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EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY

A Journal of the NNER

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EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY:

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National Network for Education Renewal
NNER

Editors
René Roselle & Dorothea Anagnostopoulos
Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut
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About the cover photo: The Neag School of Education is housed in the Gentry Building at the University of Connecticut.

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A Letter from the Executive Directors of the National Network for Educational Renewal

John Goodlad's educational odyssey took him from a one room school in British Columbia to major universities, professional prominence and the catalyst for educators across the globe to work at the intersection of education, democracy and communities. John Dewey said, "education is not preparation for life; it is life itself." John Goodlad made education and the study of schools and schooling his life, his legacy, and in part, this has been manifested in the partnership work of the National Network for Educational Renewal.

John Goodlad influenced educators for decades in significant ways. Always a teacher, he often started conversations by connecting the past with the present. He reminded us that in order to move forward one must understand the past as the foundation upon which the future stands. In 1970, he observed that "Nothing short of a simultaneous reconstruction of preservice teacher education, inservice teacher education, and schooling itself will suffice if the educational change process is to be adequate." This observation drove much of his significant research on schooling and teacher preparation from which he launched the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) in 1984. At this same time, John and colleagues also began forming the postulates for teacher preparation and

the Agenda for Education in a Democracy.

One could say he was a great intellectual multi-tasker—putting pieces together from extensive research and his experience in schools. As side bars—there was extensive reflection and deliberation on the findings from his research and their implications which resulted in the foundational tenets that continue to guide the NNER members' practice and research. These principles, postulates and moral dimensions were developed thoughtfully over time, and certainly, one of John Goodlad's unique talents was his ability to get significant financial support from a wide range of foundations and granting agencies. This allowed him to advance his research and create leadership development strategies so others could implement the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) in diverse settings under a wide variety of conditions. His genius in taking time to develop and articulate a mission and value statements resulted in a road map for the NNER (the AED). He noted that many degrees of freedom are needed so that each one of us can embark upon the journey toward providing quality democratic schooling for all.

As we reflect on his remarkable career we also look to the future with great appreciation for this foundational work. The National Network for Educational Renewal—now with 22 school-university partnerships throughout the nation all dedicated to advancing the AED, remains one of his most significant accomplishments and a living example of his strategic directed toward ensuring quality schooling for all. Over the years, he

reflected on the ecology of schools and schooling and noted that the NNER is also an ecology—an interrelated network of colleagues working toward an agreed upon mission. His vision for a network rather than a traditional organization or a prescribed way of achieving a goal is one key reason that the NNER, after more than 30 years since its beginning, continues to thrive.

John Goodlad stressed mutual and reciprocal responsibility, the need to span boundaries, and break down institutional barriers to better serve all learners. He noted that the regularities of schooling too often address the convenience of adults and the expediency of the organization rather than the best schooling for students. He noted, that "…no method or impersonal theory relieves the teacher of the burden of judgment." He describes this moral 'burden' as the central characteristic of steward-leaders. In their work together, John and Wilma Smith noted that leaders—formal and informal—are critical to the renewal process and that steward-leaders create, nurture, and support safe environments, engage in civil discourse, do not feel the need to control others, reflect on their own practice, and promote inquiry for ongoing professional development.

These characteristics describe John Goodlad, who certainly was a steward-leader. Each new generation of steward-leaders who advance the public purposes of schooling in new contexts and with new challenges is a lasting tribute to this incredible man's life.

Today, the NNER serves as a living embodiment of John's intellectual work. The NNER as a network is a steward of our profession and therefore

of our democracy. As Goodlad noted “the NNER came to provide in effect an intricate web of connections among the different individual partnerships. The web works to facilitate the exchange of ideas, practices, and information. It was intentionally structured to provide comprehensive access to a growing body of data and analysis. It draws attention to the unique role of education in a democracy and the need to foster sound educational policies and practices that would not only support the broad purposes of democratic schooling but also make possible the ongoing process of renewal.”

We are confident that John would share the sentiments expressed by Carl Sagan – “We make our world significant by the courage of our questions and the depth of our answers.” The NNER continues John Goodlad’s quest to seek answers to make education in a democracy the best possible for all learners.

This journal, dedicated to John Goodlad, a leader, visionary, and friend, extends his vision to include new generations of steward-leaders.

Ann Foster

Greg Bernhardt

Educating for Democracy, Social Justice, and Action: Building Programs for Social Justice Throughout the National Network for Educational Renewal

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Abstract

In this article, we examine the vision and mission of fostering democracy within public schools as described by John Goodlad and others within the field of education, and situate that important work within critiques of the public school system through a social justice perspective. Through the use of case studies, we then describe the ways in which three NNER partnership sites and a newly formed committee within the NNER organization are working to address issues of equity and access for students and families relegated to the margins of school life. These case studies highlight the ways in which work at partnership sites focused on social justice initiatives can empower students, teachers, and members of local communities and amplify the voices of those usually diminished or drowned out in the everyday work of public schools.

Introduction

> "The school crisis today is not the performance of students on achievement tests. It is the failure of education writ large to develop in our citizens the wisdom necessary to sustain in good health the delicate social and political ecology of the complex, moral community that is the United States of America" (p. 153).

In his book, *What Schools are For*, John Goodlad (1979) describes what he believed public schools in the U.S. are created to do, what schools actually do, and what schools should be accomplishing. Central to the book is his belief in the importance of public schools in strengthening our democracy and the urgency and careful consideration we, as educators, must lend to structuring our schools and learning environments for the children within our society. Goodlad's writing is prescient of the current struggles we face within public education around the dilemmas and pressures of high-stakes standardized testing. He argues that our ongoing discussions about the crisis of public schools is not necessarily about "the performance of students on achievement tests," but our failure as educators to "develop in our citizens the wisdom necessary to sustain in good health the delicate social and political ecology of the complex, moral community that is the United States of America" (p. 153).

He further encourages those involved in education to be vigilant and attentive as to how public schools serve the public good and foster the growth of our complex, moral community when he writes, "Our nation is marked by a characteristic that is both interesting and frightening: We are

extraordinarily patient with human folly, sometimes not paying attention until it has brought us to the edge of a precipice. Then we look down and wake up" (p. 153). Goodlad warns us that if we do not pay close attention to the overarching mission and vision of public schools and continue to carefully consider whether they serve the needs of *all* children within our nation's schools, then we may end up one day looking down, waking up, and finding ourselves out on the edge of a proverbial cliff.

In this article, we first examine the vision and mission of fostering democracy within public schools as described by John Goodlad and others within the field of education, and situate that important work within critiques of the public school system through a social justice[1] perspective. Through the form of case studies, we then describe the ways in which three National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) partnership sites and a newly formed committee within the NNER organization are working to address issues of equity and access for students and families relegated to the margins of school life. These case studies highlight the ways in which work at partnership sites focused on social justice initiatives can empower students, teachers, and members of local communities and amplify the voices of those usually diminished or drowned out in the everyday work of public schools. The case studies also underscore the ways in which this

[1] For our purposes here, social justice " . . . does not merely examine difference or diversity but pays careful attention to the systems of power and privilege that give rise to social inequality and encourages the critical examination of oppression on institutional, cultural, and individual levels in search of opportunities for social action in service of social change" (Hackman, 2005, p.104)

work is always ongoing, emergent, and dynamic, as opposed to complete and finite. As Goodlad cautions, we need to pay close attention to the state of public schooling and continually assess the work we do to support *all* of the children, parents, and teachers who are part of these schools or else "wake up" up to the harsh reality of the precarious state of our shared democracy.

Building a Vision of More Democratic Public Schools

In books such as *A Placed Called School* (1984), *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools* (1990) and *In Praise of Education* (1997), Goodlad further develops and articulates his vision of public education as an inalienable right for students and the promise of public schools in creating a more informed and educated citizenry and a better society. Goodlad's vision of public education is firmly grounded in the historical context of American democracy and his understanding that, from the country's early decades, the schooling of diverse immigrant populations provided a platform for the kind of social and political discourse required to build a civil union. This vision is located in a Jeffersonian understanding of public education's role in preparing a citizenry for participation in a democracy and in the 19th Century transition between the Common Schools of Horace Mann and public schools designed to educate the nation's burgeoning immigrant populations. It is a vision developed further by John Dewey and others at the turn of the 20th Century, a vision that argues for schools that provide all students with opportunities to inquire, experience, and explore.

In the book, *Education for Everyone: Agenda for Education in a*

Democracy, Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) builds upon this previous foundational work by describing ways in which educators could design and position public schools to provide better conditions for more democratic and inclusive learning environments. Other educational scholars continue to add to these core principles through studying and describing the importance of democracy in schools (Apple & Beane, 2007), theorizing about what kind of citizen we should aspire to educate (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), and outlining the effects the creation of democratic environments can have upon our shared public life and society (Parker, 2003).

Since 1985, the NNER has continued to focus its efforts on the central role public schools can play in the creation of more democratic and inclusive learning environments and has focused its work on the facilitation of "the simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators to promote the public purposes of education in a democracy" via its engagement with and support of the work of intentional school, university, and community partnerships. In support of Goodlad's original vision, partner sites work to foster in students the dispositions, skills, and knowledge necessary for effective participation in a social and political democracy, ensure that the young have access to knowledge and skills required for satisfying and responsible lives; develop educators who nurture the learning and well-being of every student; and ensure educators' competence in and commitment to serving as stewards of schools (National Network for Educational Renewal, 2015).

A Critical Look at Public Schools

The expectations placed on public schools in the U.S. are legion. Teachers in schools are expected to educate children, provide them the skills for their future careers, and prepare children to become productive members of our shared democracy. In addition, schools are supposed to be places where democracy flourishes and is modeled for students through daily interactions with teachers and peers and where students can visualize how to positively impact the communities within which they live. However, the promise of public education for students and their families is, at times, undercut by the realities and social contexts within which public schools are situated. For example, how can positive, productive learning environments for children be created and fostered in schools where basic resources and teacher pay have been chronically underfunded? How can democracy be achieved when schools in different communities are inequitably funded? The gap between the theory and the embodied practice of democracy has always been an ongoing tension in public education.

To better understand this dynamic between the idyllic promise and the actual lived practice of public schools, scholars within the field of education examine and focus on different areas that relate to the stratification and inequitable treatment of students and their families in U.S. public schools. Scholars have written about the ways in which race, culture, and ethnicity (Banks, 2006; Sleeter & Grant, 2011), class (Anyon, 1997), and special education status (Artiles & Klingner, 2006) can have a negative impact

upon the learning outcomes, self-efficacy, and engagement of students in public schools. Importantly, recent research and theoretical work has also included attention to the intersectionality of race, class, language, gender, and sexuality (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013) and the idea that students do not belong to only one social or cultural identity group at one time, but many. For example, because of their socio-economic status, immigrant or refugee status, and ethnicity, students sometimes see themselves at the margins of their experience in public schools for multiple reasons and, consequently, choose to disengage from a system that has chosen to fail them.

The Work of Social Justice Theorists and Advocates

Advocates for social justice in education study the disenfranchisement and marginalization of students and families in schools in many ways. One way is to critically describe and interrogate existing structures and policies in schools and how teachers and members of the school community can re-examine the "savage inequalities" within public education (Kozol, 2012; Anyon, 1997, Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009). Beyond critique, however, is the naming of actual pedagogical and relational approaches teachers must be engaged in to move from mere description of what is socially unjust to concrete and explicit action that spurs movement towards social justice, specifically within the field and practice of teacher education (Kaur, 2012; North, 2006). It is not enough for teachers to know about inequities in schools; they must act to squarely eliminate those inequities. Villegas

(2007), for example, examines the use of possible dispositions teacher education pre-service candidates need to develop while Quin (2009) outlines a pedagogical framework for in-service teachers to use in their own work and ongoing development as social justice educators while out in the field. In "Teaching for Social Justice: Voices from the Front Line," North (2009) provides practical examples of teachers working in schools to confront issues of racism, discrimination, and oppression as they put into practice their beliefs as social justice educators.

The Intersection of Democracy and Education, Social Justice and the Work of the NNER

As the demographics of the country continue to shift and inequities become more pronounced, there is a moral imperative of the work in schools and at NNER partnership sites to intentionally focus on research, advocacy and teaching for social justice. It is difficult to conceive of a functioning and vibrant democracy in which some segments of the student population are underserved either via a lack of resources or teacher attention and/or when families feel marginalized because of discriminatory practices. How can we possibly have healthy school, community, and university partnerships when members of the community feel disenfranchised by the policies of the school or university? Goodlad (2003) pushes us even further to consider the explicit need for social justice in our work in promoting democracy when he writes, we "must teach students the ideals of democracy and social equality and give our young people opportunities to practice those ideals in

their daily life, both in and out of school. Unless we work simultaneously as a society to eliminate in our schools and society a caste system harboring and even fostering beliefs and practices that contradict these ideals, our hypocrisy will become transparent" (p. 22). Indeed, working toward direct and considered action for the development of more "democracy *and* social equality" ultimately requires all of us to consider how we are advocating for social justice by working for full inclusion of *all* members of our school communities (Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, & McQuillan, 2009; Goodlad & Oakes, 1988; Bettez & Hytten, 2013).

In his foreword to the book, "Teacher Education for Democracy and Social Justice" (Michelli & Keiser, 2005), John Goodlad writes that he hopes the book continues the "multi-layered conversation - from democratic belief to democratic action - that is the hallmark of educational renewal." In a similar vein, we hope that the case studies presented in the next section provide an impetus to continue the conversation on how we can move from belief in democratic principles to actual democratic action, rooted in the service of socially just educational opportunities for all of the children enrolled in our nation's public schools.

Case Studies

Faculty, teachers, students in both schools and university, and members of the community throughout NNER sites across the country are doing important work to first identify and then programmatically address inequities they see in their communities and, in so doing, affect positive

change. The four case studies that are included in this section of the paper are illustrative examples of the kinds of focused work that are being conducted at partnership sites to foster more democratic and socially just spaces for students and families that have been marginalized.

We use a case study approach to highlight this programmatic work at sites *within* their "real-world" contexts. Applying this method allows us to gain a deeper understanding and critical appreciation about "the case" that ". . . hopefully [results] in new learning about real-world behavior and its meaning" (Yin, 2012, p.4). The goal is to provide evidence across cases in an effort to glean a more nuanced portrait of the phenomena under study. For our purposes here, we employ a case study method to raise "a descriptive question" (Yin, 2012) that answers the following: *what is happening at NNER sites to develop and further democratic and socially just educational spaces and practices?* Our goal is not to be exhaustive in providing in-depth descriptions of each site, but rather to take a "first step" to ongoing inquiry that explores the benefits and implications of each "case" and brings attention to their transformative potential, particularly as a collective.

Toward that end, each case below describes the contexts of the NNER partnership site, the ways in which students, families and local communities are being marginalized and excluded, the action being taken by partnership sites to address the injustice, the current outcomes of the outreach, and the future plans for work at the site. The first three cases are of projects being implemented and enacted directly at partnership settings at the university,

college, and community levels and the fourth case is of a collaborative effort across settings to re-establish a committee within the NNER organization that strives to call attention to social justice issues and the urgent need for action and advocacy by all of its constituent members. We believe these cases highlight the many ways in which democracy, education, and social justice intersect and will create more dialogue within the organization about the work being done at different NNER partnership sites and the additional work that still needs to be initiated. We hope that these cases will also provide a means by which to center the voices of marginalized groups at partnership sites throughout the country and point to emergent and promising processes and practices in which partnership sites can continue to reach out to and be more inclusive of all stakeholders present in our schools as we work towards more socially just and equitable schools.

Case study I: Education and Social Justice Program (Western Washington University)

In Fall 2013, Western Washington University (WWU) launched the Education and Social Justice (ESJ) minor, a program of study offered collaboratively through WWU's Woodring College of Education, Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies, and the Department of American Cultural Studies. The goal of the minor is to prepare teachers, youth workers, community organizers, counselors, and other professional educators to understand and effectively use social justice frameworks and apply critical reflection to address equity issues in formal and informal educational

settings, nonprofit, public service, and private organizations. Designed initially as an academic program, the curriculum aims to strengthen student knowledge about the social and political context of schools, the social construction of individual and collective identities, mechanisms of social and cultural reproduction, critical and decolonizing theories and pedagogies, and political movement building for social change.

In less than two years, over 100 students have enrolled in the ESJ minor, an unparalleled growth rate compared to other academic minors at WWU. The demographics of ESJ students indicate that this program has become a magnet for students of color and first generation students. Currently, students of color represent over 50% of students enrolled in the minor, and 48% of ESJ students are first-generation. Compared to campus-wide demographics, the concentration of both students of color and first-generation students in ESJ double the rate of their representation across WWU.

The curricular components of the ESJ minor have been a huge draw for students of color in particular, as noted by the demographic data above. With a critical focus on understanding and historically situating the experiences of marginalized youth in schools, many students of color find the ESJ minor provides an opening to more fully explore questions and concerns that most impact their own families and communities. By applying critical theories of education to these experiences as well as providing opportunities to engage in praxis, ESJ students wrestle with a more nuanced

portrait of the key issues either facilitating or hindering projects of justice in and connected to schools. As several ESJ students have anecdotally noted, the ESJ minor does not just focus on what is unjust with the current educational structure, but on the relationship between individuals, schools, and society, thus infusing agency and possibility for students working for democratic social change.

Programmatically, the ESJ program centers a collaborative, student driven approach. In fact, it was students and key faculty allies who called for the creation of the minor, concerned that there was a lack of critical conversations on campus about the impact of current neoliberal reforms in schools and the need to center social justice as a driving framework in the preparation of teachers and other youth workers. By employing popular education methods rooted in critical pedagogy, ESJ students have been actively involved in several aspects of the design and revision of the minor. Through this process, student investment in the ESJ minor has been unprecedented, reaching far beyond the classroom. For example, advanced ESJ students have formed a peer mentoring program to support incoming students in the minor, others have formed volunteer teaching teams to assist in the instruction of ESJ core courses that are over-capacity due to the minor's popularity, and still others have worked to organize events and conversations across campus to extend what is discussed within ESJ to other campus spaces and student communities. The minor has also become a platform for students to further and deepen their leadership work. For example, several

ESJ students sit on university-wide committees (e.g. the general education requirement reform committee; the board of WWU's Associated Students), others lead student groups such as *MEChA* and the *Black Student Union,* and still others have organized large-scale campaigns for farmworker justice. Among many of the successes, one notable achievement is the effort of two ESJ students to secure an environmental justice (EJ) minor in their primary department of environmental sciences. Propelled by their participation in the ESJ minor, these students are transforming the curricular future of their academic home. This newly formed EJ minor will launch in the Winter 2016 quarter.

In addition to the curricular functions typical of an academic minor, the ESJ minor also organizes and host several events on campus in an effort to cultivate a learning environment that fortifies and furthers institutional commitments to diversity, democracy, critical multiculturalism, and social justice. These efforts have served to develop relationships with ESJ-affiliated faculty across campus and deepen partnerships with several programs and centers. The intent is to build a larger network of individuals that work collaboratively to drive the minor, grow and sustain social justice initiatives across campus, and critically support ESJ students, the majority who traditionally find themselves at the margins in higher education and society generally. While the efforts of WWU's ESJ program have resulted in many positive gains, sustainability is a looming concern. Continued challenges in retaining students of color and first-generation students in universities

nationwide, necessitate prioritizing in-depth advising and support for ESJ students. Combined with its unparalleled growth, the capacity of the program has been thinly stretched. Maintaining a social justice vision for ESJ, not just in its outcomes but in the very process of its design, will require a deeper institutional commitment to engaging democracy as *praxis*. As the program begins to consider the possibility of an ESJ graduate degree, it is these commitments that will serve to measure how well we "walk the talk" of social justice at WWU.

Case study II: The Proud Teacher Initiative, Brooklyn College (City University of New York)

The Proud Teacher Initiative (PTI) offers Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) elementary educators a space to explore the challenges and possibilities of being openly gay in K-5 school settings. Launched by Wayne A. Reed at Brooklyn College in Fall 2013, the Initiative's core group meets regularly to dialogue, build community, and offer support to LGBT teachers as they consider how to best integrate their affectional orientation into classroom practice. The ultimate purpose of PTI is to improve the learning experiences of children by providing them with skilled, competent teachers whose practices are grounded in truth and authenticity.

The idea of starting the Proud Teacher Initiative emerged through Professor Reed's supervision of pre-service teachers. Aware that pre-service teachers who identity as LGBT experience significant insecurities regarding how to handle their self-disclosure in elementary schools, Professor Reed

partnered with the principal of a local elementary school to bring together a core group of tenured lesbian and gay K-5 practitioners in 2013-2014. The practitioners, each representing a different Brooklyn school, met monthly for almost a year, sharing experiences and formulating strategies to support LGBT practitioners.

The core group's conversations during the Initiative's first year reveal a silencing of LGBT voices in New York City public schools. Surrounded by a historically heteronormative culture and fearful of negative reactions from colleagues or parents, the vast majority of gay and lesbian teachers, even in a metropolitan, diverse context like New York City, rarely disclose their LGBT identity, particularly to students and families. This holds true even if the teacher is part of a committed same-sex relationship or functions as openly gay in contexts outside the school.

As a consequence of the Proud Teacher Initiative's work so far, several classroom practitioners self-disclosed as gay or lesbian at their school, including to their students and families. The decision to "come out" took place as a consequence of conversations with others in the core group; it also occurred after focused discussions with the school's building leader. By describing and discussing the complexities and possible ramifications of self-disclosing with other LGBT teachers in the group, teachers were able to find support, practical advice, and the language for voicing their gay identity in a public school setting. As a result of sharing their authentic selves with students and families, each of the practitioners reports improvement in their

self-efficacy and effectiveness as teachers.

In addition to providing space for LGBT practitioners to find their voice, the Proud Teacher Initiative educates and mentors pre-service teachers as they prepare for practice in diverse, urban settings. Mindful that all pre-service teachers in 2015 are full of questions about the role of LGBT identity in public schools, the Initiative hosts workshops on a variety of topics. The audience feedback from these presentations indicates that future educators benefit by considering LGBT topics when they are framed by the experiences of gay and lesbian teachers.

In public schools across the United States, thousands of LGBT teachers offer instruction to tens of thousands of children every day. These practitioners come from a wide range of backgrounds, they teach in a variety of contexts, and they vary in their depth of knowledge, experience, and expertise in their specific disciplinary areas. Although they differ in multiple ways, they generally share one thing in common - they are hesitant to disclose who they are and whom they love in the school where they devote so much of their time.

A fundamental premise of the Proud Teacher Initiative is the belief that the silencing and marginalization of anyone in a school is harmful to the shaping and sustaining of an ideal learning environment. This work is founded on the belief that teaching in a democracy calls for authentic discourse in the classroom and the development of mutual trust between teachers, students, and families. It calls for schools to model the ways in

which education in a democracy listens to and respects all voices. In the 21st Century, such modeling can only occur when the voices of LGBT practitioners are included in the life and work of public schools.

Case study III: The Matthew Shepard Symposium on Social Justice (University of Wyoming)

In 1996, Omawale Akintunda and Margaret Cooney, both College of Education professors Education started the Symposium for the Eradication of Social Inequality at the University of Wyoming. Their mission was to start a dialogue on campus with faculty, staff, students, and members of the greater community on issues related to social justice in education. In 1998, Matthew Shepard, an undergraduate student at the university, was beaten and left for dead on the outskirts of Laramie. Days later he died as a result of his injuries. The University of Wyoming, the people of Laramie and the country were outraged that this young man had been killed for being himself, for being gay. In 2002, the Symposium for the Eradication of Social Inequality changed its name to the Matthew Shepard Symposium on Social Justice to bear Matthew Shepard's name to remember his work as a student and social activist on campus and as a living reminder that life is precious and meaningful. In his name, members of the symposium committee work every year to build a program for the symposium that is focused on issues of inequality, social justice, diversity, and change.

The Matthew Shepard Symposium on Social Justice is a four-day symposium attracting people from all the country to engage in discussions

on the injustices of the world, on ways to become social justice advocates and on ways in which social justice activism can bring positive changes to communities, schools, and universities. The Shepard Symposium is an important event where students, community members, and educators can challenge themselves and others to become social justice advocates. The Symposium is also a gathering space where acceptance and affirmation is central.

The Shepard Symposium makes a call each year for participants to submit proposals for presentations or to just come to the symposium to participate in the discussions. Themes for the symposiums focus on keynote addresses from people like Tim Wise, Peggy McIntosh, Jean Kilbourne, John Corvino, Zach Wahls, and Judy Shepard. Movies and plays are included in the conversation as a way of expressing social justice activism in forms other than the written or spoken word. It has always and remains the intention of the Shepard Symposium to broaden and challenge the minds of its participants.

In April 2015, the Shepard Symposium focused its attention on the growth and support of our Gay, Straight Alliance (GSA) High School Students. With the growing number of suicides and violent retaliations to the bullying of young people we felt the need to stop and recognize the positive work that teachers and students are doing in schools to support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) youth. The response to this year's call for presentations for this topic was overwhelming. At this

year's symposium, over seventy-five students and teachers presented the work they are doing in their schools with GSAs and the work they want to do to stop the alienation of LGBT youth. Many of this year's participants attended presentations and workshops on this topic and were moved and also encouraged by the maturity and eloquence of the student presenters and their teachers who agreed to present on a topic that they cared deeply about.

The Matthew Shepherd Symposium on Social Justice demonstrates what committed educators can accomplish by offering a forum for teachers, students, activists, community leaders and concerned citizens to collectively discuss issues of equity, diversity and social justice. Whether such forums are large or small, they provide important space to exchange ideas and listen to the voices of those who are marginalized and disenfranchised in our society. By creating such spaces, educators contribute to the shaping and sustaining of a free, equitable and open democracy.

Case study IV: The Equity, Diversity and Social Justice Committee

The Equity, Diversity and Social Justice Committee (EDSJ) is a representative body of NNER members with a focused commitment to build schools and communities that are welcoming, inclusive and equipped to serve all students and their families. Officially formed in March 2015, the EDSJ Committee includes over 20 members from a dozen NNER sites around the country. The Committee is an active part of the NNER's governance structure.

The foundations for the current EDSJ Committee were initially laid

by Tina Jacobowitz (Montclair State) and the LGBT Task Force which met during the 2006-2007 year and prepared a report on the status of equity and social justice issues in NNER. A major concern of the Committee is the need to diversify NNER itself so that the organization more fully represents the students, families and communities attending America's schools. At the NNER Annual Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 2013, the report's recommendations were revisited at a session led by Wayne Reed (Brooklyn College), Angela Jaime (University of Wyoming) and Kevin Roxas (Western Washington University) and a task force was formed to strategize on moving forward with plans to further the work on social justice issues. The following year, at the Cincinnati conference in 2014, the task force was formally recognized by NNER's Governing Council and, in February 2015, the newly named Equity, Diversity and Social Justice Committee was added to NNER's by-laws.

The primary work of the EDSJ Committee is to support the existing efforts of NNER members and to build community that leads to further action in behalf of marginalized and oppressed groups in public education. A major concern of the Committee is the need to diversify NNER itself so that the organization more fully represents the students, families and communities attending America's schools. A particular focus of the Committee is creating spaces at NNER's annual meeting for engaged discussions on equity, diversity and social justice issues. At the October conference in Chico, California in 2015, the Committee attempts to highlight best practices by

NNER members related to social justice, as a way of strengthening the work being done at each partnership throughout the year. The EDSJ Committee hopes to foster a vibrant, active interest in challenging the historical and present-day patterns of discrimination which hinder the development of democracy through public education.

Mindful that the building of an inclusive democracy is hard, often challenging work, the EDSJ Committee understands the importance of the kind civil discourse that transcends differences of race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender and sexual orientation. Creating opportunities for such a discourse within NNER and supporting the transference of the dialogue to schools and communities at various NNER settings is central to the Committee's purpose. Given the nation's ongoing struggle to create a society that is safe, affirming and equitable for all, especially for people of color, the Committee is approaching its work with some urgency and welcomes participation by all with commitments to strengthen our democracy through public education.

Conclusion

Since our shared democracy is always a work-in-progress, educators are constantly called to reflect on our progress in shaping the kinds of schools which support and sustain democratic principles. Fundamental to every democracy is the commitment to equity, diversity and social justice. Hence, we are called to continually ask ourselves how well our educational practices reflect those commitments. We should be constantly

in the process of reflection and renewal on these ideas. Our reflection seems especially important now as our nation faces numerous challenges which shake the promise of democracy's future. As educators for social justice, we seek to create school and university learning communities which support Goodlad's vision for the public good and schools as vehicles for engaged democracy. We endeavor to create learning environments that include all students, families and members of local communities, schools which listen to the voices and needs of all school stakeholders, and educators that are attentive to issues of equity, diversity and social justice in our daily practice in schools.

In this paper, we offer concrete examples of work underway at different NNER sites across the country as a way to begin describing possible ways in which action for social justice can be undertaken. Namely, the examples illustrate the integration of social justice into a college curriculum in teacher education at Western Washington University, the creation of a support network of LGBT elementary teachers and their allies which is also involved in educating future teachers on LGBT issues at Brooklyn College, and an annual symposium at the University of Wyoming with a national presenter and participant base that supports and presents research and best practices in social justice education. We also offer a platform for new work on equity, diversity and social justice through the newly formed EDSJ Committee of NNER. This committee provides the opportunity to generate and share ideas for creating the kinds of schools Goodlad envisions.

Initiatives like the ones described in this paper illustrate some of the work related to social justice being undertaken at NNER partner sites throughout the country. By recognizing programs currently being implemented at partner sites that work towards advocacy, social justice, and democracy, we hope that readers can begin to dream of possible initiatives and programs at their own partnership sites in response to pressing needs voiced by students, parents, and members of the local community within their own particular NNER setting.

"The struggle for justice, equity, respect, and appreciation for human diversity has been long and often troubled. It continues to be so. The human race's proclivity for arranging its members in hierarchies of strongly maintained status and privilege is likely to continue as a malaise that can become cancerous. The answer, we know, is education. But education, despite our honoring the concept, it not in itself good. We must intentionally and even passionately inject morality into education (Goodlad, 2003, p. 21)." Goodlad warns us that the "struggle for justice, equity, respect, and appreciation for human diversity" continues to be troubled. He goes on to stress the importance of education as an answer. However, we cannot stop there.

We must continue to "intentionally" and "passionately" act in ways that build greater capacity at our school, university, and community settings so that all students, teachers, and members of the larger community can realize and actualize the roles they have to play in creating more just and

equitable schools for our nation's students, as they prepare to take up roles as leaders within our shared society. Without this constant and deliberate action, we believe that we walk ourselves closer out to what Goodlad (2003) refers to as "the edge of a precipice" for our work in schools and in the building of local communities. The call to act and work for social justice within our partnership settings is a critical one. Failing to respond will likely result in us waking up to increasingly deeper fissures in the inequitable conditions within schools, a future that we have unwittingly and unconsciously created and allowed to exist.

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Democratic Science:
Engaging Middle School Students in Meaningful Practices through Community Engagement

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Abstract

This paper presents a framework for democratic science by exploring how middle school students practice democratic science and how democratic science practices impact student and community engagement. Democratic science themes included: 1) co-constructing meaningful and engaging science through scientific modeling, 2) constructing science knowledge through peer dialogue and sharing, and 3) engaging the students and their community in scientific practices. Participation and engagement of students and their community illustrate the value of democratic science. The viability of including the community in science and providing transformative science experiences to students are described in this case study.

Keywords or phrases: middle school students, science education, democratic

science, community engagement, scientific practices, Next Generation Science Standards

Introduction

As science educators and supporters of inquiry-based science teaching and learning, we strive to construct an environment where students are engaged in science learning experiences that are more democratic and where ideas and varied socio-cultural experiences will be blended and participation valued. Inquiry science teaching relies on active participation from students and participation is the major tenant of democratic practices (Aikenhead, 1997; Upadhyay & Albrecht, 2011). All earlier advocates of democratic education, including Dewey and Freire, assert that education should prepare children to make their own decisions rather than be subjected to someone else's decisions that do not connect to their lives (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1996). Goodlad (2004, 2002) further asserts that the purpose of school is to provide access to curriculum and pedagogy that connects to opportunities for students' engagement and participation in society. Teachers must develop a supportive and inclusive classroom culture that values democratic opportunities and experiences. In this paper our goal is to explore how middle school students at one school practice democratic science and how democratic science practices build confidence in students and support community engagement in science.

In this paper, we will first present a review of the literature on democratic education and science education and how the literature suggests

a framework for *democratic science*; second we will describe how middle school students were involved in classroom practices of democratic science; third we will share our findings from this experience and how it supports the development of our framework of democratic science; and finally discuss the implications of this framework on science education.

Democratic Practices in Teaching and Learning Science

Science teaching and learning have been dominated by the vision that students need to know the facts and truths about established science. As a result, there is no need for students to question the science. The problem with this view of science is that it completely ignores the fundamental values of participating, questioning, and explaining in science, undermining the very thing that drives all scientific discovery.

Science has always progressed because scientists are allowed to question the nature of existing scientific knowledge. Science has built a reputation on allowing people to challenge it based on histories and experiences (Giroux, 1993). Similarly teachers who have allowed students to bring their home experiences into the science classrooms have successfully engaged and built student confidence in doing science (Calabrese-Barton & Tan, 2009; Upadhyay, 2006). In a review, Glickman (1998) suggested that the democratic practice implemented by teachers as a way of learning lead to major "success in the intellectual achievement of all students, from preschool through adulthood," (p. 4). His assertion aligns with other studies relating student learning, content gains and democratic practices,

engagement in class and participatory methods, student involvement, and student choice (Joyce & Weil, 1996; Lee et al. 1995; Leinhart, 1993; Newmann et al. 1995;Vygotsky, 1978). This is not to say that gut feelings and "common sense" should be trusted rather than the actual discipline of knowledge. This age of scientific accomplishment and enlightenment exists because we continue to discard troglodyte viewpoints in favor of a more progressive scientific literate society.

One of the ultimate examples of democratic science is citizen science where every day individuals contribute in generating science knowledge that is truly based on democratic practices. In the case of citizen science, where citizens not the scientists are the key data collectors over a long period of time, teachers can guide students to be scientists in the field. Many teachers have helped their students become a part of the longest running citizen science called the Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count, in which everyday citizens participate. (For details see Cornell University's Citizen Science Toolkit, www.birds.cornell.edu/citscitoolkit). Students learn the scientific methods of data collection, analysis, documentation processes, and building consensus to help gain knowledge about the migration patterns of birds, the environment, and the influence of climatic changes. Studies based on the Audubon project and similar citizen science projects have shown that there is gain in science knowledge as well as understanding of scientific practices among students (Dunn et al., 2005).

Another important component of democratic practices is to provide

students with the power to suggest adjustments and revisions in science curriculum based on what the students want to learn in science (Brunsell & Fleming, 2014; Curtis, 1993). When science curriculum and lessons become too rigid students quickly lose interest in learning because the science in the classroom is not the science of their world. For example Carson's (1962) scientific inquires on bird declines was based on her interest in the declining bird population which lead her to show that DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) was the most devastating cause of water and habitat contamination. Suppressing students' interest in learning not only leads to apathy towards studying science but also alienates scientists from the public, imparting a stigma of a top-down approach to understanding science. Students then do not identify with science and believe science is not for them to understand.

In any democratic science classroom there needs to be a constant opportunity to create an environment that is dialogical in nature, thus creating a dialogical pedagogy for science. Fernandez-Balboa and Marshall (1994) define dialogical pedagogy as an active discussion that allows students to voice their ideas and arguments. This kind of pedagogical stance permits students to explore not only their own ideas but also their peers' in furthering their understanding of scientific practices and knowledge. In the current *NGSS* document (NGSS Lead States, 2013) and also in *Science For All Americans* document (AAAS, 1990) there is a tremendous focus on building cooperation, knowledge sharing, communicating, and

argumentation embedded within the content. These habits and skills could only be developed in students, if science teaching and learning follows a dialogic pedagogy. Additionally dialogic pedagogy is based on constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) of learning where students construct meaning of their science learning through social interactions. Dialogic pedagogy based on constructivist learning theory further engages students in science by allowing students to bring their prior experiences and knowledge into the science classroom, adding personal stake in learning and connecting science to their own lives (Corburn, 2005).

If schools can engage their community of students and the students' parents in science, they create a community committed to the same outcome and directly benefit through shared resources. The diversity of students in US schools further demand that these relationships stay strong because the student diversity reflects the community diversity. In a study Berlin & Berlin (2004) used Mayan community knowledge to understand local medicinal plants and document them for understanding how the local community utilized them for personal health. They used theatrical performance to show connections and value of ethnobotany in science and science education. Similarly, Albrecht & Upadhyay (in review) presented Somali adults sharing how honey is used as a preservative to extend the shelf life of perishable fresh fruits such as strawberries in their community. These studies show that when the community found out that science was connected to their knowledge, there was a greater support for learning science.

The purpose of this study intends to extend the knowledge of democratic practices in science classrooms by describing how democratic practices were practiced in a middle school classroom and how students were able to draw the community into science through the school Family Science Explanation Night.

Supporting Engagement of Democratic Science in the Classroom and Community

Context and Participants. Most traditional family science nights include hands-on activities with little meaningful learning for students. Our goal was to transform the traditional family science night into a more meaningful experience by engaging approximately 180 middle school students in scientific practices of modeling, explanation and argumentation (NGSS Lead States, 2013; NRC, 2012) with the peer and parent community. Engaging in scientific practices was not a new experience for these particular students, they were already working with practices using the *Investigating and Questioning Our World Through Science and Technology* (IQWST) middle school curriculum (Krajcik, Reiser, Sutherland, & Fortus, 2013). We wanted to continue these practice-based efforts in the classroom and also make science learning meaningful to their personal community. Student demographics included approximately 95% Caucasian and 5% multiracial, and 50% female and 50% male in this suburban/rural Midwestern school.

Approximately two months before the Family Science Explanation Night, students constructed model-based explanations about “how” and

"why" a particular physical science phenomenon occurs (Kenyon, Schwarz, & Hug, 2008). During this time, students recorded notes and reflections in an interactive science notebook (Fleming, Kenyon, Kenyon, & Barker, 2015). Students recorded notes and observations on the right side pages of the notebook. The left side pages allowed students to connect their understanding of the right side pages and how they *interacted* with the information in reflective ways. Students used the notebook as an organizational tool to construct, evaluate, revise, and reflect on their diagrammatic models, as well as to reflect on interacting and communicating the observed phenomena to an authentic audience of peers, parents, and community members.

As they prepared for the Family Science Explanation Night, students worked in pairs to put together tri-fold display boards that would invite community members to construct knowledge together. This unique approach proposed for the family audience promoted more than just observation, but participation in the explanation process with the students. The community members moved from display to display, using post-it notes that they attached to the tri-folds to explain, question and reflect on their ideas about the physical science phenomena being presented to them. This opened up a social exchange between presenter and audience as they converged on a consensus explanation of scientific phenomena.

Case Study Design. This case study is predominantly qualitative with an emphasis on cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009). The qualitative nature of this study provides a more in-depth look at explaining the how and why

students in a common experience – preparing and implementing a Family Science Explanation Night – participate and have aligned or unaligned perceptions. We compared across middle school students' interactive science notebook reflections to build illustrative explanations and themes (Yin, 2009).

In the notebooks, students individually wrote reflections in response to formal questions designed in collaboration between the teacher and two university faculty members. Project reflections include student responses to various questions over the first month of the project. During the first week, students described themselves, strengths, and interests. In the second week, students reflected on their initial understanding of a particular physical science phenomenon. Students further reflected and connected to the phenomenon during the third week, responding to questions such as: What are examples of your phenomenon in the real world? How does the phenomenon connect to your activity? In the fourth week, students reflected more on their perceptions of the project, their models, and connections to real examples of their phenomena.

Presentation preparation reflections include students' reflective responses to formal questions during the fifth week of the project. Questions included: How does your model help you present/talk about the scientific phenomenon? How do you feel about talking to your parents, others parents, and your peers about your scientific phenomena?

Post presentation reflections include students' reflective responses

to formal questions following the Family Science Explanation Night. Questions included: What have you learned? How do you believe models help your understanding? How did the audience interact with you?

To understand the nature of parents' perceptions, data was additionally collected from parents attending the Family Science Explanation Night using a survey. Survey questions asked parents about engagement, importance, and beliefs about the event (see Appendix).

All analyses were conducted using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), as well as concurrent data analyses and triangulation of multiple data sources (Creswell & Clark, 2007). By comparing students' project reflections, presentation preparation reflections, and post presentation reflections, common and noteworthy themes emerged from the data. Interpretations were checked with participants and across researchers.

Theme 1: Co-Constructing Meaningful Engaging Science Though Scientific Modeling

Democratic classrooms involve members of the classroom in making a decision about certain processes or products. Students needed to convince or persuade an audience with strong evidence (i.e. repeating trials, revising models, and demonstrating the physical science activity). Students decided how to convince their peers of their scientific explanation portrayed in their models. Peers evaluated and reflected on each other's models, creating a co-construction context for students to collaborate on the modeling process. For

example Kate shared in her project reflections, “I think that we can do a little better…[our model is] not very convincing,” after sharing her model with classmates. Claire claimed, “Our model is coming along; we’re gradually adding in detail…[it] is pretty convincing.” Jack reported, “It [model] is well made…I would give it a 7 because we didn’t show every tiny invisible bit.” Juliet wrote, “I feel that our model is easy to read and understand. It is very convincing because other people outside of our group understand it.” In these situations students had to convince their peers through evidence, argument, deliberations, valuing and listening to each other’s ideas.

In addition the students also had to convince their parents and the community to agree to listen, participate and support the science learning process. This was achieved through dialogue, sharing the importance of doing the activity, and showing that learning and engagement had value to the community.

One of our goals was to understand and document students’ roles in engaging their more reluctant peers and community members in the co-construction of modeling. During the first week, students collectively created a class model of air pressure as they observed their teacher karate chop a paint stick in half that was held down by one sheet of newspaper. Each class period created a diagrammatic model of this phenomenon on the whiteboard. Throughout each period, the models changed in perspective; however, the science phenomenon and class explanation remained the same. The creativity and enjoyment they got by creating a class model had them

more interested in making their own models. After the modeling instruction, students decided how they wanted to build models showing both visible and invisible features of the phenomenon. Students chose from eleven physical science phenomena (i.e. how does density work and how does gravity work) in teams of two. Pairings decided how and what to model, and evaluated and revised models together using a co-constructing, decision-making process.

The process of student co-construction began with researching the phenomena. In the pre-project phase students shared ideas and through dialogue reduced to the one/s they could accomplish and interested them. Students conducted the activity and practiced them before presenting to the larger audience of their classmates. Students debriefed individually on their personal experience in their notebooks. Below is an instance of this process:

> <u>Project reflections:</u> "I am interested in learning physical science." "I am interested in learning about models." Most students reflected that they were interested in learning about the physical science content and scientific modeling.
> <u>Presentation preparation reflections:</u> "My model is improving and shows my intelligence is changing." Many students reflected that their model gets better as their understanding of the science gets better.
> <u>Post presentation reflections:</u> "My strengths were being able to explain our phenomenon and how it relates to real life as well as our activity. "I learned that in science it is very important to collect and represent data. This is evidence." Students reflected on the importance of *explanatory* models and using evidence to support ideas.

Because the students co-constructed the model through dialogue and compromise they were personally invested in learning science. An uncertain student Ana responded, "John [my partner] says that the reason the balloon blew up was because of a reaction between the yeast and sugar products that created carbon dioxide. We need to find a way to make the chemical reaction more understandable so that is it not confusing and is easy to understand." Danielle shared, "…we had to make the board look presentable and we made a moving felt model." Lucia shared that she learned, "…how to teach others as well as learning [the phenomenon]." and Michael disclosed, "[Our model is] convincing, because we showed another group and they learned what was happening in our model."

Most students commented, "We tried our best," when asked about their models. They were very proud of their work as well as their confidence in science improved substantially. Many of these students had never participated in a Family Science Night or Science Fair event prior to this experience. Students reported in their notebook reflections that they felt anxious about attending and presenting their work at the Family Science Explanation Night to an audience of parents, community members, and peers. However after the event, students overwhelmingly reflected on their increased knowledge of how and why their physical science phenomenon works and how they felt more confident about their physical science phenomenon after interacting (through modeling, dialoguing, and building consensus) with an audience. Students showed how democratic science

practices become valuable as they carried out their activity.

Theme 2: Constructing science knowledge through peer dialogue and sharing: middle school students increased interest and confidence in using models to explain physical science

For many students in middle school grades physical science becomes a challenge as they find the concepts to be a bit more abstract and less relevant to their experiences. One of the ways to have the whole class and community interested in physical science was to use social interactions, reflection, and sharing to learn science. Students continually reflected and connected their physical science phenomenon to real-life examples, personal experiences, and sought to add creativity and personal expression to their tri-fold display boards. For example Benjamin wrote, “Energy is all around us, happening every second around the globe.” Kelly shared, “We should care about gravity because gravity affects everything and everyone.” When asked what they’ve learned, Charlie explained, “I learned how to model and show the invisible and it helped me learn how to speak in front of people.” Walt said, “…When modeling, I was very creative in the way I drew some objects.” The notebooks became a safe, risk-free place for them to share, revise, and build consensus for representing their ideas. Claire cited, “…communicating with my partners,” as a strength to her project. Kate communicated, “[The notebook] helped me write down my thoughts and has my answers....” Ana discovered, “My model and notebook have improved and show all my intelligence on surface tension. My model and

explanation changed. I can see this in my notebook. I had no idea surface tension had to do with water molecule bonds." Sami wrote, "I didn't know much of anything about density before the project, and now I have a better understanding." Maddy revealed, "I've learned that each and every time you make a model, it will improve."

Students discovered that their peers had similar fears of public speaking and many of their parents who would make up the audience were also apprehensive about physical science. Students had to work to convince classmates and an audience outside of class how and why physical science phenomena occurred. This led to greater student interest and confidence while explaining and modeling. Students felt more and more comfortable each time they presented. Multiple examples from reflections include the following:

> <u>Project reflections:</u> "I think my model is good but not good enough compared to others models." "My model is not very convincing because it lacks scientific terms."
> <u>Presentation preparation reflections:</u> "I feel confident that my two partners and I know what we are doing." "…We showed another group and they learned what was happening in our model." "I feel confident that I understand it, but I don't know if the kids will be interested."
> <u>Post presentation reflections:</u> "[Scientific modeling] is very convincing because people outside of our group understand it." "I now know how to interact with people better and share my knowledge. I also know how to interpret the things I learn better. And I know how to show my understanding of it." "I became more confident over time as I presented many times."

Students communicated their activities, decisions, and findings to their classmates and also between groups of classmates who were working on similar and different projects within physical science. Students were exchanging not only the content but also their own personal insecurities of failure and exhilaration of discovering new things or being able to share what they learned. What was even more valuable was how they understood the importance of learning to "…interact with people better and share [their] knowledge…"

In another instance students explained that they had a better understanding of models and modeling in science and how they could now explain their understanding of a very difficult phenomenon.

> <u>Project reflection at the beginning:</u> "A model represents a scientific principle."
> <u>Presentation preparation reflections:</u> "A model is a good way to represent information. It shows an example of the phenomenon and proves it is there." "I know and understand scientific models to be a diagram/explanation showing more than the human eye can see."
> <u>Post presentation reflections:</u> **"**[My model] helps me present and talk about the visible and invisible things happening in my experiment." "I got more in depth understanding of our phenomenon, when I thought I knew everything about our phenomenon."

The importance of discourse and being able to co-construct a clearer picture of physical science understanding was one of the most important aspects of this project. Kelly noted, "[My model] helps me present and talk about things and actions happening in my experiment that you can and cannot

actually see." Students clearly recognized that doing an experiment and getting the results was as important as communicating their results to peers and to the community. Students were learning in a social environment where exchange of ideas and counter ideas were an integral part of the culture.

Theme 3: Community and Parents Participation: Developing capacity to communicate physical science content to an audience

A goal of democratic science is to increase participation of non-science lay people, a tricky thing to do because the content is not usually on the minds of these people. Students in this project interacted with the audience in a conversation attempting to engage this community in physical science content that the majority of the audience was not prepared to know. Students demonstrated activities, revealed models, and explained how and why phenomena work. The audience responded, questioned and evaluated the scientific explanations. Students engaged the community in science through direct participation in their activities and through community evaluation. Some students initially had reservations and outright fear of presenting their work. Over time these same students became excited in presenting their work to an authentic audience – making science participatory for all.

> <u>Project reflections:</u> "I am not looking forward to science night. I don't want to talk."
> <u>Presentation preparation reflections:</u> "I am looking forward to being able to teach something new." "I'm looking forward to knowing my phenomenon right off my head. I'm excited the parents are going to interact with us.
> <u>Post presentation reflections:</u> "I felt excited when the audience

> interacted with me. I think they were able to learn something because we explained it until they understood." "The audience actually interacted with me better than I thought."

In participatory science, all members of the audience have to be able to find something useful and worth learning. Our students not only engaged the audience in their work but also provided an opportunity for the community to interact with them and the science. As Claire noted, "Our audience was able to learn about our phenomenon. I know this because they talked to us about it and asked us questions." Students also talked about how they increased their confidence in science but more importantly were able to find it useful and valuable for themselves and the community in which they lived.

Participating parents echoed the students' responses to the Family Science Explanation Night event. Parents shared the following perceptions:

> "I was impressed with the event. The kids were confident when they spoke. They seemed 'grown up.'"
> "I used to dislike science at school and these projects made it interesting."
> "What a valuable learning experience. Really liked how the explanation/answer was covered up until after the public's input was sought. Each student I talked with had a thorough understanding of the 'how' and 'why' something happened. Also, feel like this would be a worthwhile event to open up to general public and 6th and 7th grade classes. Awesome job, kudos to the 8th grade science teachers!!"
> "I was very impressed with the kids creative ideas…and how well they were able to communicate what they were doing and why. They

all seemed to be having fun and learning. This is what is it all about!"
"I really enjoyed this night. The kids were all very engaging, answered my questions and it was refreshing to see them excited about science."
"We thought it was an outstanding event! Ana was excited about it and looking forward to it from the preparation stages on. She learned and we learned!"

Implications for Science Education

As science educators prepare to broaden the appeal of doing and learning science for "all", there is a clear need to rethink science as democratizing human participation. Science educators seek to make science more equitable, and an important component of this could be including more democratic practices in science classrooms. From the analyses, three important and valuable themes emerged about *democratic science* teaching and learning:

1. Importance of voice in a democratic classroom

Consistent with Muller, Tippins, and Bryan (2012), democratic practices in science education can increase voice and reflection. Giving voice to students decreases monological pedagogy and reduces a teacher centered science classroom environment. Students have the opportunity to voice their choice of science content they want to learn, nature of connections between science and their lives, and science questions they want to investigate in class. Additionally when students are allowed to voice their ideas (Andrews, 1994), reflections, and community connections, the power relationships between a teacher and his or her students shifts greatly

towards the students. This kind of shift in power relationship is fundamental to inquiry science and gives agency to students in science learning..

2. Importance of dialogue as science practice in a democratic classroom

In a democratic science classroom students build the practices of dialogue, negotiation skills, and community engagement. Dialogue is the foundation of democracy. Therefore, students have to learn to dialogue with teachers and their peers (Benne, 1990) in science classrooms. Learning in science happens when students are engaged in constructive dialogue with their peers, their teachers, and the myriad of evidence-based findings that students present in class based on science activities. This study illustrates that students deliberately created spaces for each other to have a productive and respectful dialogue for consensus. Equally impressive, the democratic practice of a community dialogue allowed all to have a voice in the decisions they made. Physical science has always been one of the most challenging scientific domains for students in the middle school, particularly due to gender, social, and cultural issues (Osborne et al., 2003). Yet, it provides some of the best phenomena to explore modeling, argumentation and explanation. The teacher's decision to use physical science and provide students the opportunity to select the phenomenon of most interest to them, provided the platform for engaging students in scientific modeling, argumentation and explanation practices. Students decisions to socially participate in the learning of physical science content provided opportunities for co-construction of what they wanted to pursue, how they wanted to pursue it,

and for what purposes. This project epitomized democratic pedagogy.

3. Importance of community in a democratic science classroom

A science classroom has to become an inclusive community where students can engage and practice skills, ideas, and values based on the scientific community and also be able to draw from their own home community experiences. Students' inclusion of community and the engagement of parents built confidence in their own sense of learning and engaging in science. Our findings concur with Aslaksen & Myhr (2007) and Thayer-Bacon (2003) in that when there are multiple stakeholders with a multitude of views and knowledge in a decision, there is a higher degree of confidence around that decision. Furthermore confidence grew as students' decisions became inclusive of diverse ideas and values of their peers, teacher, science, and their own community.

Students often behave differently in school than outside of school and therefore have difficulty applying what they learn in school to their everyday lives (Goodlad, 2004, 2002). Our vision of science education is directly aligned with democratic practices where students learn content and the way content is produced in science that resembles scientific community practices such as evidence-based decisions, dialogue, and questioning of old and new ideas based on evidence and other related science ideas. Using decisions, students successfully engaged in scientific practices and knowledge was further enhanced through critical reflection. The viability of including the community and providing transformative science experiences

to students looks beyond content mastery. Aligned to Goodlad's (2002) notion of "educational apprenticeship", the classroom becomes a space and place for students to learn *how* to participate and *why* their participation is necessary in not only the school community, but also the local community and scientific community. Democratization in science education is possible if students, teachers, schools, and communities provide spaces for decision-making.

We are not proposing a panacea through this study; we are proposing a science experience that could provide spaces for student exploration and critical decision-making about content, curricula, audience, and social engagement. We are also not suggesting that modeling is the only way for meaningful democratic science experiences. Our suggestion and consideration is to show how teachers and students can co-construct a learning environment that is intentionally reflective of students' interests. For science teachers and teacher educators, democratic science is the heart of inquiry teaching and learning.

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Appendix

Family Science Explanation Night Parent Participant Survey
Thank you for attending and participating in the Family Science Explanation Night. We appreciate your feedback about the event. Please fill out the following survey by checking the appropriate boxes. Your feedback is import to us!

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I enjoyed the Family Science Explanation Night.				
2. I learned useful information about physical science.				
3. I believe the Family Science Explanation Night was important for the 8th graders.				
4. In general, the 8th graders' scientific presentations were engaging for me.				
5. I would encourage other families in the future to participate in a Family Science Explanation Night.				
Please share any comment or questions about the event and your experience below. Thank you for your feedback				

School-University Partnerships That Move Learning Forward for All

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Abstract

K-8 university teacher education programs can provide win-win opportunities with school partners. The authors describe a school-university partnership in which teacher candidates learn how to assess and use data to inform instruction while courses in schools support in-service teacher learning and schools' literacy intervention goals.

Keywords: School-based partnerships, data-driven instruction, nurture learning and well-being of every student

Introduction

Recent reforms in teacher education require teacher preparation programs to link teacher candidate performance to student learning. For example, in our own state of Washington, all teacher preparation programs must "document positive impact on student learning" (Professional Educators Standards Board, 2010). At the national level, proposed rules by the Education Department would evaluate teacher preparation programs, in part, on how future K-12 students of their graduates learn (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Already, national accreditation standards for teacher candidate programs include a standard which states that a program must demonstrate, "the impact of its completers on P-12 student learning and development, classroom instruction, and schools" (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, n/d). This challenge requires teacher preparation programs to think carefully about the clinical and practical experiences teacher candidates have throughout their program and how programs and their teacher candidates use data responsively to support student learning. How can we ensure that such mandates help us empower teacher candidates and our partner schools to nurture the learning and the well-being of every student? How can we help teacher candidates and our partner schools use data more responsively, ensuring equity for all?

In line with the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) mission, faculty in our elementary education program take responsibility for improving the conditions for learning in P-12 schools, institutions

of higher education, and communities. We have partnered with schools for over 15 years to provide theory to practice experiences for teacher candidates, focused on providing access to knowledge for all children and basing teaching on the sensitivity to the unique potential of learners through “nurturing pedagogy”. This has included an increasing emphasis in our literacy coursework on data-driven instruction. We draw on initial data from our partner schools and help our teacher candidates to confirm, refute or extend that with their own data. From the combination, which includes considering students’ funds of knowledge and culturally relevant pedagogy, our teacher candidates plan and provide instruction.

In our literacy and reading endorsement methods sequences, we have established partnerships that engage university faculty with public schools as equal partners for several purposes. First, these partnerships help us to ensure that our future teachers understand how to use data to differentiate the learning and literacy experiences of each student (Hamilton, Halverson, Jackson, Mandinach, Supovitz, & Wayman, 2009). Second, the partnerships provide an opportunity to support teachers and schools as they strive to close the wide opportunity gap (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006) in partner settings that represent ethnically and socioeconomically diverse public schools. And third, we have found that partnerships allow both teachers and faculty to continue honing their own understandings related to data-driven instruction as we work with teacher candidates and those already in the field.

Over time, the collaborations have deepened and are evolving into a carefully aligned plan that 1) builds on the developing understandings of the teacher candidates, 2) provides a deliberate range of demographic experiences for teacher candidates 3), supports K-8 partner schools' intervention systems in an intentional manner, 4) provides professional development opportunities for K-8 partners, and 5) ensures current field knowledge for teacher education faculty. We believe such partnerships provide win-win opportunities for teacher candidates to learn how to assess and use data to inform instruction while supporting in-service teacher learning and schools' literacy intervention goals.

Conceptual Framework

Quality data is essential to inform classroom instruction if we are to close the opportunity gap and ensure that all students are Career and College Ready (Riddle Buly & Valencia, 2002), but quality data must go beyond traditional academic numbers (e.g. scores on standardized assessments) to include backgrounds and goals of the students. In 2009, the Alliance for Excellent Education held a symposium in which a focus topic was how to move data from compliance purposes to using data to improve student performance in every classroom. A shift from a focus on compliance to a focus on instruction creates a context in which data links directly to instruction, allowing teachers to be more responsive to the specific needs of specific students (Chappuis, 2014). This shift matches what we are working toward as a philosophy in our teacher education program. Although the

rhetoric surrounding data-based decision making goes back decades, it is rare to find examples of how teachers learn to consider data that includes who students are, the funds of knowledge they bring, and their personal goals as part of narrowing the opportunity gap. We know that data-based intervention, formative evaluation, and feedback can have powerful influences on achievement (Hattie, 2009). Yet, we have much more to learn if data-driven instructional decisions are to improve student outcomes (Cuban, 2011).

A critical goal of the literacy methods series in our program is to ensure that our future teachers have a comprehensive understanding about using data in the classroom, since "the teacher is the most important agent of assessment" (NCTE/IRA, 2009, Standard 2). We find it essential that teacher candidates develop knowledge about what literacy data can and cannot tell classroom teachers, that they recognize that academic data about students' literacy learning does not provide a complete picture of the students with whom they work, and that they must be capable of using academic data and their broader understanding of the learner to engage in the teaching and learning cycle effectively. In order for teacher candidates to fully understand the role that data plays in teacher decision-making they must have opportunities to engage data in making teaching decisions with real students -- considering what standardized tests tell them (or don't tell them), looking at teacher-collected data, planning for instruction, and collecting and using formative assessment data for on-going learning (DeLuca,

Chavez, Bellara, & Cao, 2013; Hawkins, Kroeger, Musti-Rao, Barnett, & Ward, 2008). School-based partnerships provide teacher candidates with real-life examples of how a student's literacy assessment information is only one piece in understanding that student as a literacy learner. Considering students' cultural backgrounds, funds of knowledge, opportunities to learn, teacher expectations, and personal preferences and goals puts literacy data in context and frames how teacher candidates might drive learning forward (NCTE/IRA, 2009). This is critical, as a key principal for fair and equitable assessment is that it must be "differentiated to accommodate the ability, social, cultural and linguistic background of every student" (Scott, Webber, Lupart, Aitken, & Scott, 2013). Teacher candidates then must use all of that information to make planning and instructional decisions, involve students' in collecting formative assessment, and ensure that their work with students is having a positive impact on their development as literacy learners.

Closing the opportunity gap has become the central goal for many diverse schools (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006), including those with whom we partner. For example, one of our partner schools has worked extensively with our college to gather data on the wide range of assets and needs presented by the school's students, families, and teachers in order to capitalize on strengths and address challenges (Chu, Jones, Clancy, & Donnelly, 2014; Korsmo et al, 2015). While this school, and others like it, are committed to this goal, finding the resources and expertise necessary is significantly

challenging (Carter & Welner, 2013). Finding a way to address opportunity gaps in the areas of academic language and literacy is critical as those areas are tied to successes in other disciplines as well as achievement generally (Cummins, 2011; Lee & Buxton, 2013). High quality assessment data in language and literacy is necessary in order to identify students' specific needs, and if we are to move students forward at a rate that actually makes progress in shrinking the gap, then that data must also be contextualized. Potentially, teacher candidates can provide new tools and understandings about assessment as well as the ability to work one-on-one or in small groups, while schools and teachers can help teacher candidates learn about local literacy assessment data as well as provide broader perspectives on the students and their families.

Teacher educators have the responsibility of ensuring that their own knowledge about data-driven literacy instruction is up-to-date (International Reading Association, 2010). Like the teachers and administrators with whom we partner, we are continuing to learn about how to collect and use literacy data in an effective manner and to link that data with knowledge about who students are individually. Taking the theory and research we teach in the classroom and working with teacher candidates as they attempt to make sense of it in practice provides multiple challenges and negotiations (Williams, 2014) as well as continual opportunities for deepening our own understandings as we learn with and from our partners. Such opportunities to learn, when made transparent to teacher candidates

also become opportunities to model what it means to be a member of a collaborative learning community and a reflective practitioner (Hudson-Ross & Graham, 2010). Despite the challenges of multiple roles and layers that teacher educators take on by partnering in this way, we believe this work is essential. As Zeichner (2010) has noted, "Where field experiences are carefully coordinated with coursework and carefully mentored, teacher educators are better able to accomplish their goals in preparing teachers to successfully enact complex teaching practices" (2010, p. 95).

By making complex and comprehensive use of data to drive decision-making and to design instruction that meets the specific needs of individual children the central element of our partnerships in the field we are able to serve the multiple goals of preparing highly-qualified teacher candidates, supporting teachers and schools in addressing opportunity gaps, and ensuring that we, as teacher educators, remain up-to-date. In this way, assessment data becomes an opportunity to reduce inequities, an important goal for all our teacher education programs. This approach to framing field-based experiences with responsive data use at the center infuses much of the literacy coursework in our elementary program. What follows is additional background for our program as well as a specific example of a course located in a series taken by those of our teacher candidates who are adding a reading endorsement onto their initial teaching certificate.

Local Context

Engaging in strong partnerships is infused throughout the mission of the regional college where this teacher education program is housed in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. The mission of the college includes the following:

> ...facilitates life-long learning through exemplary teaching to prepare quality education, health, and human services professionals for democratic citizenship and meaningful careers. As a college that serves the state, nation, and world, we construct, transform, and convey knowledge by integrating research, theory, and practice; cultivate student growth through extensive community and school engagement in collaboration with exemplary practicing professionals; act with respect for individual differences, including taking a strengths-based view; develop collaborative partnerships that promote the learning and well-being of individuals, families, and the community; and evaluate processes and outcomes to ensure continual program improvements.
>
> The vision of the college is to foster "community relationships and a culture of learning that advances knowledge, honors diversities, and promotes social justice."

Our teacher education program purposely includes a range of experiences for teacher candidates. From the first day of their teacher education program, candidates are in public schools, working directly with K-12 students. Candidates are also involved in many service learning opportunities with students in the community. We purposely work with schools with diverse populations, including a range of languages, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic opportunities. We believe that the more

diverse the experiences are in the preparation, the more prepared our candidates will be for their future classrooms. As a college of education, we focus on education as social justice and recognize that who a learner is reaches far beyond the classroom.

A Partnership in Progress

Candidates in our teacher education program who are working toward a state reading endorsement participate in a culminating course where they have the opportunity to consolidate previous coursework and experiences. As we design the field experience for this culminating course, we strive to partner with schools that are experiencing challenges in meeting the needs of the students. This could be for a variety of reasons, but is often due to changing demographics in the student body and the need for veteran teachers to update learning that accompanies changing times. Often this means working with a school that is under scrutiny for several years of low test scores. We currently work with a K-8 school approximately 20 miles from our main campus where 80% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch, an indicator of socioeconomic need. At this school, 60% of the students are identified as Hispanic or Latino of any race by the state report card. Of that 60%, many are students who come from families where an indigenous language like Mixteco is spoken, and many families do not speak either English or Spanish in their homes. Often it is these trilingual students, who come from a non-print home language, who are identified for extra support. Further, many of the families work in farming industries and

at times are migrating to other areas for work meaning that the student body fluctuates. Some students also make extended visits to Mexico during the school year, which teachers view as problematic.

All of these factors, and any other factors unique to a partner school, must be taken into account as we begin working with any school. In the current school, we begin with a meeting between the teacher education faculty involved, school and district administration, school literacy support teachers, and ELL teachers to examine data. The school reading specialist and the principal serve as the conduits between the mainstream classroom teachers and our planning group. When we meet, the school shares the data from a grade level where they believe our support would be beneficial. Together, we examine existing data and goals for the students at this grade or grade levels. The initial data comes from a variety of sources, including state-required assessments, reading assessments administered by the reading teachers and their staff, language assessment data collected by the school ELL specialists, and classroom data from the classroom teachers. For our preservice teachers and the planning for our work with students, the most beneficial beginning data comes from a writing pre-assessment around a unit of study (Calkins, 2013) given by the classroom teachers. This writing sample is provided to our teacher education students. Using the rubrics contained within the Calkins materials, the students assess strengths and needs in terms of the type of writing at a particular grade level. The second piece of useful beginning data comes from the reading teacher who

oversees administration and evaluation of an informal reading assessment. The school currently uses the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) (Beaver, 2004) which includes the use of oral reading records and comprehension conversations to identify a student's current demonstration of reading level, strategies, and skills. This assessment aligns with what our candidates are taught as best practice in reading assessment in their literacy methods courses.

Because the teacher candidates in our most popular major are working toward a P-12 reading endorsement and P-12 ELL endorsement, the age of students we might serve is open; all students in this K-8 school are considered. The support that various students are receiving during the day is considered, and a joint decision is made on who would benefit from a five week, ten session supplemental experience to enhance the school experience. This experience will be offered in an extended day format, adding 1 ½ hours to the end of the school day. Students are invited, based on the assessment information, to participate in the after-school literacy club, with our university teacher candidates. It has become a very popular activity at the school, with students asking the reading teacher if they can attend if they are not invited.

Faculty talk with the grade level teachers and support staff to learn about specific goals that the school has for the students during the calendar time that our candidates will be working with K-8 students so that what happens after-school is linked with and either previews or extends what is

happening during the regular school day. The teacher candidates use their primary text, *When Readers Struggle: Teaching that Works* (Fountas & Pinnel, 2009) and *The Units of Study in Opinion/Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing Series* (2013) from the students' grade level as their first source for thinking about what the assessment data they have collected suggests for instruction. For example, the state has adopted the Common Core State Standards. As a result, the school we are currently working with has started to delve into the writing areas of narrative, informational, and opinion/argument writing with all grade levels, however teachers have been hesitant to begin. As a support to the school, the teachers, and the K-8 students, we have focused on the same type of writing in the after-school support course to preview or support the students in their understanding of the particular type of writing and to provide examples for the teachers and the school. However, how we approach the learning is quite different from how it is approached in the classroom. This doesn't mean repeating what is happening in the school; it means that the teacher candidates must first understand what is happening (or not happening) in the classrooms and then plan and select resources based on the students' interests and needs to extend their understanding. As they do this, they must consider the individual student data that the candidates have been given and the additional data they have collected through oral reading assessments, spelling inventories, writing opportunities, read alouds, and other interactions. And then the teacher candidates must extend this data focusing on the students' funds

of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992) and interests. This opportunity to plan and select resources on their own provides the candidates a real sense of the teaching and learning cycle; they must collect and analyze data, get to know their students, understand the goals of the school for the students, identify specific goals with their students, locate resources, plan instruction, and formatively assess as they are teaching.

The teacher candidates are each assigned between 2-4 students who are considered to be somewhat similar in levels, providing the candidates an immediate opportunity to solidify both a key understanding, that just because students supposedly have a similar level does not mean the students have the same strengths and next steps. This has proven to be a powerful take-away for the candidates each quarter.

When the teacher candidates meet the students, in addition to getting to know what students' individual strengths, interests, and next steps might be, their primary responsibility is to establish a relationship including getting to know the students as people who have personal goals and interests. As a class, before we meet students, we brainstorm various ideas to get at the students' funds of knowledge and interests. It is then up to the teacher candidates to decide what to do and how to build these relationships. This includes things like interest inventories and heart maps. Several candidates have made various "game" activities to get to know students. A favorite has been beach balls with various candidate devised questions that are tossed around a circle to students and back to the candidate to answer.

While candidates are meeting their students, the faculty member and the reading teacher from the school are roving, monitoring, and coaching as needed. Following each session with students, the candidates privately reflect, then discuss with their peers and faculty member. This begins with a personal reflection of the following questions:

- How did it go?
- What more did you learn about your students?
- What more did you learn about yourself as a teacher?
- What will you do next and why?
- What questions do you have?

In this particular school, following the first day with students, the candidates had questions about the school program that the faculty member shared with the reading teacher. The response from the school reading teacher, in Figure 1, provided the teacher candidates with a dose of reality to some of the challenges they are likely to encounter in their chosen profession.

Figure 1. Email from faculty to candidates and school following first day.

Hi All

A great day yesterday—Candidates, you rolled down the creek and around any rocks and boulders like fabulous, flowing water!

I've attached the updated "kid-list" and also my forecast for "habits of a learner" which I'll be doing pieces of in the beginning (I already had to revise it a bit—you are welcome to invite other teachers to join us).

Candidates, you are most WELCOME to do any pieces of that for ALL the group or to spin off and do things with your learners---the school is very excited about Habits of Mind/Habits of Learners.

The other thing I noticed about the kids yesterday---talk about COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY! I suspect they haven't been encouraged much about their possibilities of college/university. I always talk with kids assuming they WILL go and PLAN to go to college/university.

Looking forward to seeing you all again tomorrow, as close to 2:30 as you can make it! 2:30 arrival means we leave by 5:30, if we make it by 2:30. Again, check in at the office and then come to the library.

In answer to the question about what the school's literacy practices are…here's what I asked and the reading teacher's honest response and a reality in MANY schools!

A student question…"What literacy framework is used in the school? i.e. Daily 5, Guided Reading, Reading/Writing Workshop etc?"

Reading teacher - "Our principal is great, our kids are fabulous - but our test scores do not reflect this. Our school on paper and our school when you walk in the door are two different things. This is an important "take away" that I would love for your students to discover....

So - one of the issues you hit right off the bat - consistency. Due to so many principals and such high staff turn-over in the last few years, we do not have as much consistency as we need. We do not have a consistent literacy framework. We have asked the question several times - but no answer. Therefore, I can honestly say - "All of the above"....

See you all tomorrow!

Teachers in the school are invited to attend any of the class sessions with the students, where the faculty member often models many of the strategies in a mini-unit she teaches to the students in front of the candidates. This provides an opportunity to reinforce the professional development the teachers have received and to introduce candidates to additional strategies. Although the faculty member has a unit in mind, she gears the lessons around the needs of the particular students in the group. One example was a mini-unit focused on learners and perseverance, a school goal and a critical life attribute, with 3rd and 4th grade students. In addition to other things, this included working on a narrative about Mexican muralist Diego Rivera because the unit of study in the school was narrative. Teachers are also invited to stop in at any time to see their students at work.

The students who are identified and choose to stay after school with us are often students who teachers say are not engaged during the school day. Yet, they beg to come back time and again! At the end of each session term, the teacher candidates host a celebration of whatever the students and their candidates wish to share, and invite teachers, families, and administrators. This provides an opportunity for the candidates to experience the power of authentic celebrations and family connections. See figure 2 for a recent invitation.

Figure 2. Invitation to end of session celebration

Please join the 3rd and 4th grade amazing After School Literacy Club students on Wednesday, 3/11/2015 between 3:45 and 4:10 for a Gallery Walk highlighting some of our publications from this quarter. We'll be in the library.

Thank you for sharing your students with us!

Faculty Member and the Reading Endorsement Future Teachers

Too often, in school days, the communication home for students who struggle is less than positive. In our partnership, teacher candidates write a thank you letter to the families of each of the students with whom they have worked. This is just a brief card saying thank you and reinforcing one thing that the student with whom they worked enjoyed. We hope that sending a positive note strengthens a connection with the school.

Figure 3. Thank you letters to families.

Dear Family of S,

I had the chance to work with S during our after school program. He always had a smile on his face and loved writing a lot with our colored pens. I hope that he continues to work on writing stories at home.

Thank you so much!

Dear Family of I,

I had the chance to work with I during our after school program. He always went right to work during our time together and enjoyed telling stories with the iPads. I enjoyed listening to him read smoothly and I hope he continues to read more at home.

Thank you so much!

Dear Family of M,

I had the chance to work with M during our after school program. He loved writing about his video game adventures and reading aloud with our wordless books. I hope he continues to work on storytelling and reading aloud at home.

Thank you so much!

Teacher candidates also include student voice in their final reflections, which are shared with the faculty member, teachers, and other school personnel. See Figure 4 for an example.

Figure 4. Teacher candidate description of student voice in learning.

One of the lessons where I felt all students understood where they are at in their writing and where they need to go next in order to enhance their writing was during our last mini-lesson. This mini-lesson was on peer editing each other's writing. During the work time the students switched drafts and used their revising and editing worksheet guides to peer edit partner's writing pieces. All the students were engaged in this activity for the full 15 minutes that we gave them. They were giving one another respectful tips on what they could add, remove, move, or substitute in their writing as well as worked together to find the correct spelling and punctuation. Some dialogue that I overheard during this work time were things like "You could do this to describe better…" and "I think I am going to say this instead to add more detail…". I felt that each student knew what the next steps were in creating a second draft of personal narratives with the help of one another's advice during the peer editing.

A goal of our partnership is that we take responsibility for improving the conditions for learning in P-12 schools and communities. A key enabling action for this is the engagement of university faculty and public schools as equal partners collectively responsible for the agenda. In the best of partnerships, the partnership becomes a part of the school plan. Partnerships can provide schools with supplemental support that might otherwise not be available. After our first quarter with the school, we worked on a continuing and purposeful plan for the 2nd year. Figure 5 is an email that encourages this purposeful planning from the principal following our first quarter.

Figure 5. Email from principal following end of first partnership quarter

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Sent: Wednesday, June 4, 2014 11:40 PM
To: Faculty member; Reading teacher; ELL teacher
Subject: WWU Tutoring Project Concludes

I would like to thank the three of you for putting this all together. Our kids were very happy, and the university's kids were amazing! There are going to be some GREAT teachers coming out of this program!

Thanks again for doing this. I look forward to next year when we will get to build this in regularly to our school year!

We are happy to share that we are in our fourth quarter, second year, of intentional partnering with this school. This past quarter, when the school was focusing on informational writing, an expectation for the candidates was that they include aspects of informational writing as they worked with

their students. This reinforced and extended the students' understandings related to informational writing because the topic and product or even if there was a specific product was left to the candidates and their students. Some students and candidates wrote informational books to teach others, others made individual or group posters with information they had learned on a particular topic, still others worked as a group to dig into an area (e.g. sharks). The teacher candidates were encouraged to follow the lead of the students while learning the critical importance of student engagement and voice in the educational process. At the end of the unit, following a celebration that included the students' classroom teachers, school principal, and families, the teacher candidates posted the students' work around the school. For the most part, this was the work of students not normally featured as quality work in the school. The students didn't know where or if their work was posted when they arrived the following day, but they looked for it and found it! The reading teacher reported that the students who had been part of the after-school support kept asking her, with pride, if she had seen their work!

The following message illustrates the feeling of the school at the end of a quarter. This was sent by the school reading specialist after the celebration to the faculty member and to all staff in the school:

> Go Hedgehogs!! Thank you so much to ALL who attended and celebrated the Gallery Walk yesterday in the library! The amazing enthusiasm and hard work that our 3rd and 4th graders showed – along with the enthusiasm and hard work from the education

> students made for a WIN-WIN learning experience!!!
> My heart is so very happy!!! Will you please pass on our appreciation to all of your students - they were grrrrrrrrreat!!!

A key part of a successful partnership to move student and teacher learning forward is the commitment and interest of the school. This involves extra time and work on the part of the school. In the partnership currently described, the extra work has resided primarily with the reading teacher. She identifies students based on data from the school, seeks permission for students to participate, gathers existing data to share with the teacher candidates, introduces school resources, and even provides instruction to the class. In our partnership, the reading teacher also invites the students to sit with her during the school day as she works with a range of K-8 students and teachers so that the candidates get a feel for the range of responsibilities of a reading teacher. This has proven to be an unexpected benefit of the partnership. Candidates find the experience so worthwhile that some continue even after the course has ended. The principal also makes himself available to the candidates to talk about specific students or the school, and often comes in to talk with the class to address their questions. Another benefit that we hope will come out of this is that the school may find some future teachers to join the staff who are committed and interested in working with this school and with its particular challenges. We believe we are achieving this with the schools and the university. We include communities but our next step is to more fully include the community of the P-12 students' families in our planning.

Partnerships like this also demand extra time on the part of the faculty member to coordinate with the reading teacher, candidates, carpooling, and university. It's a partnership. So, it's not only about what teacher candidates need to learn and experience nor is it only about what the K-8 students need, it's both, and it's planned together. Figure 6 provides an example of the kinds of back and forth communication and negotiation that it takes to set up our partnership.

Figure 6. Coordination correspondence between Reading Teacher and Faculty Member.

On Tue, Jan 13, 2015 at 3:05 PM

Yep, yep, yep - we are good to go! Man, third times a charm - we are totally on the same page! Dates, times - yes

Attached you will find a list of the students - and serves as an attendance sheet for your program and ours. 35 Allen students signed up, permission slips collected, buses ordered.

We are in the process of giving the DRA (a reading assessment) Winter Benchmark, so that reading data will be fresh off the presses for you. I have included other info in the report, just like last time.

Writing samples have all been completed for an Informational unit - and I have the writing checklists and rubrics available for you to have copies.

I would love to look at the assignments and try to coordinate it with needs around here also if we could.

On Tue, Jan 13, 2015 at 2:12 PM

I'm excited to get back down there to work with you and your

wonderful students!

I have 10 students. So 30-40 kids MAX…3rd and 4th grade is what we've discussed.

I have planned the first day with STUDENTS as 2/9, a Monday and the last day as 3/11, a Wednesday. That gives us 9 sessions with the kids.

I also plan to have the students meet me at the school on 2/4 for an orientation to the school, overview of LLI etc. so that they are ready to go on the 11th.

Does this still all work? What do we need to do?

Once you have kids identified, I would need reading levels. An expository writing sample would be GREAT to have to analyze. I would love to have that to give to the students on 1/28 so we could begin to talk about what they might do toward an expository Calkins-like writing unit, using the 3rd and 4th grade criteria. Sound good?

Here's the assignment (attached) I've planned for this quarter….let me know if you want to change anything or if something else would be better for your students etc. This is still in draft and I won't give students access for at least another week. I'm happy to tweak however it better supports YOUR students!

Conclusion

Through purposeful partnerships, teacher candidates leave understanding that data is wider than numbers and that student choice, voice, and engagement make a difference in educational outcomes. At the same time, we hope that teachers and schools gain new ideas and insights about how data can be used responsively to reach and engage students. And most important, we hope that the K-8 students not only add to their learning but also view school as a place where they can be engaged and excited

about learning.

Albert Einstein is credited with saying, "we can't solve problems using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." To positively impact student outcomes, we can start in teacher candidate education ensuring that our future teachers view data as valued rather than feared by teachers (Marshall, 2009). Our goal is to develop strong partnerships that assist future teachers to enter the field prepared to make effective and ethical data-based decisions for literacy instruction.

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What I Learned About Teaching From Two Former Teachers: A Curriculum Eulogy

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Abstract

In the same school year, two of the author's friends, both of whom were teachers, died. In this essay, the author explores his own and others' memories of his friends as teachers and learns through them what it means to be a good teacher. Additionally, the author contemplates what insights he gained from remembering his friends that might provide useful for those committed to democratic educational renewal and, especially, the Agenda for Education in a Democracy.

Kathie died in August, just a few short days before the start of the new year at the school to which she dedicated more than twenty years of her life. The remembrance ceremony a few days later was crowded with former students, colleagues, friends, and family. Her eulogizers noted that while her body may have failed her after a two-year battle with cancer, her mind and spirit never quit on her. I find that a comforting, and familiar, memory of my friend.

Andy was already awake and getting ready in the dim early-morning light of the bedroom to go to the job he loved. For nearly a decade, he had taught high school Social Studies. Just the night before, he had interviewed to become the new leader of his school, which was one of three that composed the larger high school. As he dressed, his heart gave out; he dropped dead to the floor. Like Kathie, Andy's spirit, his passion and commitment to the job he loved and to his family and his friends, endured where his body could not.

This essay is an effort to remember and honor my friends. As such, I recognize it as a bit of an indulgence that I hope the reader will pardon. It is also an attempt to make meaning of their teaching careers, and especially their lives, and to see these as a curriculum, in a sense—an enduring lesson that, I believe, reveals useful insights about educational values that are particularly resonant in this moment of education reform discourse beholden to standardization and high-stakes accountability. The collective memories we mourners share about Kathie and Andy have a story to tell about what educational values are most important to us that might offer useful foundations on which to build projects of educational renewal. Especially, I hope such dialogue can help educators reclaim the space to debate what constitutes good learning and good teaching from the seemingly settled education reform conversation.

I was scarcely twenty-two years old and newly graduated from college when I began my teaching career. By the time I joined the teaching

staff, Kathie was already an experienced and beloved English teacher. As I was an inexperienced young teacher, Kathie's mentorship was invaluable. Though she was not officially assigned as my mentor, she being in English and I in Social Studies, our principal suggested I watch and learn from her (as he had often suggested to novice teachers). Often during that first year I would pop into her class to observe, an indulgence I continued and she graciously permitted throughout my years as her colleague. Her skill was obvious—amplified by her passion and the force of her personality—yet undoubtedly forged through her (then) decade and a half of experience.

I find it hard to describe Kathie's teaching without falling into cliché. She was as much artist as technician. To say that I, or anyone, simply "watched her teach," is inaccurate, if only because in her class someone else was so often speaking. Kathie's class was purposeful without being oppressive. There was energy to Kathie's class, emanating from her passion outward to her students. That energy, shared by her students, was part excitement and anticipation for the day's topic or text (Kathie had a way of making students love books they didn't even like, I think), but was also intellectual energy. Hers was a room of ideas, of thinking. She respected that the young people in her room could think, and she expected them to, encouraging them and inspiring them along the way.

I am sure I do not yet fully understand or appreciate the influence that Kathie had on my teaching and my life, though her loss—and this eulogy essay—has certainly inspired me to think keenly about it. In many ways, I

consider myself Kathie's student—a student of her teaching, for sure. She was thrilled for me when I left teaching at our school to attend grad school full time, encouraging me to embrace the opportunity she thought suited me well. Subsequently, I will reflect further on some of the things I learned from Kathie and from the memorializing of her life.

Andy and I were college classmates and friends. We lived in the same residence hall freshman year and we were both History majors and Social Studies education students, and had numerous classes together over four years. Andy always thought that learning should give you pleasure, that you could have fun. Sometimes (okay often) for Andy this meant play. Consequently, many of his ideas about pedagogy were rooted in a spirit of play. In fact, as I understand it (though I never saw him teach), Andy often created lessons in his classes around games. But having "fun" in class for Andy also meant playing with ideas—with a willingness to see things from different angles, to bend conventional intellectual rules to see where you could go. In this is an air of subversion, though without really seeming insubordinate, a productive subversion. Playing with ideas and challenging conventional thought is fun but also allows new ideas to emerge. Andy liked ideas, I think, and wanted his students to like them, too.

After graduation, Andy and I worked in the same city, though in adjacent school districts. Unfortunately, and this gives me particular regret in retrospect, our contact through the years was infrequent, confined to occasional email messages and rare cups of coffee uptown. In spite of our

disconnection, however, I was aware that Andy was well regarded by his students and colleagues. The news of his sudden death was particularly jarring.

As I sat in Kathie's memorial service (Kathie died in the fall, Andy in the spring), I experienced a curricular moment: a phenomenological spark of insight from a lived encounter from which one might learn (see Marsh and Willis, 2007, and Pinar, et al., 2004, for example). I listened to those who offered formal eulogies, including family, former students, and the school's principal, share what Kathie and her teaching meant to them and in that moment realized that their eulogy of Kathie exemplified a lived experience, a lived "curriculum" (Marsh and Willis, 2007) of sorts, of both our individual and shared experiences of her life and career. I had a similar curricular moment reading Andy's obituary notice in the newspaper, and the outpouring of memories by his students. As a teacher educator, I am interested in what one may learn about good teaching from these memories and how I might share that with my own students, who are future teachers. In a sense, my friends now teach through me, in part—lessons about what it means to teach. In eulogizing them, I hope to illuminate lessons about what we mourners valued most about our friends and their teaching life, lessons that may provide a useful dialogic scaffold for the public to address its own educational concerns and elucidate its own values.

I am hopeful that these shared memories may provide a catalyst to articulate a more democratic agenda in education. That is, the sharing of

individual and collective memory can be a way in which practitioners in centers of pedagogy (Goodlad, 1994) engage one another on educational values, purposes, and meanings as a basis for ethically sound action and policy. These memories may offer a vision for the good community and how good education can advance that vision.

What I Learned about Teaching from My Friends' Eulogies

So, what if we really listen to ourselves? If we listen to the memories we express (through eulogy or otherwise), what will we learn? I find these particularly relevant questions the more I engage public discussions about education and, especially, the current memes of teacher quality and accountability. What answers about our educational values, about what it means to learn, to know, and to teach may already exist in our individual and collective memories? Here, to answer some of these questions I return to the memories shared (by me and by others) about my friends.

One thing I learned immediately from the public memories shared about Kathie and Andy is that what their students remember is rarely discrete bits of information these teachers taught. For example, no students noted how thankful they were to just learn the plot arc and detailed character sketches of the novels Kathie required them to read. But this does not mean that academic content is/was unimportant to these students. Rather, the content was the access mechanism through which students developed a deeper sense of themselves (sometimes for the first time) as they learned that they could think and that their ideas were legitimate. Several students noted how much

they appreciated that Kathie was "demanding" and "expected so much." Yet Kathie elegantly and fervently scaffolded her high expectations with encouragement, belief, and inspiration (words that students used repeatedly to remember her). One student even remarked that though others had given him much to think *about* before, she was the one who inspired him to think in the first place. These students expressed a deep gratitude for having been respected as people who can and should think, for the inspiration of a sense of self-as-knower. The day I visited Kathie's class during their discussion of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) sticks with me. Her students discussed the novel with such sophistication and sensitivity that I left inspired to read the book the following summer.

Students (and a few parents) offered similar memories of Andy. For example, students noted that he seemed to really care that they learned about "life," not just their assigned Social Studies content. He inquired about their interests, their plans for after high school (implying that he believed they can and should "have plans"), and encouraged them to get involved in their own schooling. Repeatedly, they noted Andy's belief in their abilities, his instilling confidence in them academically. And, of course, they noted Andy's commitment to making the experience fun, which they noted was not the end-in-itself but was, rather, a means of motivating them and awakening confidence in them as well as a sense that they do not have to fear "not knowing" the way they might in other classes. In my memory, Andy will always have an enthusiastic, some might say ornery, smile; his

was a boundless, infectious energy for learning.

What are we to make of these memories? If we listen to these memories, we can see an image of teaching that is relational, aesthetic, emotive, rooted in care. We can infer that education should be humanizing; it should help students believe in themselves and their abilities. We see an image of a teacher who is passionate not merely about the content of the formal curriculum, but about how the real purpose of the content is to enlarge students' view of themselves and their intellectual power in the world. And we see that when these are the educational experiences students have, they respond with energy, with their own passion, and even with pleasure. As Goodlad notes, "good schools…are good places for children and youths to be" (1997, p. 114). Kathie and Andy both created good classrooms in which students' being was paramount.

From both teachers, I learned that it is difficult to reduce what they do to a summation of mere technique. And, perhaps most importantly, I learned that much of the mainstream language currently used to talk about teaching and learning—laced as it is with metaphors of standardization - does not reflect those things that we valued most about Kathie's and Andy's teaching.

> So many teachers are cool to and not inspired by political calls to educational arms that miss the inner core of trying to connect significantly with children, the almost spiritual thing that brings them back each day in spite of the dispiriting circumstances around them and their work. (Goodlad, 1997, p. 71)

Kathie and Andy taught me that as teachers we must be stewards of the education of real, concrete individuals—real Sarahs and Susans and Josés and Jamals. We should not reduce those we teach to mere abstractions as we focus on objectives, on content, and on standards.

And so, finally, as I eulogize my friends and reflect on what I learned from them, I am perhaps mourning another loss: the loss of a way of thinking about teaching and learning that transcends test scores, letter grades, and reductive talk of "best practices." My friends' death has reminded me that as educators we are, first and foremost, engaged together in a project of nurturing young people into communities of care, authentic intellectual growth, and support, an ethic promoted by the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (Goodlad, 1997, p. 128). It has motivated me to spend more time listening to what people say they value about education and to work to make those values a reality. Finally, as a teacher educator, I am now more firmly committed to helping my students see not just the technical expertise of teachers, but to see the moral implications of their teaching at both the individual and societal levels. In doing so, I hope always to honor the memory of my friends.

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TPA – Taking Power Away

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Abstract

Many concerns arise when teacher certification and accreditation rely on outcome-based accountability. When test scores become so high-stakes, some teacher education programs may end up diverting attention from their missions and altering the focus of the student teaching experience. Using a Foucauldian inspired commentary, this paper will show how those leading the edTPA hold the power to determine who is certified and what gets taught in teacher education programs and how this threatens the deprofessionalization of teacher educators. Such risks are exacerbated by the edTPA being managed by a for-profit company. The use of a standardized national assessment will allow teacher candidates and schools of education to be compared, ranked, and punished, fueling public criticism of teachers and promoting privatization and market-based reform.

Keywords: edTPA, teacher certification, outcome-based accountability, audit culture, market-based reform, Foucault

Introduction

While the edTPA officially stands for "Teacher Performance Assessment," it might as well stand for :Taking Power Away." Politicians,

those who have created the edTPA, and Pearson Inc. take power away from local teacher educators and teacher candidates. Although backed by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) to be a type of national teacher bar exam, those taking the edTPA and those working with teacher candidates see its negative consequences firsthand. The use of a national teacher assessment proliferates outcome-based accountability models. The edTPA takes power away from teacher educators, teacher candidates, and partner schools in its definition and standardized assessment of good teaching as well as the national scoring process by distant per diem workers.

By regulating and ranking potential teachers through a bureaucratic testing regime, the edTPA brings to mind Michel Foucault's theories about discipline devices deployed by power to manage a mass constituency. One can see how power is circulated through networks and how it is created, maintained, or strengthened through discourse and "regimes of truth." As Foucault (1984) explains, "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it." The "regime of truth" is what allows a certain discourse to prevail.

The edTPA is part of the neoliberal discourse which promotes the role of human capital in outcome-based accountability initiatives (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013) resulting in what is known as an audit culture (Berlak, 2011b, 2012; Price, 2014). This discourse posits that if

incoming teachers are better tested, the country will weed out the teachers who will be ineffective. Test scores are seen as measures of quality and production – a private good, an investment in oneself "to better compete in the labor market, not a social good for development of individuals and society as a whole" (Lipman, 2011, intro., section 7, para. 2). It is assumed that high scores on the edTPA will predict teacher effectiveness as measured by outcomes on standardized tests. Such exaggeration of the teacher's role in producing student test scores ignores the complex of factors involved in student achievement (Bloom, 2013). Additionally, discourse centered on teacher quality as the singular factor in student scores supports that accountability and high standards, as set forth by the Council of Chief State School Officers, will overcome poverty and other social justice issues (Price, 2014). This view overlooks the systemic concerns associated with low student achievement in the political economy of schooling (Anyon, 2014; Lipman, 2011).

Foucault (1977) also espouses that examinations are tools used to judge and surveil constituencies to reproduce power for the elite. As a nationally standardized assessment, the edTPA may become the singular instrument used to normalize and unify the market through which teachers will be sorted, ranked, and hired. It will work to maximize the revenue stream for Pearson and the management of teacher education and teachers entering the profession. This will allow teacher candidates and schools of education to be compared, ranked, and punished (Meuwissen, Choppin,

Shang-Bulter, & Cloonan, 2015) potentially generating another high-profile cluster of low scores for education which may fuel public criticism of teachers and promote privatization and market-based reform. This creates a "meta-narrative" behind the edTPA; it is not merely a test but a complex agency for generating stories that defines what is good, what is wrong, and what needs to be done in terms of addressing the alleged crisis in education. Choice and voice in education is restricted in favor of standardization of teaching styles and curriculum.

Surveillance via testing with rewards for high scores on official exams and punishments for low ones has been a method of accountability for teacher education programs since the passage of Title II of the Higher Education Act in 2008. Colleges and universities are obliged to report their teacher candidates' pass rates on certification exams to their states or risk losing millions of federal dollars. This requirement was enacted under the false assumption that the best teachers are those from institutions with the highest pass rates (and vice versa) and that the new law would prevent those who did not pass the certification tests from eventually becoming teachers (Earley, Imig, & Michelli, 2011). Then, in 2009, Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, announced the federal government's promotion of a national performance assessment exit exam for teacher candidates by dedicating Race to the Top funds for their development. By partnering with Pearson, the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) was able to take the edTPA to a national level and fulfill this call, and schools of

education had a convenient way to meet it. The weight of federal money was then thrown behind using passing rates to reward colleges with the top performance rates and shutdown of schools with low performance rates (Berlak, 2011a).

Outcome-based accountability has moved from not just looking at teacher exams but to their students' test scores as well. This is supported by the Race to the Top designation of "effective teaching" as improvement in student outcomes. In fact, "Five out of the 12 funded states make clear commitments to use evidence of teacher effectiveness for program accountability. They also propose steps to close weak programs unable or unwilling to improve" (Crowe, 2011, p. 5). This is not to say that teacher education programs shouldn't be subject to methods of accountability. It is just that using standardized test scores, whether for teachers or their students, for this purpose will tilt and narrow the curriculum until "teaching to the test" predominates, because the test is a punitive instrument for judging success. As Kumashiro (2015) explains that "market-based 'reforms' [that] may sound commonsensical but, on the whole, lack a sound research base" (p. 1). He goes on to explain that the Council of Chief State School Officers created a task force which recommended outcome-based accountability policies linked to licensure, program approval, and data.

> Currently, a majority of states have indicated a willingness to implement these recommendations, and seven states are participating in a two-year pilot known as the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation. Included in the recommendations are the high-stakes

> use of performance assessments like the edTPA (the Pearson-administered Teacher Performance Assessment), and the rating of teacher preparation programs *using* outcomes data on the student of the teachers who graduate from the programs (p. 2).

It is important to note that this task force was made up of members of the National Association of State Boards of Education and the National Governors Association but did not include teacher educators. The ultimate goal is to use edTPA scores to predict the scores that those teachers' students will get on standardized tests. This endorses a quantitative view of teaching that neglects 1) that research shows that standardized tests are better predictors of income than they are of student learning or teacher quality (American Statistical Association, 2014), 2) the aspects of teaching that are not measured on the test but seen by parents as the most important attributes of teachers, such as a passion for teaching and demonstrating care and respect for students (Gary, 2015), and 3) teaching "to prepare students for democratic participation" (Berlak, 2011a, p. 55).

(De) Professionalization

While groups like the National Center for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) claim there is a lack of rigor in teacher education programs, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) works to overcome this reputation with a focus on the "professionalization" of teachers. However, both these efforts have fed into the dominant discourse around the testing, accountability, and standardization. These methods work

to discipline human subjects into docile bodies “that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved... political puppets, small-scale models of power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). Instead of honoring diverse teaching styles, deployed by teachers as part of their professional practice, the edTPA deprofessionalizes teachers pushing them to be compliant and fit into one definition of the effective teacher” (Au, 2013; Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013). Foucault (1977) explains that “The examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them (p. 189). This is grossly apparent with the edTPA’s 60-80 of pages of written commentary, lesson plans, student work samples, and feedback given to students. As Dover, Schultz, Smith, & Duggan (2015) explain, “despite federal emphases on oversight in the name of ‘rigor’ and ‘accountability,’ the rise of teacher performance assessment undermines teacher preparation by marginalizing the local experts best situated to evaluate candidates’ performance, transforming student teaching from an educative experience to a prematurely evaluative one” (para. 2).

The edTPA, a high-stakes assessment, has considerable power over what is privileged in teacher education. As Ann Berlak (2012), a teacher educator at San Francisco State University explains, “those who construct the rubrics and train the calibrators hold the power over how good teaching is defined and identified” (para. 17). This leaves some essential qualitative attributes of good teaching out of the conversation (Berlak, 2011a; Hogness,

2014) such as passion for teaching (Gary, 2015) and the "moral dimensions of teaching" which include developing active citizens, building student-teacher connections, and being "stewards of schools" (Goodlad, 1990a, 1990b). Lewis and Morse (2013) go into further detail stating,

> …other truths about successful teachers, such as the ability to relate to children and the ability to interact well with, and support, parents, are filtered out of the discourse... for pre-service teacher candidates to succeed on the edTPA, they must pick up the discourse as presented within the assessment, and they must meet the constraints and expectations of its regime of truth (68).

Wayne Au (2013), Associate Professor in the education program at the University of Washington, articulates the sentiments of many teacher educators dealing with the implications of the edTPA, "Someone outside of and far away from my classes and students is taking control of curriculum and teaching, and the end result is a distortion of teaching and learning --at both the university and the K-12 levels" (26).

Additionally, allowing per diem workers to be the gatekeepers into teaching deprofessionalizes teacher educators and undermines the relationship between teacher candidates and their students, cooperating teachers, field supervisors, and professors (Chiu, 2014; Lanham, 2012; Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013; Madeloni & Hoogstraten, 2013). As one former teacher candidate explained,

> A distant, anonymous scorer does not know me, my students, or my teaching context, nor is she/he invested in any of these. My

> cooperating teacher, my field supervisor, and my professors are the ones who best understand me, my students, my teaching context, my teaching skills, and my growth over time. EdTPA ignores the expertise of the teacher educators who are best positioned to judge my abilities and potential to develop further as a teacher.

It's already been shown that there are inconsistencies in portfolio scoring across candidates and differences in ratings between the Pearson scorers and those whom see the candidates teach on a regular basis (Singer, 2014). One teacher candidate from New York shared her experience in the mismatch between her edTPA scores and the feedback she had been getting from her college professors and field supervisors, cooperating teacher, and principal.

> Throughout my masters program at Touro College I have consistently received A grades in all of my classes, including the class where I was evaluated for my performance on the edTPA task assignments. In fact, my professor informed me that I was the only student in her class that received an A in the course. Yet, my edTPA portfolio, which she evaluated according to the same rubrics that were used by edTPA scorers received a rating of 33/75 or overall rubric score of 2.2, which indicated that I am grossly unprepared for teaching… I received high levels of recommendation from my cooperating teachers…the teachers I worked with have endorsed me for employment with their principal and head of school. I received cards that stated that 'I was the most dedicated student teacher they had seen' and that they were 'confident that I was destined for a successful career'… As you can see my work in my masters program and observations during student teaching starkly contrast these dismal edTPA scores. The contradiction does not only surface in real life vs. edTPA, the edTPA score rubrics also contradict themselves (personal communication, March 18, 2014).

Situations like this have led to questions about the qualifications of the scorers (Gary, 2015). Pearson claims that scorers must fit the credentials outlined on the job description and that they go through a rigorous "calibration" process to ensure inter-rater reliability, however, information about this per diem workforce has not been released. In the vein of "right-to-know," there should be transparency on this issue so showing if the claim can really be made that those from the profession are experienced teachers or teacher educators working within their field of expertise. The edTPA's role in the deprofessionalization of teacher educators and the work being done to undermine schools of education and promote the corporatization of teacher training is apparent (Hogness, 2014).

Power and Profit

By holding the monopoly on a national certification exam, Pearson not only has the power to control who enters the profession, but it also holds the power to make a large profit in the process. Pearson charges three-hundred dollars to teacher candidates to take the edTPA while paying per diem workers seventy-five dollars to score each portfolio. Additionally, Pearson also sells ePortfolio systems (such as Taskstream) to store and organize the materials for mock portfolios and for candidates' final edTPA submissions. In some cases, this cost is being passed on to the students under the label of "edTPA fees" (Guaglianone, Payne, Kinsey, & Chiero, 2009). Additionally, edTPA preparation courses and tutors are already being offered to those who can afford to pay. Profits are to be made, and

those who can have the funds for an advantage will benefit. All of these expenses will certainly give underrepresented groups another barrier to the profession which may reproduce class inequalities like other high-stakes assessments (Au, 2013). Furthermore, Dover et al.(2015) exposes how private coaching services for the edTPA raise "multiple concerns regarding the validity of edTPA preparation and assessment" since these companies promise a passing score through "revising candidates' portfolios to include what scores 'look for'" (para.8).

Privileging Market-based Reforms: Teach for America and the edTPA

Within teacher educational policy, there continues to be a professionalization-deregulation debate (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, 2002; Fenstermacher, 2002; W. D. Lewis & Young, 2013; I. S. Okhremtchouk, Newell, & Rosa, 2013). Those working to professionalize teacher education advocate using national standards and assessments to lift the level of expectations of the profession. Those in favor of deregulation support alternative routes to teaching and feel that schools of education and the certification process are just meaningless barriers to the profession. On the surface, it seems that the edTPA is a tool for professionalization; however, when looked at closely it seems that edTPA privileges those in deregulated markets.

In New York, one of the first states to adopt edTPA as part of the certification process, Teach for America (TfA) candidates have been given significant advantages over their counterparts from schools of education.

TfA candidates are exempt for their first two years of teaching and granted a temporary license. After this license expires, TfA candidates are expected to pass the edTPA to continue their work in the classroom (Eduventures 2013). As Dr. Kevin W. Meuwissen, (2014) Assistant Professor in Department of Teaching and Curriculum at University of Rochester, explains, "[M]any teacher educators [are] deeply skeptical that the State Education Department and Board of Regents have an interest in providing opportunities and resources to strengthen their programs via the assessment. That alternative credentialing programs like Teach For America are held to looser standards corroborates this skepticism" (para. 14). Indeed, these teachers are working under "false pretenses" when they are not held to the same requirements as their colleagues (Goodlad, 1990b).

If according to the edTPA website, the assessment is a "process to evaluate the performance of aspiring teachers before they lead an actual classroom" (AACTE, n.d.), why are TfA corps members allowed to get two years of classroom experience prior to taking the exam? Additionally, once it is time for them to take the assessment, they will be completing the edTPA in their own classroom where they have more authority and control over the methods used than those who are taking the exam in their student teaching placement. TfA corps members are also likely to complete their edTPA in the final months of being with their students for a whole year compared with some candidates who will have had less than six weeks at an assignment before completing their portfolios. Furthermore, TfA corps members only

have to make a two-year commitment to the profession which essentially releases many of them from the requirement altogether. Although about two-thirds of the corps members do continue teaching, the majority of them leave their original low-income placement (Donaldson & Kappan, 2011). For those who choose to stay, their new school settings and classroom experience will likely result in a better passing rate for TfA corps members. This will result in ammunition for deregulators to undermine schools of education and increase the privatization of public education.

Power over Teacher Education Curriculum

As John Goodlad warns, in order for teacher education programs to be "vital and renewing, [they] must be free from curricular specifications by licensing agencies" (Goodlad, 1990a, p. 192). Unfortunately, many schools have found it necessary to make major changes in their curriculum due to the edTPA including rearranging of course sequences, changing of program assessments and rubrics, conducting mock-edTPAs, giving technical training of digital literacy skills, and integration of test-specific language (Barron, 2015; Burns, Henry, & Lindauer, 2015; Cacicio & Le, 2014; Fuchs, Fahsl, & James, 2014; Gary, 2015; T. Lewis & Morse, 2013; Lys, L'Esperance, Dobson, & Bullock, 2014; Miller, Carroll, Jancic, & Markworth, 2015). To prepare their students, professors help students dissect the prompts and assign parallel tasks that give candidates practice manipulating their teaching to fit the confines of the exam resulting in a loss of academic freedom (Berlak, 2012; Bloom, 2013; Chiu, 2014; Gurl, 2014; Hogness,

2014; T. Lewis & Morse, 2013; Proulx, 2014). At the 66th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Educators (AACTE), “Those in attendance were concerned with ‘teaching to the test,’ curriculum resources, and the edTPA dominating all other courses resulting in content that may not be taught because of time limitations” (Gary, 2015, p. 19). In states where the edTPA is high-stakes, some teacher candidates are clearly seeing how the edTPA is dominating the curriculum. One candidate from New York State explained, “Our year-long Supervised Student Teaching course might have well been entitled ‘Unpacking the edTPA’” (Proulx, 2014, p. 25). In these situations, student teaching seminar no longer focuses on issues of social justice or how historical, sociocultural, or political contexts are important to understanding appropriate classroom instruction for the student population in one’s classroom. Instead, teacher candidates learn that these contexts are influencing their ability to get certified as power and privilege are embedded into the exam (Berlak, 2012; Chiu, 2014).

Much controversy remains around the conflict between the philosophy of the edTPA and the philosophies of schools of education and their students (Snyder, 2009). For example, a teacher candidate from Teachers College, Columbia University found there to be an obvious conflict between the edTPA and the social justice perspective that was a part of the conceptual framework of the college. Resigned to the fact that she would have to pass the test to be certified, she explained, “I accepted that I was to going to have to cram my multi-modal, social justice-themed, English language arts

ESL lessons into a rigid box" (McKenna, 2014, p. 32). A candidate from Hunter College at City University of New York echoed the same sentiment concluding that "Teacher candidates are less likely to take risks in their teaching, such as using progressive, critical pedagogies, for fear of losing points for deviating from teaching ideologies and practices that have been described in the edTPA rubrics" (Chiu, 2014, p. 29). Society at large should consider the consequences when standardization overshadows social justice instruction and critical pedagogy.

In analyzing the edTPA, it is clear how the test is meant to prepare teachers for outcome-based accountability. The edTPA states that teacher candidates are to "analyze student work from the selected assessment to identify quantitative and qualitative patterns learning within, and across learners in, the class" (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity, 2014a). The tasks and rubrics clearly privilege assessment over all other aspects of teaching with ten of the eighteen rubrics in the elementary education portfolio focusing on some aspect of data collection, analysis, or usage (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity, 2014b).

The consequences of a high-stakes standardized test during student teaching

Teacher candidates have shared that they were so focused on the rubrics and the technical aspects of videotaping their lessons that "Many credential candidates elected to plan the simplest and most technically unchallenging lessons they could think of," (Berlak, 2012, p. 114) and some

students even rehearsed their videotaped lessons in advance, literally teaching the same lessons twice, to make sure they captured a good performance (McGrath 2014). Because candidates only choose 10-20 minutes of video, they can pick and choose snippets that represent the teaching the scorers are looking for and hide evidence of badly executed instruction or poor interaction with their students (Sandholtz & Shea, 2012). Additionally, for several of the certification areas, teacher candidates choose a student or small group of students for the video. This allows candidates to easily avoid students with behavioral issues or the ones with the greatest learning challenges. For the elementary education portfolio, there must be at least one student with "specific learning needs," but this can be a "struggling student" rather than a student with an IEP or an English language learner (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity, 2014a). These situations are not authentic to the experiences teachers will most likely face in their careers.

The candidates also spent many hours breaking down the prompts, examining the rubrics, and writing up pages of commentary which took time and focus away from their coursework and their students (Okhremtchouk et al., 2009; Sandholtz & Shea, 2012; Singer, 2014). Jen Boerner, a graduate student at SUNY Brockport, shared with the United University Professions (UUP) Teach Ed Task Force panel that "the biggest drawback to the edTPA was the lack of attention she was able to pay to all of her students...'I feel I lost out on a lot of student teaching. I really couldn't do as much as I wanted;

I couldn't go over all the lesson plans I wanted to try out because I was teaching to the test. That was unfortunate'" (United University Professions, n.d.). Justine McConville, a teacher candidate at Columbia University Teachers College, voiced similar sentiments,

> In the amount of time my peers and I spent jumping through edTPA's hoops, we could have been actually growing and reflecting as young teachers through meaningful coursework and classroom discussions…I feel less prepared to teach because of the amount of time and energy this dastardly assessment demanded. I am now, however, extremely well versed in the art of edTPA and bamboozling inexperienced raters…The moral of this story is to predict what the raters might want, and give it to them, no matter how restlessly repetitive and monotonous the rubrics may be (McConville, 2014, p. 34).

In addition to the shift in focus to preparing for the edTPA, the enormous consequences and workload of the portfolio can result in students prioritizing the assessment over all their other coursework. Undergraduate teacher candidates need to take a full course load to maintain their financial aid and many students have jobs to help pay for their education (and testing fees to Pearson). For many, this burden can become too much to handle resulting in teacher candidates skipping class, needing extensions on assignments, or handing in substandard work. Students also reported sleep deprivation, problems with their personal relationships, and high levels of stress associated with the demands of the test (Berlak, 2011b; Okhremtchouk, et al., 2009; Sandholtz & Shea, 2012).

Testing the outcomes

Because of the high stakes nature of the edTPA, it is important to examine the reliability and validity of the test results. With their own candidates, teacher educators are noticing there are some inconsistencies in: 1) the ratings that similar portfolios receive and 2) the ratings Pearson evaluators give compared to ratings given by those whom work closely with the candidates on a regular basis. The Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) were the creators of the Performance Assessment of California Teachers (PACT) predecessor to the edTPA. SCALE claims that the edTPA is valid and reliable because it is based on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPT). Since the National Boards are voluntary, low-stakes, and are done in one's own classroom, there are many important differences between who decides to take the exam and how it is conducted. In fact, there is no evidence that the edTPA has predictive validity for the success of new teachers on any measure such as how long they will remain in the classroom, how well their students will score on the Common Core assessments, how likely they are to move into leadership roles, etc. (New York State United Teachers, 2014). In fact, research on the PACT has shown that inter-rater reliability is poor to moderate (Berlak, 2011; Lyness & Peterson, 2015; Porter & Jelinek, 2011; Porter, 2010).

In the expansion of the PACT to the edTPA, many of the important aspects of the scoring procedure may be disappearing. The outsourcing

of the scoring to Pearson and lack of highly qualified scorers may lead to even more variability in the scoring. Several teacher educators have found in their experience and in reports about the edTPA that there were many occasions where students received high scores on the edTPA yet were not seen as strong candidates by those observing them in the field (Clayton, 2014; Henning, 2014).

Dover et al. (2015) point out that "Ironically, current or retired P-12 teachers, university faculty, and student teaching supervisors—the same people considered unqualified to evaluate their own candidates—are the target recruits for edTPA scoring" and that one researcher on their team was "offered the job [scoring the edTPA] after a five minute telephone interview that included no discussion of curriculum, pedagogy, student learning, or any other aspect of teacher preparation" (para. 9). Additionally, "applicants do not have to provide evidence that they actually were good teachers, worked in inclusive and multicultural classrooms, or are familiar with, support, and use state learning standards of the states where student teachers are working" (Singer, 2014). However, currently no data has been released about who is actually scoring the tests. With the low rate of compensation and the estimated workload of 2-3 hours per portfolio, one has to wonder about the availability of appropriate scorers. In fact, this concern was shared at the AACTE annual meeting (Gary, 2015).

When the PACT was being used in California, it was scored by university professionals. Additionally, 10% of all portfolios were double

scored as were the portfolios for any candidate who failed the PACT (Porter & Jelinek, 2011). In fact, with the PACT, "For candidates who do not pass the TPA, credential programs are required to provide procedures for double scoring, appeal, remediation, and resubmission" (Guaglianone et al., 2009, p. 140). Not only are California teacher candidates given a safety-net, the scoring process is also governed by the programs which the candidates attend. This gives teacher educators and candidates more power and voice in the credentialing process. Currently, there is no data on the amount of double scoring used to check consistency and inter-rater reliability for the edTPA. Pearson's protocol for the national scoring is only used for portfolios at or near a passing score (N. DeKorp, personal communication, June 8, 2015). This means that many portfolios that are harshly (or generously) evaluated are pushed through the system before they may be caught with the sporadic quality control measures. If teacher candidates don't pass and would like their portfolio re-examined, the Pearson appeals process requires a $200 fee for the rescoring process ("Frequently Asked Questions by Candidates," 2014).

Conclusion

Although many would say that we need entry examinations to protect the public against incompetent teachers and to have high-quality teacher education programs, it is important to be aware that what is assessed determines what is valued and what will ultimately be the focus for schools of education (Goodlad, 1991). Within the current audit culture, this means

that the emphasis on "moral dimensions of teaching" is reduced. Many additional concerns arise when teacher certification and accreditation rely on outcome-based accountability. Teacher education programs may have to divert attention from their missions. There becomes a need to focus on teaching the language and tasks of the test and how to use the rubrics to get passing scores. Because the edTPA is a high-risk and time consuming process, teacher candidates will do whatever it takes to get a passing score. Instead of showing their abilities to deal with realistic challenges, teacher candidates may rehearse their lessons and may selectively choose which students are in their "class" to complete a low-risk portfolio. In the end, teacher candidates show great aptitude for not only analyzing data but also in how to manipulate that data through selective sampling. These are hallmarks of market-based educational reform. Price (2014) explains further consequences of this audit culture saying,

> Teacher education, whose goal has been molding students into powerful PK-12 classroom teachers – a monumental, critical function for sustaining democracy – is henceforth placed under strict market discipline. These then are the grand 'metanarratives' [2] that account for contemporary American society tensions and clashes, democracy and the market, education for citizenship or student as consumer (p. 217).

In other words, this discourse threatens the role of teacher education to prepare teachers to facilitate "cultural enculturation into a political democracy" to develop effective citizens who understand truth, beauty, and justice and will be humane and morally responsible (Goodlad, 1990a, 1990b) and assumes

that pursuit of these moral dimensions are not as important as quantifiable outcomes.

With profits to be made, Pearson, Inc. corners the market on teacher certification while exploiting per diem workers and teacher candidates. Under the veil of supervised "calibration," Pearson can claim that anyone who passes their training is "qualified" to determine whether a teacher should be certified (Dover et al., 2015). With this in mind, policies must be put in place to protect teacher candidates and to fight the deprofessionalization of teacher educators. When students fail the edTPA but pass their student teaching observations, teacher educators should be allowed to appeal the grade and submit documentation to show teacher readiness. At the very least, an appeal from a school of education should not cost teacher candidates anything. Additionally, teacher educators need to stand up for their academic freedom and battle against the deprofessionalization of teacher education that is hiding in the discourse of improving teaching standards.

The biggest challenge is that most teacher educators and policy makers have different measures for teacher readiness. No matter what assessment school of educators would recommend using, the policy makers would continue to make the dependent variable "student test scores." As David Berliner (2015) said at a speech he made at Teachers College, "Good teaching is not successful teaching." They are defined differently. One is defined by the impact a teacher makes on a child's life. The other is defined by a number. This is the same for teacher education. Good teacher education

prepares teachers to handle unexpected circumstances, to create classroom communities that are warm and inviting, and to build confidence in each student, regardless of what a number on a page may say. Successful teacher education prepares teachers to do test preparation, sort, rank, and label. It is imperative to have alternative ways to define and measure student success and challenge the dominant discourse.

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Elevating Teacher Voice: Democracy, Political Action, and Professional Engagement

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Abstract

Education has become more politicized than ever. There are growing divisions among policymakers, elected officials, and educators. Educators have struggled to find a voice amid this clamoring. This lack of empowerment has resulted in a policy process that has largely excluded the voices of educators. In this essay, we argue that teacher voices are not lost, but are only dormant. In order to find their voice, teachers and educational leaders must take on a more political role, focus on democratic ideals and principles, and collaborate with national networks and other stakeholders. Despite the gloomy rhetoric and negative media portrayals of public schools, teacher voices remain strong.

Keywords: School Reform; Educational Policy

The Beginning

Imagine that the President of the United States has just nominated a new Secretary of Education. At the joint press conference this new Secretary of Education begins her speech with the following quote that reflects her

beliefs about education in our society:

> "How one person's abilities compare in quantity with those of another is none of the teacher's business. It is irrelevant to his work. What is required is that every individual shall have opportunities to employ his own powers in activities that have meaning. Mind, individual method, originality (these are convertible terms) signify the quality of purposive or directed action. If we act upon this conviction, we shall secure more originality even by the conventional standard than now developed. Imposing an alleged uniform general method upon everybody breeds mediocrity in all but the very exceptional. And measuring originality by deviation from the mass breeds eccentricity in them. Thus we stifle the distinctive quality of the many, and save in rare instances (like, say, that of Darwin) infect the rare geniuses with an unwholesome quality" (Dewey, 1916, p. 188).

Imagining education policies that focus on children as individuals would be a radical departure from the rhetoric we hear from Federal and State Departments of Education and a departure from a school culture hyper-focused on standardization, accountability, and competition. Revisiting Dewey reminds us that education should not be mired in averages, grade level equivalencies, and standardization. Instead, we should listen to teachers and parents who feel first-hand the effects of an educational system that stifles creativity, defines ambition in terms of quantifiable data, and reduces teacher autonomy. In short we need to ask ourselves: How did it come to this? And - perhaps more importantly - how do we find our way back to an educational system based on respect, professionalism, and high standards for all?

The Political Context

Today's political landscape is mired in sound bites, empty rhetoric, and unprecedented partisanship. Education has always been a political endeavor, but where is the voice of the profession? Why are parents not being heard? And, above all, why do we not respond to children as the unique learners they are? As we move further into the 21st century we recognize that education is now global, complex, and dynamic—yet, where are voices of reason, knowledge, and perspective? We want to believe our elected officials will listen to educator voices, but lobbyists, special interests, and corporate influences have tilted the playing field for personal and economic gain. There are calls for widespread reforms, yet teachers and leaders continue to respond as best they can to policies that lack a fundamental anchoring to the democratic ideals that Dewey envisioned nearly 100 years ago. Consider another quote from Dewey:

> "A reorganization of education so that learning takes place in connection with the intelligent carrying forward of purposeful activities is a slow work. It can only be accomplished piecemeal, a step at a time. But this is not a reason for nominally accepting one educational philosophy and accommodating ourselves in practice to another. It is a challenge to undertake the task of reorganization courageously and to keep at it persistently" (1916, p. 149).

We see here a strong argument against the idea of a quick "turn-around;" there is no silver bullet of reform that will lead to lasting or meaningful change. Instead, meaningful school reform will be difficult work that will require us to look deeply into our own political system and into our professional norms.

Dewey further reminds us to trust in the tenets of democracy and to find the courage to question—and resist—a status quo that diminishes professional voice and democratic dialogue. The work of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) and other organizations provides a shape to this argument and help us see Dewey's work in context.

Imagining Dewey as our educational leader is a touch romantic, but his work gives us a sense of direction and a context for understanding how we can help teachers regain their professional voices. His work also brings into sharp relief a central frustration: our policymakers do not seem to be listening to those closest to the work of educating our young people. The U.S.—through organizations like the NNER and others at the grassroots level—has the capacity to establish an era of education that will pick up where Dewey left off, and maybe even take us a little further than he'd envisioned. In doing so, we focus throughout this essay on laying the groundwork for what the NNER (and other like-minded organizations) can do to strengthen teacher voice and professional influence. We stress the importance of being *more* political; more rooted in democratic ideals and principles; and teacher training for political activism.

Getting there will not be easy. The road to meaningful change is bumpy and uneven. Potholes are everywhere. In this essay, we'll examine how we might rebuild our education infrastructure, level the playing field, and empower educator voice. In doing so, we'll discuss teaching and learning in the 21st century (which doesn't look too different really); the need to revisit

what it means to engage in a democracy; and the role of the NNER and other organizations in education reform. Dewey teaches us many things. Among these is a sense of history, perspective, and optimism. On challenging days, educators describe the profession as cyclical, meaning—haven't we seen this all before? It's easy to see how one comes to this conclusion after a day of redundant professional development or the unveiling of yet another "new" initiative. Despite these challenges we argue that the "cycle" is not a perfect circle, and does not cast a deterministic shadow on anything and everything. Instead, we argue that there are off ramps if we look for the signs.

Though Dewey's work translates to education policy at the state and national levels, his ideas—at their core—are fundamentally rooted in the learner. Unfortunately, we often fail to recognize when things become overly complicated (as they often do). Political scientists teach us that work is successful when members of an organization understand: (a) why their work is important; (b) who stands to benefit; and (c) their role in achieving those goals (Simon, 1997). In short: the successful enterprise is one in which organizational goals are understood at all levels. For example, a successful hospital is one in which all workers recognize their role in helping patients become more healthy. Likewise, our schools need to operate with the same mindset: How can all members of the educational community contribute to student success?

Modern politics are bifurcated in such a way as to cause enormous discord, and education is just another example of this. In a healthy democracy, politics are intertwined with organizations to focus on shared goals despite the inevitable—and often ugly—political wrangling that is necessary to the process. In a real sense, political rewards in our current system are economic gain (typically for the privileged), personal or organizational self-interest, and cultural isolation (Owens, 2004). For examples of this we can look to the rise of standardized testing (which we will discuss in more detail), the narrowing of the curriculum (an exclusive focus on math and reading), and the proliferation of charter, magnet, and for-profit schools. Politics appear evil and self-serving—but is this a fair assessment?

We argue that this is unfair; we argue that "politics" is a bad word only because we make it so. It is easy to see how this comes to be when education is talked about in such a bifurcated fashion (e.g., we are the best in the world; we are falling hopelessly behind). In addition we are reminded constantly how U.S. politics have never been so bad, how we are losing our preeminence on the world stage, and how public schools are so often to blame. Of course these observations do not entirely lack merit. Many of our political institutions are in turmoil and the public trust has been violated in spectacular fashion (as we saw with the housing and financial crises).

But there is another story to tell, one that involves the capacity of trained professionals to improve on the system and to make their voices heard. Organizations like the NNER have the professional expertise and

political savvy to intertwine politics and education in productive ways, empower educators to speak and act with conviction, and renew our focus on student learning. Despite the narratives that paint such a gloomy picture, the reality is really quite different. The fact remains that there are more opportunities than ever to engage in the political process in such a way that we can safeguard professional knowledge, autonomy, and expertise.

Politics and the Voice of the Teacher

How do teaching and learning translate into political issues? Based on preceding arguments, the outcomes of the political process—in a democratic sense—should be consistent with desired outcomes in the professional sense. In other words, the political process should be the mechanism by which we can reach professional goals. As such, professional goals (those of teachers and educators) should be translated (and acted upon) by public officials. In the current context we too often see the opposite wherein elected officials (acting on the behalf of lobbyists and other interests) dictate terms to educational professionals.

For rather obvious reasons, this is where we need to see change. The purposes of the educational enterprise—both politically and professionally—are to engage students emotionally and intellectually, deliver meaningful and relevant academic content, and develop an approach to American life based on civic virtue. These arguments have not fundamentally changed since Dewey's time. We need to move away from the "bottom-line" mentality that drives so much of our behavior including over-reliance on

testing, confining curricula, and reduced discretion for teachers to use their skills and expertise.

The Organizational Context

Meaningful school reform will only occur within an organizational context marked by collaboration and shared purpose. But this context is complex. It is also confusing. For example, what is the role of teacher unions in 2015? We've seen unions evolve over time, but perhaps never as much as we do now. How did we get here?

Collective bargaining has long been a feature of professional life, and for years was somewhat taken for granted (Wirst & Kirst, 2005). Union membership meant that teachers benefited from due process protection (Alexander & Alexander, 2012). Earning tenure was seen as a birthright to the profession and helped attract teachers into the workforce. Though imperfect, unions were both nominally and functionally democratic and inclusive, and helped to establish professional norms and to contribute to a sense of professional identity. Unions were widespread, they focused on protecting teachers, and they ensured educators could maintain enough discretion in their decision making to act in the best interests of students (Ravitch, 2010).

In the new era of accountability, teacher unions have been attacked without mercy. The prevailing norms these days in the media—and taken as fact by many citizens—is that tenure is outdated and contributes to a teaching force that has been compromised by inept and incompetent

teachers. Furthermore, it has become commonly accepted that tenured teachers cannot be terminated, and the tenure contract contributes to lower academic standards, subpar teaching, and professional neglect (Ravitch, 2013). Underlying this is the supposition that the system is "broken" and fundamental structures and practices need to be ditched in an effort to reshape schools

There is no evidence to support these assertions. Research does not link unions to student outcomes. What we do know is that teachers have—over the years—been terminated for reasons such as religious practice, political affiliation, and sexual orientation. In our current state one might imagine that without tenure teachers might be unwilling or unable to question current practice due to fear of reprisal. As such, teachers—who know first hand effects of standardized testing on students and on the profession—might be unable to voice this concern (Ravitch, 2010).

There are points here to unravel. Among these is a growing concern about organizational support for teachers and administrators. Attacks on teacher unions speak to attacks on the profession itself, and reveal a basic public misunderstanding of what it means to be a teacher in the 21st century. We know incompetent teachers exist—this is troubling but true. However, we also know that union advocacy and contract protections do not cause this issue. Instead, we need to look to policing our own profession to ensure that our leaders hire and retain high quality, committed teachers.

On a further point, this illustrates the need for increased politicization

in terms of organizational support for teachers. Teacher unions represent only one such organization, and it appears to be increasingly vulnerable in today's political landscape. However, there are other organizations that play an important role in safeguarding our profession. For example, the National Councils for Math and English (NCTM and NCTE, respectively) focus on student learning and on teacher empowerment. Similarly, the National Network for Educational Renewal is well positioned to empower teachers via organizational collaboration. These will be discussed in greater detail, but the fact remains that organizations need to work together toward a shared vision. The ideals Dewey discusses provide the structure for that to happen.

Moving Toward Policy

Discussions on student learning can seem to take on a separate dimension from larger issues of policy and practice. This need not be the case, as the linkages are clear, strong, and provocative. Dewey reminds us that learning is an endeavor that is open-ended, engaging, and fluid. In short, students learn in powerful ways when the ends are not made clear, when there is a focus on development and engagement, and when problems of learning are relevant to the world in which we actually live. On the flip side, this is descriptive of a healthy democracy in which ideas are discussed transparently and with vigor, in which outcomes result from defensible practice, and in which political actors behave with integrity and consideration for the public good. Our leaders of education can and should

set to implement several education reform initiatives to put into practice the philosophy of education described by John Dewey almost 100 years ago.

The role of testing in U.S. education is tricky. It's difficult to defend a position where there is *no* testing as there is place for empirical evidence of where we've been, where we are, and where we want to go. However, data gives us a sense of certainty and control that goes beyond the bounds of what it can *really* contribute. Indeed, it often statisticians who tell us that we go too far with data, who caution us to view testing as snapshot in time, and who remind us that all data are ultimately interpreted by subjective and fallible human beings (Ravitch, 2013) So, we need to consider the role of testing, what it can contribute, and where we need to tread lightly.

When it comes to testing we need to examine (a) the purpose of the test in the first place; (b) how much testing we need to achieve our goals; and (c) how we use data to guide our practice. On the first point there seems to be little consensus. There is rhetoric concerning the matter (e.g., accountability drives success, we need to compete globally) but on a more fundamental level there is disillusionment and confusion. In short, there is an underlying question: Do we thrive in an environment where so much practice is responsive to the test? And, to what extent do we want tests linked to teacher contracts and pay? On this point, we see significant political struggle, in large part due to the sense (for some) that schools function best as market-based enterprises in which success is based on winners and losers. As discussed there is organizational resistance to this

(the teacher unions, for example) but a political "default" to increased testing and standardization to raise student performance is troubling.

On the second point, we return to Dewey's quote that opened the essay. Do we need to pitch students against one another to move them forward? Recently, there seems to be a growing sense that we simply test our kids too much. Stories that were once seen as anecdotal about the testing "takeover" have now become the dominant narrative. Teachers and administrators can routinely tell you the extent to which testing has squeezed out time for actual teaching, and the extent to which "teaching" is simply synonymous with "teaching to the test." Simply put, there seems little doubt that we need to move away from the one test measurement strategy that has dominated recent educational reform and get back to letting professionals dictate the pace, sequence, and substance of their work.

What role should data play in politics and teaching? Does judging students and teachers based on these exams constitute defensible practice? We emphatically argue *no.* The use of data, especially when collected by teachers working in professional learning communities focused on improving outcomes for students, can reap benefits for all students, particularly minority students (Blankstein, 2013; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Delpit, 2005; Hord, 2009). Teachers need to be empowered to look at their students, set goals based on growth, and then implement instruction and interventions to improve outcomes for each and every student. This requires flexibility in the standards and curricula to

allow teachers to meet each child where they are at and accelerate their learning. Rather than rigid value-added performance goals for teachers, a narrative describing the student with a goal plan would better serve both teachers and students.

Likewise administrators need more flexibility to differentiate teacher growth and evaluation plans. A strong teacher who is already working with an instructional coach requires far less supervision than a teacher who has been less successful in helping their students reach their learning goals. Freeing up supervisors to enable them to do just-in-time evaluation combined with professional development would be a better model than the hours spent completing countless observation write ups. It is high time for the state and federal policymakers to embrace the logic shared by the trained educators they wish to regulate. One size fits all serves neither the teacher nor the student, and educators need to collaborate with like-minded colleagues in relationships based on fluidity, openness, and professional growth.

The Role of the NNER

As stated earlier, politics is often construed as a dirty word. This need not be the case. Although it is true that education is more politicized than ever, it’s also true that politics has always had a role to play. And education does not stand alone in this era of increased politicization. Instead, politics have changed in such a way that we now fundamentally question *who* can best deliver public services and *how* these services are best implemented. As such this essay argues a few points:

(a) We cannot improve by being *less* political;

(b) We must look to fundamental tenets of democracy to guide us towards meaningful reform;

(c) We must train educators to work within a political system;

(d) Intergovernmental organizations must play a role in reform efforts (e.g., the NNER).

We Cannot Improve by Being Less Political

The prevailing view in the U.S. is that politics have never been worse. Is this truly the case? It seems possible and certainly we could construct a reasonable argument to that end. However it seems more certain that we have been down this road before, and we need to respond more thoughtfully. It's common to hear teachers speak of how "it's all about the kids" and how "I don't see politics in my job." The sentiment here is laudable, but in practice this is counterproductive. Educators have lost considerable political power as evidenced by revamped teacher evaluation procedures; attacks on tenure; marked increases in merit pay; decreased discretion over curriculum and instruction; and the focus on standardized testing. We argue that this loss of political power is due in part to organized politics *against* teacher voice. However, we also argue that this loss of power is equally due to a lack of organization and sense of common purpose from within the profession.

What does a political educator look like? It's not an easy question, though we know enough to suggest that political empowerment is a

systemic effort (this is where the NNER comes in; more on that later). Currently, federal and state governments function on a "stick and carrot" basis that will never lead to the kinds of reforms we sorely need. Instead we need grassroots efforts that engage educators in the politics relevant to their positions. Educators appear splintered and marginalized due to a lack of political power. However, there is remarkable agreement on most issues across the board (e.g., too much testing). The missing link here is establishing political unity on key issues that speak to the reason teachers got into the profession in the first place. However, this line of thinking begins to sound like a bit of an oversimplification. So where is the mechanism that will actually bring teachers together in the ways described here?

We argue that this education for teachers begin in their teacher preparation program. While being trained for the classroom, future educators should be introduced to their role in the political process. This would include a political perspective taught alongside the history of schooling in America. The rise of the unions and national organizations like the NCTM and others as political players in influencing policy should be explicitly taught. These prospective teachers should be required to join such an organization. The benefit of joining would be to introduce future teachers to the type of work such organizations do and to introduce them to the democratic process of the organization itself. This membership would then carryover to their beginning and future years as an educator.

We Need to Focus on Democracy

We lost our way when we let "democracy" fall from the common rhetoric. Despite so many attacks on schools and on the education system generally, the public tends to turn to our public schools whenever there is the sense that our liberties need to be more protected. The good news here is that this is a road we've traveled before, but that we've lost sight of along the way. Dewey reminds us time and again that it is not acceptable to simply accept the education of tomorrow that is presented to us; rather, we must persistently shape the education of tomorrow through active participation in our democracy. When teachers passively take part in a system that is fundamentally at odds with their educational philosophy—too much testing and value added measures including in their evaluations—they are no better than the politicians that put these policies in place.

We argue that through a grassroots effort, teacher, student, and parent voice can easily be gained to implement reform in schools at the local level. Teachers, parents, and at times students have the opportunity to influence hiring of leaders in their local school systems. Advocating for leaders that will empower teachers, parents, and, where appropriate, students, will not only lead to better outcomes for students (Blankstein, 2013; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 2009) but also better working conditions for the staff (Senge, 1996). This very process of democratic leadership in our schools has the potential to motivate staff to be more involved beyond their local school.

We Need Political Educators

While teacher preparation and local democratic leadership would be a good start, we ultimately need to be more effective as a profession at influencing larger policy discussion. As discussed earlier, educators are political actors by default. In many cases, they simply fail to recognize or accept what powers they might possess (action by non-action) and as such are silent to the educational reforms thrust on them. In this case, teachers who readily disavow their political roles are actually quite political. The argument (again, as stated earlier) is clear: (a) educators are political actors; and (b) educators need to be trained in politics.

This training does happen and is becoming more frequent. However, this most frequently occurs in leadership programs (which makes sense) but tends not to exist in terms of teacher training or professional development. Though it is self-evident that leaders need this training, we need to also recognize its importance for all educators. However, this seems to be a more difficult hill to climb than seems warranted. The NNER includes as one element of their mission to educate youth for the thoughtful participation in a social and political democracy. How is this possible without teacher participation in our democracy? Teachers play an important role in providing role models for their students. For the NNER to achieve their mission for our youth (a laudable mission) it must organize and train teachers to be active in our democracy. Teachers in turn will then be role models and promote an education for tomorrow that focuses on the unique learners we teach in our classrooms.

The majority of teachers espouse the need for a return to a focus on student learning yet their voice is not strong and the policy makers are not listening. When was the last time the rank and file teaching staff marched on the state house and Washington, DC? Where is the persistence Dewey demanded of an active democracy? The answer is largely nowhere to be found. We argue that for this to happen we need organizations like NNER, NCTM, and the like to take a more active approach to training teachers, parents, the generally community, and students to be the very lobbyist that our policy makers appear to listen to.

Conclusion

We began our discussion with the image of a joint press conference with a newly appointed Secretary of Education and the President of the United States. We suggested that this new leader of education should advocate for a focus on the learner as an individual with unique contributions for our society. We put forward an impossible dream of John Dewey himself as this new leader. But here is an even more appealing thought: what if it mattered far less who this figure head was and instead it mattered far more what the teachers and educational leaders working in our schools thought would lead to better education for our Nation? This would lead to a far more powerful and swift movement of reform in our schools.

In this essay we suggest that teacher voice has not gone silent. Rather, it has been overtaken by more effective political actors. By implementing more robust training on democratic participation to shape policy, beginning

with teacher preparation programs, continuing at the local level, and as a specific focus of organizations like the NNER, we can train teachers and their allies to be more effective at elevating their voice. Ultimately, we need not ask our politicians to listen better. By elevating our voice, we can reach a point that this collective voice becomes the policy we champion.

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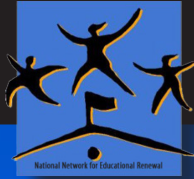

John Goodlad

1920-2014

Founder of **NNER**