissa’s third graders in Reading either had parents that were not born in the United States, or the students themselves were immigrants. All of her students were of minority ethnic groups and all qualified for free or reduced lunch. Over 95% of them lived in subsidized housing and walked to school each day from their housing projects. Very few of her students had a family car, and most had never traveled outside of their zip code. The experiences of her students inspired her to develop a thematic unit using principles of the Teaching for Understanding framework around the National Council for the Social Studies standards for civics and government. Most specifically, she wanted to focus on the unique nature of democratic ideals. Her philosophy of social studies education evolved in her methods class, where she came to believe that students need to experience the world outside of the small part to which they are exposed, and for children in an urban school, imaginative social studies may be the only way to accomplish this. For starters, she wanted her students to feel knowledgeable about where they lived and to believe they had control over their futures; she stated she did not want to see them become victims of ignorance.

A large emphasis of the unit Melissa planned revolved around the role of the citizen, the components of democracy, the importance of voting, strategies of decision-making, and the knowledge and efficacy to peacefully promote societal change. She kept her students engaged with hands-on activities such as playing cooperative learning activities, where she consistently related the students’ background knowledge and experiences to key concepts. She reported she was very fortunate to have the complete cooperation of Reading’s Mayor, Vaughn Spencer (See Image 1). He took time out of his busy schedule and came into her third-grade classroom
to serve as a role model for her students. Leading up to this experience, the students had researched his campaign platforms, his biography, and issues that face the city of Reading as a whole. They connected with the mayor, because he graduated from Reading High School and had been a teacher in the district for more than 30 years prior to entering politics. The students asked him a variety of high-level questions, including how did he plan to reduce littering in the city, what subject did he teach and why, and how do I become a police officer? The students had conducted such extensive research and planned such thoughtful questions that Mayor Spencer at one point during the session commented, “How do they know so much about me?” Melissa said, “The Internet! We researched!” The students wrote him thank you notes the day after his visit. One student wrote that when he went home and told his mother he had met Mayor Spencer, she revealed for the first time that she had been one of his students. Melissa saw this experience as bridging a large school-to-home gap.

Motivated by the mayor’s visit, the students were energized to learn about voting and democracy. After learning about their role as future voters with control over electing officials and choosing laws, her students simulated a class-wide campaign and vote on a class handshake. She predicted that overall, the experiences of bringing democracy to life will not only benefit her students individually but the future of the city of Reading and ultimately, the United States. She concluded that it is critical to teach social studies in urban schools so students gain the information they need to grow up to be positive and participatory citizens.

**Schocker Analysis of Case Study 3**

When I received Melissa’s email inviting me to visit her class because the mayor would be the guest speaker, it signaled to me that she had also achieved success. Like her peers, Melissa was not required to prepare this unit for any course requirement. Melissa’s confident persistence demonstrates her belief in doing what is best for her students, in spite of any perceived obstacles. In observing Melissa’s work, I saw her demonstrate planning, preparation, and implementation similar to an experienced, veteran teacher. A result of hard work, passion, and the critical application of the Teaching for Understanding Framework (Blythe, et. al, 1997), she learned
about in our social studies methods class. Melissa’s experiences indicate that novice teachers can be prepared for excellence in social studies planning and instruction. Her optimism and training led to an exciting social studies experience for the children in her school.

**STUDENT TEACHER CASE 4: JENNA**

Jenna’s first impression was that the physical conditions of the school in which she was placed were inadequate for the physical and social development of elementary aged children. Believing the opportunity to communicate and play is an essential part of the elementary student experience, her mission as a student teacher was to improve the social centers of the school: the playground, the hallways, and common spaces (see images 2 and 3). These spaces are where children create a community, an important aspect of informal social studies education. Upon completing an assignment in her methods class, where she reported learning “startling facts” about her school, district and greater community, she knew that she had the knowledge and power to make an impact for her students. Through the entire assignment, she talked about being able to see her students’ hopeful, innocent faces behind the facts, making it that much more meaningful for her. At the time of this writing, school is currently in Corrective Action II for the second year, failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP); this is the second lowest status of all 24 schools in the district. The district itself is 78.7% Hispanic and the rate of ELL students is 19.1%. The district report card reports that the 90.9% of the Reading School District population is economically disadvantaged. As such, she has implemented a service-learning project as a contribution to the school’s five-year strategic plan, which was created based on the above information to strengthen partnerships and supports.
She reported that her ambitious goal to improve the social centers of the school has been challenging and rewarding. On top of her responsibilities as a preservice teacher in and outside of the classroom, she allotted a significant amount of time to finding companies to donate products, time, and/or service to complete several important improvement projects. Along with writing a grant to get safe and secure fencing around the school playground, she secured donations from local hardware stores to provide painting supplies. These donations were used to develop a community involvement activity for her students and their families. As a community, they repainted the activities, maps, and murals located on the playground blacktop and the walls around the school. Her goal was to improve the school itself while promoting the importance of community service and community unity. The social studies curriculum in her classroom focused on the big idea of community, such that in her view, not only did the service project allow her students to become actively involved with bettering their school, but it also tied directly in with their social studies curriculum. To involve the community, she took her ideas to an upcoming school board meeting, modeling involvement by contributing to the community models of effective citizenship for my students, an essential component of social studies education.

**Schocker Analysis of Case Study 4**

What makes Jenna’s case so fascinating and absolutely different from most of the student teachers I’ve worked with is that she is a superb model of action-taking. Nothing is impossible in Jenna’s mind. The first indication of this was when she announced her plan to attend a school board meeting in order to obtain permission to revitalize the playground at her school. Then, slowly, piece-by-piece, she has begun to assemble the supplies necessary to carry out her plan. By my perception, what Jenna has done for her school is twofold. First, she has modeled for other teachers in her school and other pre-service teachers in her cohort how much can be achieved by a hopeful, determined teacher. And second, she has modeled for her students what it means to be a participatory citizen invested in her community. I am not sure where Jenna got the faith to believe, as one student teacher, that she could change the face of her entire school’s play area, and I certainly cannot take credit for it. But, I think what she has done is show the role that student teachers can play in shaping the social studies curriculum in their student teaching placements. Her contribution forges a partnership between the college, the school, and the community, an example of successful community outreach. I am anxious to watch her project play out in the remainder of the school year.

**DISCUSSION**

In six years of working with student teachers at different colleges and universities, I’ve seen amazing passion, hope, and action. This semester has been among the most inspiring. This begs the question: what can we learn from student teachers? They are about to step into a field they love, undaunted by negativity and obstacles. Each day, they look past chipping paint, graffiti, and lack of resources and keep their eyes on what is important: their students. I have learned from experience that working with student teachers to affect change in their own schools and communities has been the most effective method for preparing educators to teach social studies. Student teachers, however, need to be empowered and impassioned by social studies methods.
instructors and mentor teachers in order to succeed. These are the three top suggestions for fostering this relationship suggested by the case studies profiled here.

First, our pre-service teachers must be prepared for culturally responsive teaching. This means they must not only respect different cultures, but they must learn detailed nuances about the cultures of their students and understand the contributions these cultural groups have made over time. It is essential that student teachers learn that cultural groups have different communication strategies that teachers must appreciate and utilize (Gay, 2001). In our methods class, for example, we spend a significant amount of time talking about the importance of understanding the communities where we work. This can be accomplished through an inquiry assignment (referenced in the pieces above) where the student teachers immerse themselves in the community by talking to locals, walking around town, exploring the library and other public buildings, and conducting research about the community’s demographics and history. This particular assignment was developed by a collaboration of social studies methods instructors at Penn State University campuses. The actions that student teachers took as described above demonstrate the theory of culturally responsive teaching in practice; they are studying the school community and then taking action with and for their students.

Second, after learning the basis of culturally responsive teaching, student teachers need a planning and instructional framework that fosters its implementation. My students each semester apply culturally responsive practices to their social studies curriculum preparation by using the Teaching for Understanding Framework, which focuses on encouraging collaboration among children and assessment through performance-based projects (Blythe, et. al, 1997). This constructivist model helps teachers to plan based on student and teacher interests, available resources and opportunities in the community, standards, and meaningful content. The opportunities in the community can be defined in many ways, including community buildings and landmarks, but also as community leaders. Melissa’s visit with the mayor, for example, provided an information source from the students’ own community far more salient than a textbook passage about community leadership. Because the model encourages a large amount of communication and feedback between teacher and student, student and student, and student and self, it lends itself perfectly to the concepts underlying culturally responsive teaching. The model suggests that teachers develop overarching understanding goals that can be transferred to other topics and experiences and that students demonstrate understanding by performance-based assessments, receiving constant feedback from multiple sources. For example, in their case study, Gabriella and Pamela both have a goal that their students will understand and appreciate the impact diverse cultures have on the strength of a community. Over time, their students have participated in performances that indicate their achievement of this goal.

As another example, Jenna set a goal that her students would understand the important role of a participatory citizen. In creating opportunities for these students to take pride in and improve the conditions of their economically disadvantaged school, she allows them to enact the participatory role. In this capacity, they will demonstrate positive citizenship and pride in their community. The opportunities for student ownership and teacher differentiation are nearly limitless. Further, when time is not available for isolated social studies instruction, pre-service teachers need to know how to integrate social studies across the curriculum with a framework
that fosters cross-curricular strategies, as Pamela, Gabriella, and Stephen illustrated above. The Teaching for Understanding Framework easily lends itself to interdisciplinary studies.

Finally, I suggest that student teachers be encouraged to lead and teach by example. A community service project involving the students in an urban elementary school provides a platform for a rich social studies experience, where students learn about their community and to participate in a positive way. This goes beyond teaching kids merely about community; it teaches appreciation of the community. Jenna's students, for example, may not remember all the facts they learn in third grade, but they would very likely remember repainting faded or graffiti-covered murals as a group or watching a new fence be constructed with funds received after diligent and persistent lobbying and grant writing. Such experiences not only teach participatory citizenship for the strength of a community, but also show the children that their teacher cares deeply about them and is committed to their positive school and community experience. Melissa's students who met their city mayor will hopefully remember a feeling of togetherness and empowerment that translates far beyond that event. Further, they were able to share this experience with their parents. Research has indicated that urban student achievement is higher when parents are involved (Jeynes, 2005). This type of event creates an opportunity for such involvement and inspires educational discussions between students and their parents.

I strongly encourage social studies methods faculty and mentor teachers to nurture and empower optimism within student teachers. They have the desire to make a difference and are learning the tools to do so with our support. The creative drive in these hopeful college seniors certainly raises my passion for urban education every year, and I have come to realize the power of the teacher education system. If we can be motivated by our students and our students can be empowered by us, we have an enormous potential to affect change through the practice of social studies in urban elementary schools. The cases I have presented above show student teachers transcending stereotypes and beating down clichés on their way to becoming the educators they always believed they could be. We all have a lot to learn from student teachers who work relentlessly, without losing hope, from a place of good intentions with solid training and instruction to guide them.
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