**Appendix A**

**Sample Questions: Interview of a Past Scholar**

1. Are there certain elements of Gorski’s book that resonated with you? How does that affect your classroom?

2. How do you approach building relationships with each of your students?

3. What experiences have you had with disagreeing with colleagues on issues of equity and social justice? How did you navigate politics?

4. What is your policy on homework?

5. What do you do for self-care?

6. What advice do you have for us as we approach interviewing for positions at schools?

7. Do you see other teachers acting with bias toward students? How do you handle that?

8. Have you been trying to incorporate social justice topics in your math or science class? If so, how is it working?

9. What inequities do you see in your school that you feel you can deal with as a first-year teacher? What have you done to alleviate those things?

10. How do you make the learning experiences in your classroom equitable?

11. What is your advice for lesson planning during your first year?

12. What has been the most rewarding part of working in a high-need school? What has been most discouraging?

**Appendix B**

**Sample Final Reflection From a Scholar: Building Relationships**

For my Building Relationships assignment, I tutored a student for the GED pretest. I was told that he rarely came to school, was very behind on math skills, and would most likely drop out if he didn’t get into the GED program. The first few weeks, we made some progress, but I didn’t feel that I was really forming a relationship. However, after a while, he started to open up to me. He told me that he works after school, and he takes care of his two younger brothers. He told me that he wanted to join the army and then, after that, have a career. He was working as a server but said that he wanted to make something more of himself. He said that he didn’t want to work as a server forever, and that was why he wanted to get his GED. It was really at that moment when I realized how much more important it was to help him pass the test and stay in school than it was for him to have a deep understanding of every single problem he was doing. For example, it would be better for me to help him with test-taking strategies than trying to get him to stop using his calculator for 1 + 2. This is similar to what I learned in my interview [of a past scholar]. You have to give students the supports they need so that they can reach the actual goal.

This isn’t to say that it’s not important for students to learn math, but I now think it is more important to keep students in school, even if it means sacrificing some content. At the same time, I also believe that all students are capable of succeeding and that high-need teachers must have high expectations for all students. I also believe that the students deserve challenging and engaging content that helps them build conceptual knowledge, not just procedural fluency, so they can pass the [state test name omitted]. I now just see a balance that I didn’t understand before. These high expectations were seen in the schools we visited, specifically in the Algebra 2 class at the [district name and city omitted] high school we visited.

For students to be able to rise to high expectations, it is crucial to have good relationships with them. I have learned that students need to feel respected in order to respect the teacher. In my class, I can tell which students have a good relationship with the teacher and which do not just based on their reaction to being told to stop talking and to work on their worksheet. The students that she has a relationship with will apologize and start working again. Since they like her, they don’t want her to be mad at them. However, with the special ed teacher in the class, it is clear that some of the relationships are strained. I have noticed that they do not respond well to her, but I don’t think she truly has a relationship with any of the students. She also talks to them in a way that is very clear that she doesn’t respect them. It isn’t surprising then when they don’t listen to her. I am very excited to use what I have learned in this class in my future classroom. Although I am nervous about classroom management, I now understand that building relationships is the solution.

**Appendix C**

**Sample Critical Reflection From a Scholar: Letter to the Editor**

Dear Editor of the Gazette,

As a student teacher at [school omitted] and a Master of Education candidate at the [university omitted], I am writing to draw your attention to the mounting problem of chronic absenteeism amongst Black and Latinx students. Throughout my course of study, I have spent considerable time discussing different issues and solutions related to closing the opportunity gap amongst minority students and students living in poverty. Many of the issues related to the opportunity gap have community-level solutions, such as inadequate access to healthcare, food insecurity, and the scarcity of living-wage jobs (Gorski, 2018). As a teacher candidate, these challenges can feel overwhelming, which is why I am calling on the [city omitted] community to work with teachers to effectively address these issues and work toward closing the opportunity gap for our students.

In order to address poverty-related issues on the community level, I propose an increase to minimum wage in [city omitted]. Currently, minimum wage rests at $7.25 an hour. Because [city omitted] is an economically diverse community, not only do students who come from families where parents are working minimum wage jobs feel the strain of poverty, they feel peer pressure from students who come from more affluent backgrounds. By raising minimum wage to $15 over the course of the next 8 years, there will be increased access to living-wage jobs, which will then reduce the economic impacts on the opportunity gap. Although none of the [district omitted] public high schools are listed as high-need schools according to the 2019–2020 [state omitted] Department of Education (2020) report on free- and reduced-price lunch statistics, there are many students who are living in poverty. At [school omitted], 29% of the student body is labeled “economically disadvantaged.” This includes students who are experiencing homelessness, qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch and Medicaid, or are receiving temporary assistance. Although some may say that this percentage is low enough that policy change is not necessary, there is a significant impact on students’ ability to succeed at school. Students who are economically disadvantaged make up the largest demographic of students who are chronically absent, meaning that they have missed 18 or more days of school, at 23.7%. As of 2019, [school omitted] has not met the Every Student Succeeds Act annual target for reducing chronic absenteeism in economically disadvantaged students ([school omitted] Quality Profile, 2020). By gradually increasing minimum wage in the community so that more families have access to living-wage jobs, fewer students will feel the sharp sting of poverty and have more opportunities to attend and succeed at school.

Although this solution does not address all aspects of inequity amongst students living in poverty, especially amongst Black and Latinx students, increasing family income will go a long way toward ending the generational injustice of poverty. I ask the community to demand the City Council enacts policies that increase minimum wage. It is not enough to support charity organizations; the [city omitted] community needs to systematically change the economic inequalities so that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and succeed in school.

Best,

[Name omitted]

**Peer Response to This Assignment in Blackboard**

First off, I thought you did a great job building your credibility. I like how you emphasized the need to address problems outside the education system and explained how these problems connect to the opportunity gap. Maybe you can provide some specific examples as to how poverty affects students in school and that the stereotypes around students living in poverty are false. When you mention the chronic absentee rate, you could mention that students aren’t absent because they or their families don’t care, but that living in poverty creates more obstacles for getting to school. I 100% agree that the [state omitted] (and other states) minimum wage needs to become a living wage of at least $15. This would have a huge impact on so many issues. I also like how you ended your letter with a clear demand. I like how you call out that donating to charity is not enough, that there needs to be a systemic change.

**Appendix D**

**Sample Critical Reflection from a Scholar: School Board Public Comment**

Good evening and thank you to the [district omitted] board for receiving this public comment. I am a citizen who recently had the opportunity to observe classes at [school omitted], and I am calling today to bring up the disparity between students enrolled in AP classes and students taking the AP exams. First, I would like to commend [school omitted] for their 20% enrollment in AP classes, which far exceeds the average AP enrollment in this district. Clearly, they are encouraging and supporting students in taking AP-level coursework. However, only 17% of students actually go on to take the AP exams. This is a discrepancy far greater than is seen at other schools with similar rates of high AP enrollment, where nearly all students go on to take associated AP exams. Although it is excellent that students are engaged in this more challenging AP coursework, it is important that they also get equal opportunity to pursue college credit for this challenging work. It is likely that this disparity is due to economic disadvantage. I call upon the [district omitted] school board to pursue policies that will fully fund or subsidize the cost of AP testing for all students. Until AP-testing fees are subsidized for students, there will remain an opportunity gap for our students who experience economic insecurity and are unable to cover the costs of AP testing. Thank you very much.