

EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY



A Journal of the National Network for Educational Renewal

Adaptive and Responsive Educational Renewal

Vol. 12 No. 1 | 2021



Rhonda Jeffries, Senior Co-Editor
Terrance McAdoo, Co-Editor
Michele Myers, Co-Editor

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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— JOURNAL INTRODUCTION —

Editor's Introduction

Educating with Love in the Face of Illogical Reasoning: A Response to Challenged Democracy

Rhonda Jeffries, Terrance McAdoo, and Michele Myers
University of South Carolina

2020 fully exposed the gravity and complexity of this current moment in history. After myriad attacks on practical democracy in the United States from individuals charged expressly with protecting these theoretical ideals upon which the country was founded, a time for radical change presses upon us. As the COVID-19 pandemic evolves into widespread health and economic despair and uprisings across the country and world unfold against massive racial disparities in police killings, use of unjustifiable force, arrests, imprisonment and more, we find ourselves as educators compelled to adapt and respond to these changing conditions.

Political and civil unrest is not new to the history of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER). Born from decades of educational research and scholarship from the 1940s-1980s, the Network has been shaped by the shifting perspectives in education in response to World War 2, the Vietnam War, the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Civil Rights Movement, and other pivotal events in United States history. John Goodlad and his colleagues created NNER and its membership settings as school-university partnership implementation sites to counter these demonstrative attacks on democracy. Viewing schools as critical and fundamental institutions where the ideals of democracy are either championed or challenged; enculturated or ignored; manifested or destroyed, the role of NNER has and continues to support the collaboration of educational and community sites as exemplars practicing democracy. The impact and influence of these sites attests to what is possible when equal, yet different partners

engage in issues of common concern to emphatically address how and why we should educate in a democracy.

Since its inception, the National Network for Educational Renewal has promoted a compelling agenda, known as the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED), to ensure quality education for all and insist on educational renewal to ensure the vital role of education in a democracy. The 2020 NNER Summer Institute offered an opportunity to fully address the current state of democracy in the United States, the role and response of education at this historical time, and to revisit the Agenda and the Network's ancestral imagination.

The Institute produced a myriad of emotions from our membership participants ranging from frustration to disappointment in response to the erosion of democracy at large and across educational contexts in the United States. Fascination ensued with the opportunities present within The Agenda for Education in a Democracy to confront and challenge these issues in meaningful ways. The Institute focused our response to the decline of democracy and affirmed the role of NNER to impact change in various educational communities for the good of society overall. As we consider explorations of the true purpose of NNER and the next steps for this organization, we intend to rethink, renew, and rebuild educational spaces. This volume of *Education in a Democracy* once again revisits our organization identity and mission to bring about change in education and revitalizes our goal to adapt and respond to the state of our present human condition. Through these scholarly contributions, we collectively craft new possibilities of how NNER can shape pedagogy and support teachers to create change in the classroom by imagining the impossible.

The Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED), the core guiding principles of NNER, grew out of a set of strong beliefs and assumptions about the nature of educational and organizational change and about the purposes of public education in a democracy. Historically, the AED involved three dimensions: 1) A four-part mission of schooling that describes the purpose of schools; 2) A set of twenty postulates and; 3) A goal of simultaneous renewal. Ultimately, NNER rests of the notion that, "Good schools require good teachers and good teacher preparation programs require good schools" (Goodlad et al., 2004, p. 22). This cyclical pattern of renewal

through partnership is a continuous process of agency and structure designed as a journey toward improvement rather than a destination to reach that ends (Buchanan, 2015; Burrige, Carpenter, Cherednichenko, & Kruger, 2010; Giddens, 1979, 1984). It is from this vantage point that the quest for renewal survives and our membership is committed to this quest.

We called on our current membership to contribute to this volume by considering the following questions: a) How has the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) contributed to scholarly, critical, and collaborative inquiry on the structures of schools and like-minded organizations? b) What are the political aims of the agenda and how have those aims enabled and/or hampered a critical examination of school and university partnerships regarding the Agenda's moral principles? c) What shapes and patterns of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy do you see in your work, and are critical elements missing? d) How might we imagine the structure of continued support of NNER, and in what ways might we continue to build and strengthen our school-university relationships to impact education? and e) How does the NNER Summer Institute shape your agenda related work regarding specific resources/lessons learned during the Institute? Our most relevant response to these questions comes in the form of the first manuscript in this issue by our Summer Institute keynote speaker, Brian Schultz, whose piece, "Taking Action as Curriculum," challenges us to go beyond writing and reading curriculum that shapes educational spaces. His charge to perform curriculum as action in our daily educative moments embodies the essence of teaching for justice through social activism. His piece reminds us of the fundamental goal of publicly funded education to sustain a democratic state and offers myriad powerful examples of how this can be done. Schultz's message rests upon the tenets of NNER's mission and requires hope toward a future built on trust, collaboration and imaginative moments of agency that produce bold and innovative strategies for change.

It is nothing less that our responsibility as educators to seek these opportunities for change, and the Summer Institute inspired Deborah Greenblatt and Sari Rivera to critically examine their Community of Volunteer Educators (COVE) project in the second contribution to this issue, "Virtual Reality: From Crisis to Creativity." As this project was elevating its focus on issues of equity through anti-bias/anti-

racism and innovative application of care ethics, the Summer Institute ignited their work to further develop the COVE project around the core values of NNER. This project sought to expand the concept of educational partnership for change by increasing participation in COVE using the partnership model espoused by the National Network for Education Renewal and doing so through the use of virtual learning platforms that proliferated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Summer Institute was also impactful toward the expansion of the summer camp described in the manuscript, “Imagining the Possible: Educating for a Democracy in a Summer Literacy Camp for Emergent Bilinguals,” by Lindsay Yearta, Bettie Parsons Barger, Erin Hamel, and Koti L. Hubbard. This literacy camp for emergent bilinguals took a multi-purpose layered approach to sustaining knowledge acquisition over the summer for bilingual students while strengthening family and community relationships among educational agents and institutions. Building upon Goodlad’s four-part mission and NNER’s Agenda for Education, this initiative and the COVE project are concrete examples of the performative curriculum championed by Schultz in the opening article.

While the macro designs of performative curriculum are evident in the programmatic work of the aforementioned projects covered in this issue, micro level instructional approaches are implementable ways to take action as curriculum. Contributions to this issue focusing on micro level actions include instructional practices in P-12 and higher education that hold promise for change toward democracy. Anne Jewett examined the concept of nurturing pedagogy as a means of enacting curriculum by supporting the development of democratic citizens in her manuscript, “Using a Problem-Posing Approach in the English as a Second Language Classroom.” Her action research study, in the vein of the summer literacy camp designed by Yearta et al., framed critical pedagogy around the academic advancement of students in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. Echoing the notion of instructional care found throughout this issue, her article demonstrates the emancipatory effects of educating for democracy to crush concerns born from fear, cultivate collaboration and create community. Another take action approach shared by Sheri Stover and Amy Elston focused on collaborative professional development opportunities guided by the Agenda in their article, “An Online Book Study Approach to P-12 Teachers’ Professional

Learning Experience.” This article furthered the notion that in-service teachers can take charge of their renewal and support each other at the classroom level to reach their goals for equity in education through democracy. Higher education instructional methods intended to create change for democracy were explored as a method for renewing teacher practice at the pre-service preparation level in “Preparing ‘Guardians of Democracy’: How Elementary Social Studies Methods Courses Can Support Participatory Democracy.” Thomas Levine, Sara Harvel, and Cory Wright-Maley, examined the impact of national standards of excellence on teacher education. They identified specific ways in which institutions of higher education play a critical role in supporting the sustainability of democracy in P-12 settings according to the readiness of pre-service teachers to enact the predominantly theoretical work they complete in teacher education programs. Rene Roselle, Robin Hands, Kelly Marino, Cara Kilgallen, and Julianne Howard reminded us that neither in-service nor pre-service education at the P-12 or higher education level is as effective in isolation as they are in collaboration. In their article, “Revisiting the Tripartite Council Model: Considering the Collaborative Possibilities between the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Education,” they examined the role of the partnership model developed and championed by the NNER and the importance of this framework to maximize the content/field based and pedagogical domains in the educational enterprise.

Another theme that surfaced among the contributions in this issue highlighted the contemporary barriers that challenge the state of democracy in the United States and the role that education might play to counter these challenges. The façade of objectivity in education and within the teaching and learning profession was explored in the article by Brian Yontz and Erin Hill titled, “The Day After the Election: The Problem with Educator Neutrality.” This piece focused intently on the missed opportunities in classroom settings to confront the ways in which democracy either manifests or is destroyed in general elections and analyzed the complex responses from students-citizens before and after these monumental events occurred. They called for teachers and teacher educators to recognize the precarious nature of political apathy in curriculum development, implementation and evaluation and for increased

teachers engagement as political agents with specific goals to enact equity, dismantle privilege, and redistribute power through the curriculum. Diane L. Duffin, Jane Ziebarth-Bovill, and Rochelle Hunt Reeves continued the discussion on the fragile state of democracy in the United States and called for an end to the alternative realities that have proliferated in social and mainstream media within recent history. In their article, “The Assault on Reason in the Human Conversation: Libraries and Renewal in the Agenda for Education in a Democracy,” they suggested that teachers and teacher educators are the individuals who are best positioned to collaborate with medial specialists/librarians to better prepare students-citizens to become informed consumers of information. With the co-instructional assistance of media specialist working in a more centralized and sustained role with classroom educators, students-citizens can become less susceptible to believe the hyperbolic narratives currently intended to disassemble democracy. They reiterated the message from Yontz and Hill that teaching is a political profession and those entering and maintaining a position in the profession should be guided by and committed to maintaining democracy and equity through their work. Any goals otherwise should be under review and under reform. Bringing the conversation about impediments to democracy at the macro level to the forefront are Jean A. Garrison, Jason B. McConnell, and Curtis N. Biggs in their article, “Cross-College Collaboration and Successful Civic Engagement Through On-Demand Digital Content.” This case highlights the timely response of higher education institutions to collaborate in the provision of increased free digital access to equity based curriculum for P-12 teachers. Through the elimination of isolated curriculum development and pedagogical practices, these curriculum resources are intentionally designed to support the liberatory instruction of divisive content in our heightened state of racial and medical pandemics.

A final theme stems naturally from the urgent need to adapt and change in an effort to buttress the crumbling foundations of democracy after intentional and significant attacks. The institution of publicly funded schools, a fundamental construct of democracy, is examined by Douglas Larkin in “The Public Purposes of Schooling in the Age of Coronavirus and Beyond.” With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the world to reconsider

priorities and our essential relationship to democracy, this article shared 10 purposes of public schooling and described manifestations of those purposes with the intent to support the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. The piece further suggests that schools are microcosms of contested space for the advocacy of ideals that either promote or discourage equity among students-citizens. It is critical that we treat them as such and substantiate a democracy based education to guide us through and beyond our societal challenges. The concept of adapt and change is laced throughout Thomas Levine's article, "Educational Renewal Through Professional Learning Communities: Drawing on Zen Buddhism to Improve our Collaborative Work," where he explores human frailty as a significant threat to the frameworks and ideals of democracy. This personal and revelatory piece recommends deep individual introspection and cognitive safe zones as methods to assist in the likelihood that constructs like professional learning communities support actual renewal through authentic collaboration. It is though community that the most effective work toward building and sustaining democratic spaces occurs and those communities thrive when there is a sense of acceptance and belonging. These ideal settings are described by Madhu Narayanan in "Belonging in a Democracy: How Teachers Can Support Democratic Participation for All." This article articulates the seemingly insignificant ways in which the performance of democracy might in fact create spaces for alienation and disenfranchisement if not enacted carefully or from a place of love. His work connects this issue of *Education in a Democracy* with the core purpose of the journal's title. As we continue in our cycle toward a culturally responsive democracy:

We must struggle together not only to reimagine schools but to build new schools that we are taught to believe are impossible: schools based on intersectional justice, antiracism, love, healing, and joy.

-- Bettina Love

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— INVITED KEYNOTE ARTICLE —

Taking Action as Curriculum

Brian D. Schultz
Miami University

Author's Note

What follows is a transcription from the 2020 National Network for Educational Renewal's Summer Symposium Keynote Address. The remarks have been edited for clarity and readability. The keynote, titled "Taking Action as Curriculum," echoes the pillars of NNER, highlighting a way of engaging young people in participating in curriculum for social action. This approach to curriculum has the deep potential to meet or exceed mandates while honoring the curiosities, interests, and embracing the full humanity of students. A social action curriculum embodies our responsibility as educators to prepare students for the benefits and responsibilities of public life—a key tenet of NNER's mission. Leveraging and advocating for such curricular possibilities, emboldens this collective responsibility to develop students as considerate and critical citizens (NNER, 2021). This talk demonstrates ways in which educators can foster equitable access to high quality learning and enriching life experiences where students are not only loved and challenged, but also are pushed to build their own capacities to be active participants to change our world (see NNER Mission, 2021). The message within this article can prompt teachers, school leaders, teacher educators, and community partners to imagine a hopeful, new vision for how teachers and students can enact curriculum together that focuses on actions and opportunities that promote agency and change. Following the formal remarks, the audience participated in questions and answers with the speaker; this engagement, too, has been abridged and edited for readability.

Before I begin talking about taking action as curriculum, I would like to first acknowledge the native lands that I am speaking from right now. Long before Miami University was a university, the land belonged to the Myaamia. That tribe is in present-day Oklahoma. Importantly, the colonialization that affords me to be perched here at a university is the direct result of exploitation of the people who once inhabited this area.

While that is problematic and deserves critical introspection and action to honor and to protect the Myaamia, there's also much to celebrate about the work that is happening by the Myaamia people.

The language and, in turn, the culture and the cultural renewal work of people like Daryl Baldwin and George Ironstrack and many others demonstrates the resilience and the hopefulness that is ongoing and related to the Myaamia people (MacArthur Foundation, 2021).

I also want to acknowledge the critical moment that we find ourselves in with the global pandemic and also a long-overdue racial justice awakening. My hope is that my talk with you will show you ways in which you may go beyond the rhetoric and the slogans to take action that demonstrates that Black lives do matter. I want to also echo the words of John Lewis penned in the days before he died two weeks ago and published in yesterday's New York Times (Lewis, 2020). We must, John Lewis reminds us, continue to build union between movements.

I am hoping that this talk shows you a way to do that with young people in classrooms. With that, I am going jump into this talk and will go through some ideas, show some video that was produced some time ago by my former fifth-grade students, and then walk you through a process by which you can take action as curriculum.

A Demetrius Story

I want to start with a story about Demetrius. Demetrius was a fifth-grade student in my classroom more than 15 years ago. You can see a couple pictures of him when he was a fifth grader as well as a just a couple years back with me.

Figure 1.

Demetrius as a fifth grader with Ralph Nader in 2004 and with me as an adult in 2018.



A decade ago, I heard from Demetrius. I received a voicemail from him. That Demetrius would reach out to me was not a surprise at all. I had maintained regular contact with him and with many other students for years after I was their classroom teacher. It was the fact that Demetrius had left a voicemail for me that was unusual. Voicemails, especially for millennials like Demetrius, were reserved for more urgent matters. Upon calling him back, I was relieved to hear good news.

Demetrius explained that a story had appeared in the progressive news magazine, *In These Times* (Schuhrke, 2013). The article detailed his involvement with the Fight for 15 and the Workers Organizing Committee of Chicago, a group pushing for a minimum wage increase in a larger effort to curtail gun violence. Demetrius not only needed a raise, the article reported, but he was also demanding a safer work environment. As a Walgreen's stock clerk at the time, Demetrius was struggling to make ends meet.

In addition to the low pay at this job, the Walgreen's location also lacked security guards. This expense was apparently eliminated due to cost, even though a worker had recently been shot and killed while on the clock. Although Demetrius was grateful for a job, he wanted and needed more, rightfully so. As his former teacher, I would have been uplifted if the story simply conveyed Demetrius's involvement in fighting for what he believed in to help himself and his community.

What caught my attention in the article though was how Demetrius cites his experiences in fifth grade when he saw the potential of grassroots organizing as a reason to get involved in these causes related to workers' rights. Demetrius had carried these skills with him for all those years. He knew from firsthand experience the power of identifying a problem, coming up with a solution, and taking action accordingly, a competency he learned in the fifth grade.

When he was an 11-year-old, Demetrius helped fight for a new community school building, and it had a lasting and profound effect on him. Retaining the skill until adulthood, Demetrius was now more woke to issues around him. He was willing to stand up to make change for himself and the community of workers like him. In that piece, Demetrius also says, "I know for a fact, if people want change, they have to stand up." I believe that Demetrius was doing just that in that moment. Demetrius now is working for the University of

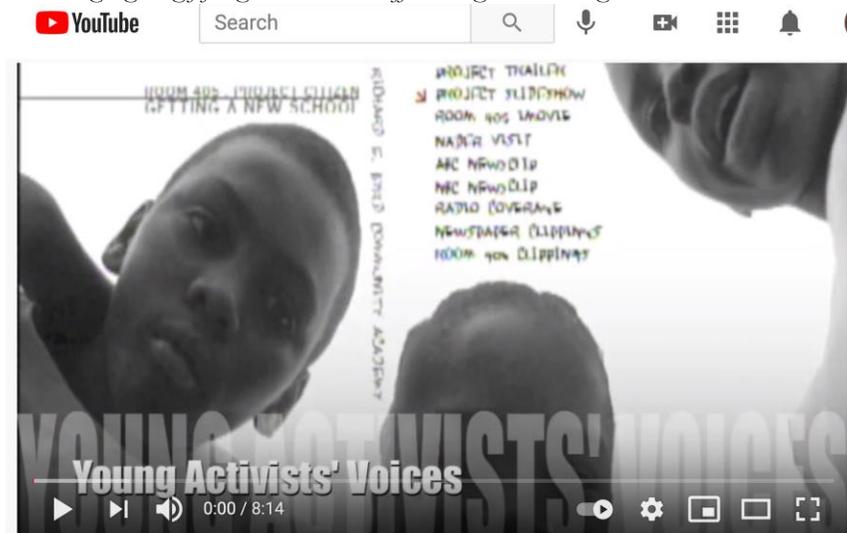
Chicago as a manager of security, a bit of an ironic twist, given his demands just a few years back.

Reflecting on My Time Engaging with Young People in a Social Action Curriculum Project

I am going to show a video (Author's note: To view this video type the following URL into your browser: <https://tinyurl.com/activistvoices>). The video is about eight minutes long, and it was produced by the students in that fifth-grade classroom (with the help of a graduate student)—including Demetrius—when they were fighting for a new school building in downtown Chicago. After the video, I am going to come back to unpack the processes in which taking action as curriculum can play out in other settings, including yours.

Figure 2.

Video highlighting fifth-grade students' efforts to get a new neighborhood school.



Whenever I watch this video that has some years behind it now, it is always really frustrating to think that when 10 to 12-year-olds were asked to name an issue in their community, they identify that their school was dreadfully inadequate. It makes me really pause, even though I'm quite familiar with the story, and say, shame on us as a society for that being the issue that gets named by young people in a classroom. As we think about taking action as curriculum, and as I

challenge my college students now, as I did my fifth graders then, I ask them to name a problem in the community that they want to solve.

What that problem is will really be up to the group you are asking to name the issue. Sometimes, I say that you can formulate the definition of community however you see fit, but oftentimes, what I try to encourage folks to do is name something that they would have no problem in speaking out loud, whether it's in the classroom or in public. Their willingness to name out loud the problems in their community have a built-in hook or motivation because they want to solve that issue because they see it as an issue.

Providing Space to Explore the Intersection of Self and Society

A problem that students identify is often something that has piqued their interest, their curiosity, or the questions that they have about themselves and about society and the intersection thereof. Clearly, there are many problems in our community today, just looking at the collage of pictures below with Black Lives Matter, the “wall of moms,” and the federal agents in Portland all in reaction to the deplorable acts by police to George Floyd and countless others. There are other issues in the community that might also come up as you provide space for them to be named.

Figure 3.

Collage of images representing Black Lives Matter protestors and armed responses, summer 2020.



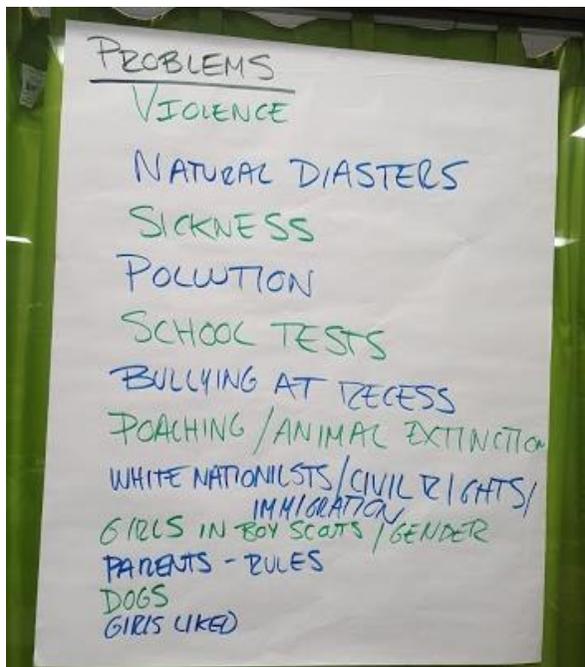
Recently here in southwest Ohio, but nationally as well, we are again addressing an ongoing matter: the naming of mascots after

Native Americans and the related cultural appropriation. The local school district here recently changed their mascot from Braves to Brave; a very incremental and modest change. As this change occurred, a contingency of folks pushed forward the mantra of Braves Forever. Their (flawed) argument was that when they cheer for the “Braves” their intention is to honor while also claiming it as part of their heritage. What they’re missing is that their impact does just the opposite. Intentions versus impact are clearly not the same in this matter. How we think about problems in the community is really up to that group that you’re engaging with at the time.

Right now, I can name many different problems in the community based on my own concerns. Anti-masking among individuals is one readily apparent problem during the pandemic, but there are a multitude of others to contemplate. The idea here is that the problems named in a community are really going to be specific to that group. The chart below were topics gathered by a group of third graders in a school where I was co-teaching with their teacher. There are all sorts of different issues.

Figure 4.

A problems-in-the-community list generated by third-grade students in Stephanie Pearson’s classroom.



Every time that I engage with students about what I call a social action curriculum project—the very essence of taking action as curriculum—they come up with all different sorts of issues. Here we can see many concerns and there are countless others: from pollution or the Great Pacific Garbage Patch to standardized testing, ostracism, gentrification, food deserts, and lack of composting in certain communities. You name it, whatever that community might find important to them, can be the starting point for a curriculum. From there, what I often encourage students to do is to start to conduct research.

Organizing around a Topic and Techniques for Participation

Students can research in many different ways. Whether it's using books or newspapers, Google searches, or other means, there is a plethora of ways to engage young people and college students in conducting research to better understand the problem in which their group has identified. I have recently found with emergent readers that using Newsela (newsela.com), a clearinghouse website that aggregates and rewrites news stories in order to publish articles at multiple reading levels, is a fascinating place to begin research. Because the site has an archive as well as current event pieces, students can often find developmentally appropriate and pertinent source materials to conduct research. I have found that coupling Newsela with a Padlet (padlet.com)—a Padlet is a digital tool that helps students and teachers to create boundedness for resources into a single online posting board—provides a great digital tool for engaging students in research. The Padlet can include an array of multiple media including: images, links, videos, documents, and commentary. Using these resources together gives a teacher some element of oversight, especially important when teachers are working with young people. I have found that these resources are particularly powerful when using other pedagogical techniques like KWL charts or what became known as their next generation cousin—the Inquiry or I-Chart (Hoffman, 1992; see also Bowdoin, 2017).

Figure 5.

Example of an I-chart showing research findings at the intersection of generative questions and source documents.



I-charts allow students and teachers to use sources that they might find on a Google search or on Newsela, a newspaper, or other resource to document their findings against generative questions that the students have named. Plotting the sources on one axis and the questions on another creates a grid or an intersection where facts can easily be documented. I have found great success using this methodological approach with Post-It Notes for documenting facts in those intersections for a whole number of pedagogical reasons. The I-chart is really great because it allows students to work, oftentimes at their own pace, to discover pertinent facts about their own questions from sources they discovered on their own or with peers. The I-chart allows for easy self-checking, peer checking, and teacher review. In this case, it becomes less about crossing out or teacher's red pen, but instead about re-appropriating where that Post-It Note, that fact that answers the guiding question, from a particular source can be found. Once students start to gather that research base about the problem they have identified, it scaffolds a best next step to really think about how to study what Katherine Isaac (1992) called "techniques for participation".

In my recent book, *Teaching in the Cracks* (Schultz, 2017a), there is a chapter dedicated to techniques, resources, and tools for taking action. These are drawn in part from Isaac's work documenting techniques that were used in movement-making that's happened over

the last century and a half in the United States that guides people to take action. A lot of those techniques found in Isaac's books, *Civics for Democracy* (1992) and *Practicing Democracy* (1997), are somewhat dated in our very Internet-driven, technologically-based world. With my university students, I've captured different tools that are web 2.0 or 3.0-based and bring in 21st century skills (Schultz, 2017a, 2017b). Understanding and applying those techniques in the classroom then becomes a way in which the curriculum can come alive for students. Students engaging in the various techniques can become a means to how they learn about and apply skills in reading, writing, social studies, math, and science. Importantly, they are not doing exercises in the subject areas for their own sake but instead are practicing competencies in these subjects through these techniques that help them solve the problem in which they have identified. Further, their actions can then be tied back to whatever might be expected in terms of a mandate or an expectation from an administrator or the state.

When we think about these various techniques for participation, I particularly encourage four main ones that are must-haves, if you will, when I am engaging students in a social action curriculum project. The first one is doing surveys. Surveys are so important because not only is the literacy critical—it is a literacy-rich activity where you are having to construct questions that you want answers to—but surveys allow students to gather a plethora of data that they need to make meaning about and also have the opportunity to analyze them.

I also believe that students have to produce a video documentary. I never had any skills in video documentation myself, but what I found is that producing a video documentary forces students to use tertiary skills of analysis in order to make the case about the problem in which they have identified and what they want to solve. Producing a video challenges the students to think about the problem and determine a way they want to share that issue with others. Video documentation becomes a very public facing text that is difficult to fake or simply go through the motions. And in our video-rich, consumptive environment, students readily know what makes a video that will capture the attention of others to help them further their cause.

As students are creating various artifacts for their social action curriculum projects, I encourage them to archive these, whether it be the survey, data analysis, or the video documentary, on a website that

they curate. The website becomes a kind of repository for the work in which they are engaged. In addition, websites allow for multiple editors to constantly and consistently update, change, and share a fluid document. There are a lot of non-proprietary or no-cost tools out there like Weebly (weebly.com) or Wix (wix.com), and Google and Apple have website platforms built into their application suites or their operating systems.

Then finally, the last piece that is a requirement for me when I'm thinking about social action curriculum projects is engagement with the community. Finding a community-based organization that is doing labor around this problem in which the students have identified is important. Because the problem students have identified is an important issue, likely other people are working on ways to solve it. Oftentimes, there are many organizations that are working towards justice in the issue that students think is so important. What this does is allow for a built-in mentorship component to the social action curriculum project. It also allows a teacher to go well beyond their own individual expertise or capacity and tap into those community-based organizations expertise and capacities. Additionally, it frames the work from an asset-based perspective rather than one that is taking a more deficit-oriented approach.

There are a many other techniques, like petitioning, letters to the editor, poster and pamphlet-making, or even developing Lego stop-motion animation public service announcements like the one below on an effort to stop poaching. The possibilities are really endless. From the idea of those various techniques for participation, you can encourage students to engage in the contingent action plan that goes along with it.

Figure 6.
Examples of various techniques for participation.



The collage below is from a project that was highlighted in the *Teaching in the Cracks* book. The students had identified the issue of people getting sick from viruses and bacteria, and they created this handwashing campaign. It was at the height of the Ebola crisis several years back. You can see the students engaging in work and contingent action planning based on many different techniques.

In the photos, they rubbed substances on each other's hands and then did handshaking and engagement. This image shows the youth doing this with my university students. Then they have a black light that shows “germs” and how they were spread. They then cultured bacteria and analyzed that bacteria. Eventually, they created a whole handwashing campaign with slogans and posters. They made soap out of natural products. This was all because they were inspired based on an issue that they found really important to them—that issue was that lots of kids were getting sick. They kept on hearing their principal talk about the idea of health and safety—remember, it's cold and flu season, you need to protect yourself, and one of the best ways is handwashing. They thought that the younger kids at their school—these were sixth graders—could learn a lot from them. They thought that the younger kids didn't really understand the issue, and they could provide a campaign to get the word out and to solve that problem. The project was robust and was perpetuated by discovery as the students learned more about the differences between viruses and bacteria, how disease is spread, disparities in access to education, resources, and healthcare.

Figure 7.

Localizing Ebola/Handwashing Campaign from a sixth-grade classroom's emergent curriculum.



There are many examples of different kinds of social action curriculum projects. This is a group of university students that decided to engage in the public sphere about book censorship, and so they're doing a demonstration to bring attention to the issue that they identified.

Figure 8.

University students demonstrating in the public sphere against book censorship.



By no means though do you just do one—it's not a one-off action. The idea of action planning is comprehensive, and you have to have a multiple-pronged approach, which then leads itself to being able to satisfy whatever standards or mandates or expectations from the outside are at play. A couple other examples include a school in Chicago that has a rooftop greenhouse. That school was located in a food desert on the near west side of Chicago. The plants that they're growing in their greenhouse, which was funded with grant money that the students and the faculty had acquired, was to make sofrito, the base for Puerto Rican food. Then they sold those vegetables to local restaurants in the area.

Using Social Action to Meet Standards

What I really want you to think about though is, as I share these couple of examples—I have hundreds of them as I engage with university students now on these projects that are self-determined; they are picking them; they're organizing in groups based on the issues and the problems that they've identified, the topics, the

questions, the curiosities that they have—is to really think about ways to cover outside mandates. I am highly critical of standards and this idea of front-loaded objectives. This is not how we ought to be organizing or guiding our instruction.

Figure 9.

The rooftop greenhouse at Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School (PACHS) in Chicago.



I don't have a problem necessarily with standards as being a goal to try to achieve, but standards should not be for their own sake. How does it work when we are teaching students to be active participants in our democracy that goes well beyond just visiting a voting booth to see democracy in action? Citizen action at the local grassroots level can meet whatever expectations, whether it's the Ohio learning standards, which is a disguise for the Common Core, or satisfying some outside expectation for the Every Student Succeeds Act or, before that, Race to the Top, and before that, No Child Left Behind.

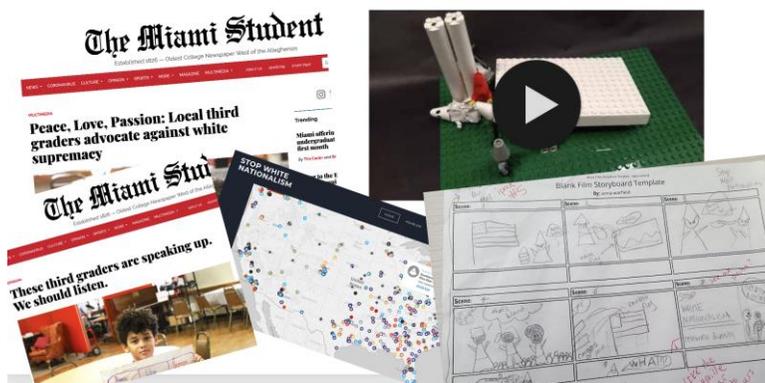
What I want us to really think about is how students enact a social action curriculum. Below is an example of third graders from three years ago who had named the problem in their community as the need to stop White nationalism. These were third graders who were given the space and the opportunity to name a problem important to them, and what they decided was most important was stopping White nationalism.

In southwest Ohio, these students were spot-on that this is an issue. We see it in terms of all the structural and institutional racism that's now become mainstream. Perhaps they were a little bit ahead of their time in terms of naming this three years ago by taking action and getting into the public sphere. When the students started to organize and campaign about this issue, they caught the attention of the university's student newspaper.

I think the challenge that happened and what is fascinating with this group of young people was that they were speaking out when the predominantly White institution, and its surrounding community was not. I love the sentiment of the headline from the newspaper article. It's an editorial that says that these third graders are speaking up, and we should listen. The images below show a screen capture of part of their public service announcement—a PSA that they produced on stopping White nationalism along with their website, a video storyboard, and newspaper clippings about their project.

Figure 10.

Artifacts from third-grade students social action curriculum project centered on stopping White nationalism.



I do find it pretty creepy that they created Lego Ku Klux Klan members. But this was very effective in getting their point across. This gives you a sense of their work. What I found profound though, too, is that what happens oftentimes when you do this work is that the curriculum has legs, as the teacher in that classroom said. She found it both enriching and invigorating, but also, she found that it was also scary. She felt vulnerable at times because no longer was she in control of everything in her classroom.

Consequential Curriculum and What Will You Do?

When I encourage my university future teachers and engage with practicing teachers in this work, I am always mindful to be challenging the teachers to think about this work and engage in emergent curriculum based on the priority concerns of the students, while also understanding the consequences. Interestingly enough, this teacher (who supported her students' efforts to stop White nationalism) talks about the idea of this work being really important, and she wholeheartedly backed the students in this pursuit and in others, but she also says, "Please just don't call it social justice."

I find the tension to be really interesting in a small town in southwestern Ohio where she doesn't want that label, even though she's an award-winning teacher from the NAACP. For instance, she's creating spaces for her students to push back against White nationalism and White supremacy and unpacking the institutional and structural racism that is pervasive not just here in southwest Ohio, but beyond that.

As teacher educators, I also want to really caution us about how we label things because it is not so much the label that matters, but it's the work that happens in the classrooms with young people. This is why the work of NNER has so much deep potential.

I often think back about my former students seen in the video earlier. Several years after they were in fifth grade, they were invited to the Center for Civic Education's national symposium on Project Citizen—the curriculum framework that helped them fight for a new neighborhood school. At the conference, they presented their work, and the audience of about 500 adults was really excited by it. There were multiple times where the room of people interrupted the students to clap and applaud them.

One of the students, though, at the end of their talk—there was a standing ovation—he asked them to stop. He said, "It's not because I don't like the props. I really appreciate all that you're celebrating. We did do good work, but when you go back to your own communities, your own cities, I bet there's schools just like our school. It's fine and good that you're celebrating us, and please don't stop," he said, before adding, "but what will you do when you get back home?"

I think this student's question *is* the question. (We are in a moment right now—even more pronounced than some 10, 15 years later from

the time I was in the elementary classroom—where there is a lot of action happening. There's a lot of people using rhetoric to disrupt the current systems that are at play, but what kind of action do you take as an individual, as an educator, and what kind of action do you take with your students? I'll leave on that note with the same question that my former student had for that group of adults:

What will you do?

Author's Note:

My former student's question of 'what will you do?' is not a new one. The question connects to the vision and ideals of NNER. It reflects the call for reimagining schools while also improving teacher preparation by developing "positive symbiotic relationships" (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 24). It also challenges all of us to continuously "draw attention to the unique role of education in a democratic society" (p. 25). This question, and pondering how we can be intentional about engaging in social action as curriculum, is one way in which NNER's powerful work can and must remain relevant.

Questions and Answers

Can you tell us what happened with Byrd Academy after all of the social action work?

At the end of that school year, the school actually was shut down by the city of Chicago and the Chicago Board of Education. The students found that out several weeks before the school year ended, and they were—they had mixed feelings. They were really frustrated. Some students said that they had wasted their breath the entire year. Then others saw the opportunities that came out of the experience of naming a problem and taking action to try to solve it.

In part of their work in those last few weeks, they uncovered the fact that the Board of Education in Chicago had already determined that they were going to close the Byrd school down as part of a gentrification effort and a change with the Chicago Housing Authority and displacement efforts that were at play. I think that it begs the question, when you take on an issue that is important to young people, are you setting them up for failure, or are they speaking into a situation where they learn that maybe their voice doesn't matter and can be silenced, rather than the skills that they learn in terms of

taking action that will stay with them as it did for the story that I shared about Demetrius.

I certainly had all those feelings and don't want to sugarcoat the idea that I have received wisdom or that I am not constantly problematizing my race, my class, my privilege, in the midst of the spaces in which my former students found themselves and find themselves. When a second edition of a book about this experience came out, a lot that I did was push back on not only the way that city kids are portrayed in the media and the like, but pushing back on my own storytelling and my own positionality and social location as I engage in this kind work.

You mentioned Demetrius. If you're still in touch with any other students, besides Demetrius, what are they doing with their lives?

I stayed in touch for a very long time with about half the class, and then as life happens and I'd lose touch with some and reconnect with others. It has gotten to be a smaller and smaller group.

For instance, one of the young women has one class left in nursing school right now. Another in the class with whom I maintained contact, I had actually fallen out of touch with while he was still matriculating through high school and then reconnected to him when he was playing basketball for the University of Illinois and then transferred to DePaul. His name is Myke Henry. My son and I used to go to all the games, and he would hold up a sign (reflective of the old Michael Jordan Gatorade commercials), "I want to be like Myke." Myke has been playing professionally in Europe, Israel, and in the development league for the NBA.

But for all the powerful and uplifting stories there are more complicated ones. The other students I maintained connections with, coexist with all those contextual factors that are at play for kids coming up in a housing project community. One student was lost to gun violence in Chicago, and others have been in and out of prison. All of those contextual factors don't stop because of a powerful fifth-grade year when they organized and pushed back against the city and the school board to make good on their promise of equity in education.

Where did the students go to school after Byrd Academy closed?

The way that the city organized the transfer when Byrd closed down was to send the kids to school that was in the video that was across the ball field. That was the school that the kids said was “nice and neat” compared to their school that was “sloppy and ugly.” That was the natural transition, except for there was a gang turf line between the two schools. Unfortunately, the school district did not put anything in place to remedy or to build capacity for that situation.

Amidst all of that complicatedness, there was a massive gentrification effort occurring at the same time. All of the high-rise tenement buildings in which the students were living were being torn down to make way for market-rate condominiums. A lot of students were pushed out of the area of Cabrini Green, and as a result, many of them ended up going to other schools as well.

Please talk a bit about the role of the school leader, classroom teacher, department chair in fostering and sustaining an environment that supports this kind of teaching and what you've done for teacher education to give space for this to make sure this is part of how we prepare teachers.

I think that's a great question, and it could—I could write an article and have 30 different threads on this topic. I think, for a classroom teacher, what I always encourage my university students to think about is where they're going to work and who they are going to work for. When they are in the interview process, they are interviewing that principal, that school, that community just as much as they are being interviewed. There has to be some philosophical and ideological connections to the people who are evaluating them.

In Chicago, teachers are presented with high-stakes evaluations, and that's the case in many districts. I also think that, if you don't have that space and that opportunity to engage young people and challenge them with the responsibility to do this kind of work in the beginning, it is going to be really hard to transition into that stance in the future. That's the first piece. From a school principal standpoint, I believe you have to trust that graduates are coming out of teacher preparation programs with pedagogical skills and content knowledge that are going help them meet the needs of their students while honoring the students' questions and curiosities as curriculum.

That is not how schools typically function, and educator preparation programs are often dreadfully inadequate in doing that

preparation. For those teachers who do have that teacher vision, so to speak, that they know what's going on and are able to do right by the students in their classrooms, they need to have those spaces and then some good coaching from their school leaders in order to understand how to engage with the community or how to do things that new teachers really struggle with.

We know that there are shortcomings in terms of the induction years for teachers. So, what can we do as school leaders in a school building or as university folks outside of the school to continue that thread beyond the four or the five years that they are in a preparation program?

As a department chair, I think about that work, too. I think that the faculty that I work with are fantastic, and they are great in terms of their disciplinary focus and their pedagogical awareness, but what needs to happen in a department, there has to be a collective vision. When I arrived at Miami, there had been six department chairs in 10 years. Once I made it through that first year, I think I had the longest-standing tenure of a department chair in a long time. The chairs that came before me did a lot of the groundwork that really set up a space where we could make good on a mission statement that was very powerful. From there, we collectively developed a strategic plan that anchored ten specific goals and the priorities.

Our first goal was to create critically-conscious curriculum makers for social justice in solidarity with communities in diverse contexts. It's a mouthful, but it rolls off my tongue right now. The words are powerful in and of themselves, but they beg the questions: How do you do that? What do you do? What are the actions that you take, and how do you measure yourself against doing that work?

We went further than the strategic plan; we created what we call threshold concepts, which are the anchors by which we do our work. It's like, these are the understood commitments that we have about, for instance, education not being neutral or curriculum being co-created between teachers and students or the power differentials that are at play in classrooms and schools. When we do any work, whether it's in an individual methods class or student teaching or when we're recruiting our students, those threshold concepts become our guideposts. These are the cornerstone ideas that we share to prepare our teachers.

It doesn't mean that we are always doing it as well as we'd individually like or that we hope for, but we know that there's work to be done. There's a beacon, if you will, that we're working towards, and as faculty we are all on the same page in that. I think that's really a hard thing to do, especially in teacher education if—because of the disparate disciplinary at Miami. We have 17 programs that are coming out of the department that are mandated by the state of Ohio. We then have to answer to accrediting bodies like CAEP. We are pushed and pulled, and there's a lot of rough edges, but having those documents like a strategic plan, department goals, and threshold concepts help to keep us tethered to why we're doing this work. It is also a reminder that we have to continue to push for it even if it's hard and complicated, and we see that we have shortcomings in that process.

Are you still in schools?

I try to be in schools all the time. As a professor and a department chair, I think that you have to be in schools. That experience where those young people in the third grade were engaging in the effort to stop White nationalism, I was co-teaching at that time, and then I'm always seeking opportunities. I was working with a kindergarten teacher that was certainly pushing my own boundaries and trying to do this work—what does this kind of work look like with five-year-olds? How can we honor the pedagogical sensibilities of a teacher that are organized around centers and things like that?

I gravitate towards the urban settings because of my own experiences as a teacher, but I've also challenged myself in some of these suburban and rural areas around Miami. The way that we think about schools and how we label them is also a fascinating thing for how I, as a teacher educator, think about having this multiplicity or plurality of experiences. I think that it's as much opportunity that I can engage in different settings so that I have the constant stories to tell and narratives to draw on from those experiences I think is helpful.

With your take action as a curriculum, what have you learned in preparing students for success that might revert back to failure, as it seems to have happened in this case? Have you readjusted how you use tactics to engage your students and inform them that, even though you may wind up being successful, that ultimately, they would take a hit at the end?

I think that's a great question. I think that, like with a lot of received wisdom, years later and looking back, I don't think that this experience that the fifth graders engaged in was a failure. The students didn't succeed in getting the new school building in and of itself, right? That was their priority concern. It was their objective. But what we focused on was the moments along the way where they had different opportunities, different ways to show their aptitude and creativity and intelligence.

I've been really conscious to think about this—I think I was somewhat conscious of that while that was going on because I was worried about what happens if they don't get what they're asking for. I've now theorized a lot about that since that time, and it's about those techniques for participation that are transferrable. Yes, we want to strive towards a solution or a goal as an end in mind, but it's those means, that process over the product that is most important. I think that the Demetrius story is a testament to that. The idea that he learned these organizing skills, these techniques for ways to make his community better, and not just for himself, but for those around him. When he took that action as an 11-year-old, he was able to see how he could adapt and change and tweak it to a different setting in which he found himself and relate it to a different issue that he was confronted with.

I think it's what I try to encourage teachers to see. How do they then engage with young people so that there are not only quick wins that happen along the way where you are satisfied by an in-between result, but also that you know that there is a long view, and the skills that you're learning aren't just for the now? If you are doing a survey, for instance, the importance is because you want to have answers to the questions that you have right now, in the moment. But the longer view is that you can survey, gather data, and then analyze data in other situations for other purposes in your life.

There is no doubt we want to have the immediate gratification. We want to be able to satisfy an immediate goal, but then we also know that that goal is just one moment in a long view in the trajectory of our lives. How do we encourage the refinement of those skills so that we can use them to get better making the case the next time around?

How do you start this process how do you get students to rally around a substantive idea rather than a simple one? How do you get the kids when they're brainstorming to really think about questions that are important?

When I wrote *Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way*, I wondered out loud in the pages of the book that, when I look to the students to name problems, they're going to pick things like wanting fruit punch at lunch or recess every day or things like that. How was that going to play out if that was the issue? When I was in that third-grade classroom three years ago co-teaching, there were some topics that were named by the students that were comical. One was itchy haircuts, for instance. That was a problem that a boy wanted to solve, and so we had some laughs about it.

The issue for me, or the way that I think about this is that, when you really work to break down the barriers of that power dynamic in the classroom, like where you're going to, as a teacher, honor the students for what they decide and name, they often—this is my experience, and it's something that echoes the work of John Dewey—they will seek out a higher moral ground. They will seek out the something that's important. Kids are often dismissed that a topic is not something that a third grader can take on. They can't take on stopping poaching or stopping White nationalism or focus on natural disasters or animal cruelty. There were some really powerful things that they named. What I found is that students naturally go beyond those more simplistic ideas, like the fruit punch at lunch.

I was working with a former university student of mine and was invited into her classroom. I've written a lot about this teacher. She does good work, and I've written with her as well. One of the things that her students mobilized on was the fact that the principal had decided that their eighth-grade graduation—it was a Chicago public school—their eighth-grade graduation would be held at a nearby private school because it was nicer and prettier and could allow more parents and family members to come for the ceremony.

The students were furious because they wanted to be at their school, and they had pride. Yes, they understood that there wasn't as much space. It was a very localized issue. They knew that they either convince the principal, or they don't. I was there when they surveyed the entire community and convinced that principal. It wasn't easy. The principal had her tail between her legs. She was being called out

by eighth graders for a decision that she thought was—with the best intentions, and I believe that she had the best intentions—but her decision did not work for that group of students.

I didn't frame it this way when I started the talk earlier, but I often say—I frame it depending on the age group of the students to name things that aren't just like, name a problem in the community, but I like to name it as something that pisses you off. That's very calculated and purposeful, but you have to be mindful of who you're engaging with and where you're engaging and the language that you might use. If somebody's willing to take that stand and publicly take that stand, it's typically not that they're pissed off that they don't have fruit punch at lunch. They might be angry about it and bothered by it, but it's not going to motivate them for a multiple month-long project is what my experience has been. Now, it might for some group that I haven't engaged with. I'm really careful that this isn't necessarily the model to follow or the recipe to follow, but this is one way for it to be the impetus for a starting point.

Then it's a matter of making sure that the students agree on that problem. I have them write a research brief, and I have them cite sources because—I'll give an example. This is almost 15 years ago. This was one of the first groups I worked with at the university level. At the time, Chicago Public Schools was creating public military academies, and so much so that Chicago Public Schools became the most militarized public school system in the country. What was happening was a provision in No Child Left Behind that allowed military recruiters to access the student records. I had a group of university students that were really intrigued by this. They were fascinated by this topic, but what came out when they started deliberating is that most of the group was against the idea of the military having access to kids' records, particularly students of color, and who they were recruiting and why they were recruiting them within schools. The flip side, there were people in that group who identified the same problem, but who were intrigued by the idea as an option for students who might be marginalized by the system and not have access to university. They needed to come together and deliberate this difference and make sure they were on the same page; they quickly found that they weren't, and they weren't a group solidified together. That was fine. Then they went their separate ways, and that was okay.

In my university classrooms with classes of 25 students, I encourage groups of three to five people. In elementary, like an early childhood classroom, I really encourage teachers to find multiple projects, but not too many because managing different disparate topics is a challenge. What I find to be helpful in teaching social action curriculum projects is that instead of centering the topics and the issues that have come up, you center the techniques for participation so that as a class everyone can learn how to, for instance, conduct a survey.

In the book *Teaching in the Cracks*, I go into giving multiple examples of different kinds of schools, like whether public, private, charter or neighborhood, and then how the different teachers and school leaders are wrestling with doing this work. I try to share how you go about doing it in these different classrooms. I share them as portraits or mini-cases, if you will, to see the examples and then provide some frameworks. I also show how leaning on specific organizations can help to do this work.

I have a couple teachers that were former students that lean heavily on national organizations like Facing History (facinghistory.org) or Mikva Challenge (mikvachallenge.org), not because they love those organizations so much, although I think they do, but because they get to lean on an entity that is much bigger than them as a teacher individually closing the door to do good curriculum work with her students. I do think those teachers are doing excellent curriculum work with their students alongside those organizations, but they can lean on them, and the schools typically celebrate them for that reason. I think that that's something that this organization, NNER, does really well—champions the need for strong partnership and collaboration. I think that the work that all of you are engaged in with your university settings and school settings is powerful. But I want to challenge you to think about how you keep on pushing that further.

A natural next step is how do you engage with CBOs, those community-based organizations, that are doing parallel work, to think about how we immerse ourselves in the community issues and tap into the assets of those communities as educators, broadly defined.

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— JOURNAL ARTICLES —

Virtual Reality: From Crisis to Creativity

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Abstract

At the National Network for Educational Renewal Summer Institute in 2020, the Community of Volunteer Educators (COVE) was transitioning into an organization dedicated to the values of democracy, care, innovation, anti-bias/anti-racism, and equity. The Summer Institute became a forum to get advice on sustaining a group with core values that are similar to the NNER, recruit members, and start additional chapters as part of the Network model. This article will show what was applied by this newly formed non-profit with a mission to expand learning opportunities through free, virtual programming to advance issues of economic, racial, and social justice.

Keywords: *pandemic, Covid-19, virtual learning, educational technology, non-profit, educational partnerships, community-based organization, democracy in education, volunteer, equity in education*

When the COVID-19 outbreak caused global disruptions in almost all facets of life in March 2020, education took one of the hardest hits. At the same time, this crisis highlighted pre-existing inequities, and opening the door for innovative problem solving. The 2020 National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) Summer Institute centered around the theme “Preparing Beyond Distress: How Do We Prepare Ourselves for Innovation?” As a national organization built on the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED), NNER was in a unique position to apply its thirty years of work in social justice and education and reimagining what is possible to the unique and unpredictable conditions of the pandemic.

Every year, during the NNER Summer Institute, members come together from across the country, reflect on the previous academic year, and make goals for the year ahead centered on the AED, which will be explained in further detail below. During the school year, we are often too busy to work with colleagues from other colleges on a shared vision developed from a variety of perspectives for a variety

of courses and clinical experiences for our teacher candidates. The NNER Summer Institute is also a time to share ideas with various partners in teacher education: schools of education, schools of arts and sciences, PK-12 schools, and community-based/non-profit organizations. As is stated in the 2020 Summer Institute Program:

The Summer Institute combines the here-and-now of school-university-community partnership work and the larger framework and long-range/historical perspective of the National Network for Educational Renewal. The Institute furthers the network of professional connections and friendships across NNER with the intention of deepening our partnership among each other as well as our local settings (National Network for Educational Renewal, 2020).

At the same time the organizers of the NNER 2020 Summer Institute realized that the convening would have to be held virtually, a group of volunteers from Teachers College at Columbia University were expanding their student group focused on supporting the children of frontline hospital workers into a broader community-based organization with volunteers from across the country and children from New York City who needed support in their online schooling. This group, Columbia Volunteer Tutor Core (CVTC) had not only outgrown its name, but also was at a time of defining its identity. Also, by mid-2020 this new organization became known as Community of Volunteer Educators (COVE), which would focus on the core values of democracy, care, innovation, anti-bias/anti-racism, and equity. A shared definition of these values is difficult, but the NNER Summer Institute helped COVE members understand that the commitment to them will need constant renewal. It is important to define them for now, while remembering they will evolve over time with the organization.

Table 1.

Core Values of The Community of Volunteer Educators (adapted from COVE Onboarding Training)

Value	Working definition	Example
Care	Strive to genuinely know and ask about our students, establish a safe, low-risk environment, and nurture the intellectual, emotional, and social potential of my student.	Asking a misbehaving or unfocused student, “How I can help?” or finding the underlying cause of the behavior rather than getting upset or frustrated at the student.

Commitment to Equity	Believing all students can learn. Holding high standards for our students and empowering them to be independent learners while making learning accessible are all part of commitment to equity.	<p>Explaining a concept in several different ways, especially when a student is struggling.</p> <p>Taking into consideration the student's learning style to make learning accessible.</p>
Innovation	Innovation means being flexible to accommodate the student's interests, moods, circumstances, thinking of ways to expand teaching beyond traditional lecture, and reflecting on how students respond to different teaching methods to improve teaching.	<p>Incorporating videos and other digital platforms into lessons, utilizing multi-media such as written material, photos, songs, blogs, games, etc,</p> <p>Restructuring instruction to integrate the child's environment and surroundings.</p>
Democracy	Building respect and trust between the instructor and the student, empowering the student to stay involved, giving them the freedom to choose and engaging them with the world by being culturally mindful.	<p>Utilizing open-ended questions to give way to discussions, promoting non-repressive active listening and asking for different opinions. Fostering student engagement and autonomy and allocate room for student feedback.</p> <p>Student feedback is crucial because along with putting your students first, the teacher, can see what went well, what to improve upon, and what to change.</p> <p>Democracy gives your students a voice and that is critical in a classroom.</p>

Anti-bias/ Anti-racist	<p>Respecting and honoring our students’ cultures, languages, ways of speaking, lived experiences, histories, pronouns, family structure.</p> <p>But more than just being non-racist; be ANTI-racist educators. It means not only are we respectful, but we also actively work against our biases, which we all have.</p> <p>We actively learn about and affirm our students’ identities.</p>	<p>Engage in meaningful conversation, involving family in projects, interviews, and surveys, and our own outside research.</p> <p>Self-reflect on if we subconsciously think our world view and knowledge, way of speaking, is the only proper one? When unchecked, these biases influence our language and our teaching.</p>
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The Community of Volunteer Educators

The Community of Volunteer Educators (COVE) began in March 2020, as a way to provide free one-on-one tutoring for children of healthcare workers at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. Shortly thereafter, the organization changed direction to generally assist the children of New York City’s essential workers and communities in need. COVE now provides tutoring, after-school and summer enrichment and other educational programming to children and their families across the five boroughs of New York City. It aims to reduce educational inequities that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic using creative educational solutions.

COVE is run entirely by volunteer administrators, guided by a commitment to public service and democratic values within and outside the organization. The majority of the volunteers continue to be current or recently graduated college or graduate students. The organizational structure includes an advisory board, board of directors, senior organizers and administrators.

COVE is made up of eight administrative teams, including educational technology, instructional support, logistics, communications, outreach, research, legal, and finance. An “Accessibility Hub” has recently been added with representatives from each team to examine and increase accessibility to students and

volunteers based on a variety of factors, such as vision ability. Participation on the various teams is open to any volunteers, with some caveats. For example, instructional support, legal and finance team members may be sought based on some experience in the field, but a volunteer without prior experience can participate on another team that best fits their skill set and interests. All volunteers participate in a short virtual onboarding session to become familiar with the group's values and procedures. Currently, administrators hail from 15 cities and seven countries. The vast majority of these administrators have never met in person. The entire organization is run virtually using video conferencing (Zoom), Cloud-based work sharing (Google Suites), and a group messaging platform (Slack).

COVE volunteers are chosen democratically by other members. Administrators, tutors, and advisors apply to the organization and are interviewed by the current members to see if they are the right fit for the organization. They are then voted upon by those a part of the process. The team leads, or senior organizers, must experience being an administrator in the organization before applying for the position. They then interview with and are voted upon by the other Senior Organizers, since they will need to work across teams. The team they wish to serve is also consulted as well.

Senior organizers schedule and lead meetings, establish and encourage attendance at virtual co-working spaces, loosely coordinate team activities, and provide a point of contact for team members. The use of Slack and Google Drive enables administrators to communicate and collaborate directly with all other team members, making the senior organizers more facilitators than managers. The senior organizers meet weekly to plan across teams in the organization, while each team meets weekly to plan for the projects specific to its area. Team meetings are open to all administrators. Additionally, the senior organizers plan and lead the weekly "All-Staff" meeting, where all the administrators from all the teams communicate about their ongoing projects, share ideas and resources and have team-building discussions.

The organization's activities are all informed by a core set of values: equity, democracy, innovation, anti-bias/anti-racism and care. COVE practices equity by focusing on recruiting students from low-income communities, as well as tutors, teachers and administrators of color. COVE's Outreach Team partners with Title I schools and

community-based organizations that provide support to families who would not be able to afford tutoring and enrichment services otherwise. COVE is focused on combating the digital divide and opportunity gap for children which is greater for students of color (Dorn et al., 2020).

Table 2.

COVE Programming Enrollees by Demographics

Summer Enrichment Camp	
Race	Percent of enrollees
Asian	67
Hispanic	10.9
Black/African America	10
White	9.3
American Indian/Alaskan native	2.8
Fall Programming	
Asian	8.6
Hispanic	36.8
Black/African America	36.8
White	<5
American Indian/Alaskan native	<5
Middle Eastern/North African	<5
Prefer not to answer	7

Democracy informs COVE’s mission through an open and easy communication style through Slack channels, weekly All-Staff meetings, open access to information organization-wide, communication to the public through social media and a recent attainment of non-profit status. The core value of democracy also focuses on choice and voice for volunteers, students, and families. The organization leads focus groups and sends out surveys to get feedback on how to meet the needs of all of those involved. For example, one parent of a COVE student wrote, “Thanks for teaching and making the summer fun for all the kids stuck inside from the

pandemic. Not only did you share your gifts, but you also listened, giving kids a voice to explore and learn. We really appreciate all that you have voluntarily contributed.” Another parent wrote, “I am so happy with COVE and our tutor. The program has alleviated a lot of stress going through this pandemic with remote learning, and my son has come a long way. I am very appreciative of the services.”

COVE strives to create innovative educational opportunities, similar to the need for the “radical imagination” needed in the way we think about traditional schooling, as discussed in the Summer Institute (Love, 2020; Stovall, 2018). Online educational spaces afford students with wealth of new opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable due to monetary or geographic limitations.

Anti-bias/anti-racism is another core value of COVE that is not only about teaching, but about the organization itself. COVE believes in the power of diverse perspectives to help us grow both individually and organizationally. We work to promote a safe space for all students and volunteers. We share anti-bias/anti-racists curriculum resources, professional development events, and book lists. We believe that books and curriculum should be windows and mirrors for children, so they both see themselves, their history and cultures honored, as well as learn to understand the history and culture of others (Bishop, 1990; Botelho & Rudman, 2009). COVE also promotes activism outside the organization and actively stands with marginalized communities using our social media platforms.

This anti-bias/anti-racist space also helps to facilitate our final core value of care because in order to care for one another, we must create an organization and teaching environment that is safe for those from non-dominant communities in American society. COVE places emphasis on care, not just for others and our communities, but for ourselves. COVE administrators participate in check-ins at weekly meetings and maintain a self-care blog and workshops. COVE’s culture is generally one of care and encouragement, as evidenced by encouragement for those needing breaks, group game nights and supportive posts in Slack channels.

The 100+ COVE tutors work on a volunteer basis, providing a diverse range of educational and enrichment opportunities for students. Summer camp and fall tutoring were COVE’s two major programs thus far, serving New York City children aged 5-18. These

students participated in a wide range of entirely virtual activities, from dance and soccer classes to math and reading help.

Table 3.

COVE Summer and Fall 2020 Programming Enrollees by Location

Borough of New York City	Number of students
Bronx	92
Brooklyn	137
Manhattan	51
Queens	46
Staten Island	16

Table 4.

COVE Programming Enrollees by Age

Summer Enrichment Camp	
Age range/grade range	Number of students
5-8 years old	200
9-13 years old	170
14-18 years old	82
Fall Programming	
PreK-second grade	35
Third-fifth grade	59
Sixth-eighth	29
Ninth-Twelfth	26

How COVE’s Values Connect to the NNER Agenda for Education in a Democracy

The Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) is framed by the mission (Moral Dimensions), the conditions (20 Postulates), and the strategy (simultaneous renewal/reimagining) for schooling. The work of COVE is connected to AED in many ways. Moral Dimension 2 is about providing access to knowledge for all children and youth (Goodlad, 1990). COVE not only provides free online tutoring and enrichment programming, but prioritizes access to low-income students. Additionally, COVE provides families with resources to help secure free or low-cost devices and Wi-Fi through various third-

party sources. Moral Dimension 3 speaks to practicing a nurturing pedagogy (Goodlad, 1990). As stated above, one of COVE's core values is care. This is enacted in the stewardship of students and within COVE through fostering a supportive volunteer community and self-care. As explained above, COVE care includes having instructional support liaison groups for tutors, check-ins at meetings, a "self-care" and "non-work fun" channel on Slack, a self-care blog, and designated "times/days off" from COVE work.

The AED conditions are explained in the 20 Postulates, of which 10, 13, 15, and 16 are strongly connected to the work of COVE (Goodlad et al., 2004). Postulate 10 explains how teacher education must have the conditions for learning that future teachers are to establish in their own classrooms. COVE works to provide this professional development through our Educational Technology and Instructional Support teams.

Postulate 13 states that programs "must be infused with understanding of commitment to the moral obligation of teachers to ensure equitable access to and engagement in the best possible K-12 education for all children and youths" (Goodlad et al., 2004, p. 185). With equity as a Core Value, COVE's mission is to expand access to equitable learning opportunities through free, virtual educational enrichment programming to advance issues of economic, racial, and social justice within our communities. This mission is realized in several ways. Most broadly, our website and forms are also available in Spanish and Mandarin to provide access to two of NYC's largest bilingual or English learning populations. Other languages will also be provided as needed. COVE also targets student recruitment from Title I schools and has been working to recruit more volunteers from public schools of higher education.

Additionally, COVE has informal and formal partnerships with other non-profit organizations that serve children of low-income families throughout New York City. We look for other organizations to part with for a mutually-beneficial relationship. For example, COVE provides tutoring, enrichment and information to low-income communities of color, who do not have equitable access to these services, and East Flatbush Community Partnership (EFCP) provides food and housing services to the local community. EFCP has been a reliable partner in disseminating information on our programs, such as our college access workshops, that would benefit

the area residents. This postulate is also evident in our work to engage students in the best possible K-12 education for all children through tutor and teacher training in instructional support and educational technology and for students through workshops, one-on-one tutoring, after-school programming, and summer enrichment.

Postulate 15 speaks to the need for an array of laboratory settings and experiences. This will be explained in detail in the following section on our partnership with COVE, teacher education programs within the City University of New York system, and New York City public schools.

Postulate 16, most relevant to the current times, calls for engagement “in the problems and dilemmas arising out the inevitable conflict and incongruities between what works or is accepted in practice and the research and theory supporting other options” (Goodlad et al., 2004, p. 185). Certainly, no college textbook or teacher training program prepared educators for a global pandemic that would result in a sudden shift from in-person learning to hybrid/online learning, the social and psychological consequences of sheltering in place, and the emotional toll of COVID-19 illness and death. What may have worked in other circumstances is not the right strategy in these technical and social/emotional conditions.

The Impact of the NNER Summer Institute and Our Actions Taken as an Organization

The theme of the Summer Institute was “Preparing Beyond Distress: How do we prepare ourselves for innovation?” This question asks us to commit to strategic thinking, rather than just strategic planning. As Wheatley (2006) explains, in strategic thinking, we are not responding to the environment, but intentionally creating it. During the Summer Institute, all participants were challenged to think beyond the distress of today and imagine our future. For COVE, this particular question has been central to our thinking. Although COVE was founded because of the COVID-19 crisis, it plans to indefinitely sustain its mission, which is to expand access to equitable learning opportunities through free, virtual educational enrichment programming, and to advance issues of economic, racial, and social justice within our communities.

In accordance with strategic thinking, during COVE’s session at the Summer Institute, we asked participants to share their responses

to the following questions using a Padlet: “What educational needs do you foresee for the upcoming school year?” and “How can an educational support organization like us best address those needs?” In the chart below, we have organized the comments by topic. There were thirteen comments overall with three comments related to engagement and motivation; six comments related to supporting social and emotional needs, with five “likes” for comments in this group; one comment on technical tools and skills; and three comments on working space and organization, with two “likes” for comments in this group. These comments were in-line with our core values and helped confirm our strategic thinking, as well as add new ideas for future planning. As a virtual support organization, the most challenging areas for COVE to impact are technical tools/skills and working space/organization. Although we can provide support and ideas for these areas, we do not provide desks, devices, Wi-Fi, or workspaces for students. COVE has searched for other organizations to help families with these services.

Table 5

Comments (and Likes) on Padlet for COVE NNER Summer Institute Session

Topic	Comments
Engagement and motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging and motivating struggling students and having meaningful social interaction with peers. • Keeping kids engaged and motivated in what they are learning in school. • The biggest need will be for students take ownership in their learning as opposed to completing the assignments so they can get a passing grade in lower grades (K-2 is the most difficult during this period).
Supporting social and emotional needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social and emotional interactions • Social emotional support in addition to added academic support to high risk/low income students making that move to post-secondary education. • Social interaction is sorely missed. How can we build out more interaction in these virtual spaces? (2 likes)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting students "caught up academically" and provide avenues for social interaction. (1like) • Safety will be huge! Make sure each student feels supported and safe. (1 like) • Mental health and care. • I think there is a lot of power in naming that this will be difficult, and coaching people through that. It seems like we need to keep making space for heavy discussions, I am thinking about the social emotional part of this, how things will not feel the same upon our return. (1 like)
Technical tools and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think just making sure all students have the same capabilities to participate is a huge first step.
Working space and organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our students who are already academically struggling now have to balance trying to learn with all the distractions at home that they often come to school to escape. (2 likes) • Organization - helping students create a workable schedule/system in this new classroom. • Providing resources and space for students to develop strong work habits at home. Especially when their parents are working and they may be home alone or caregivers for siblings.

The sessions and readings were so informative to COVE as an organization and to individual participants, that NNER has become a mentor organization for us. Catherine Wolfe Bornhorst spoke to the newly formed COVE Board of Directors in the fall to share her experience and knowledge in helping lay the groundwork for COVE’s future as a democratically-run non-profit organization. We are inspired by Wheatley’s (2006) words, “Because power is energy, it needs to flow through organizations; it cannot be bound or designated to certain functions or levels” (p. 40).

COVE's AED-Inspired Innovating Problem-Solving Partnerships

COVE has sought to find innovative solutions for problems of educational inequity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of those challenges includes access for college students in Schools of Education (known as teacher candidates) at various New York City campuses to obtain synchronous online pre-student teaching experience with children. In accordance with the AED, COVE has created partnerships among itself, schools of education, and PK-12 schools. In the spring of 2021, COVE piloted a program for virtual pre-student teaching fieldwork experiences at Hunter College, Medgar Evers College, and several Title I New York City Public Schools. Due to health and safety concerns, many schools of education have had to turn to virtual simulations of children, causing a serious educational disadvantage for these future teachers, as well as any local children that would have benefited from their attention. In addition to in-person sessions being disrupted by social distancing needs, these teacher candidates have faced bureaucratic hurdles due to an overwhelmed Department of Education (DOE) and the delay in processing DOE email addresses for student teachers. This has meant that there have been delays in accessing video conferences and online classroom platforms for these teacher candidates.

One of the authors of this article works as a professor and clinical coordinator at Medgar Evers College, a City University of New York in Brooklyn, New York. In this role, she places teacher candidates in educational settings for their fieldwork experiences and is therefore uniquely qualified to understand the challenges of this task during the pandemic. Both authors, as members of COVE, held several virtual meetings with coordinators from the schools of education, elementary school administrators and other COVE members to coordinate the needs of all groups. This allowed approximately 85 teacher candidates to gain virtual experience working directly with children, and New York City Title 1 public school students obtained much needed additional instruction and enrichment. This teacher education partnership allows for more flexibility for the teacher candidates, many of whom are working full or part-time and/or are caring for family members.

Through COVE's coordination, these undergraduate and graduate students were given distance learning experiences with neighborhood

schools which also allowed them to complete field-based assignments for their education psychology, math methods, reading methods, or general pedagogy courses. These early childhood and elementary education teacher candidates were able to get flexible scheduling for their clinical hours during this challenging time when many had their own children doing virtual learning at home as well. The partnership also allowed for families to get more support with their children's independent online work as well as for students to receive more small-group instruction through online breakout rooms during class time. The inspiration for this program came from ideas shared at the NNER Summer Institute and the continuing guidance of the NNER. Originally, COVE saw schools of education as places for outreach for tutors and teachers for current programming and PK-12 schools as places to recruit students; but a reimagination allowed COVE to become a partner in teacher education programs.

Conclusion

The 2020 NNER Summer Institute came at the perfect time for COVE. After establishing itself as a community-based organization and diverging from some of the founders of the original organization, COVE was transitioning as a new organization committed to core values, mission, and vision that are similar to those of NNER. The Summer Institute became a place for COVE members to obtain feedback, recruit volunteers, and connect with a mentor organization, as we worked to become a non-profit. Since the summer, we were able to apply what we learned at various sessions, obtain support from Catherine Wolfe Bornhorst on organizational theory, and recruit Donna Kobza from Montclair State to serve on our Advisory Board, along with an existing Board member representing NNER. The NNER model of shared partnerships inspired us to think about connecting with other organizations with a focus on mission, rather than the organization itself. We were able to ask ourselves, "How can we combine effort and resources to do a better job to meet various goals together rather than work independently or in competition with one another?"

Although we are a group that centers around diversity and equity, we are immersed in a society where these concepts are at odds with each other. We have continued to reflect and struggle with how organizations are typically run and to imagine what is possible that is

true to our mission and Core Values. Wheatley (2006) also expanded on the work around shared vision that was explained in the readings and session by Greenblatt and Michelli (2020) during the Institute. Both Wheatley and Greenblatt and Michelli noted the importance of identity and self-awareness in an organization in order for it to constantly evolve and respond to changes. Whether the changes are broad and external, such as in policy or society, or are smaller and internal, such as in personnel or partnerships, an organization's shared vision and identity will anchor it through these changes and opportunities for renewal.

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Imagining the Possible:

Educating for a Democracy in a Summer Literacy Camp for Emergent Bilinguals

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Abstract

Our experiences at NNER's summer institute inspired and informed the development of a literacy camp for emergent bilinguals. The vision was to create an educational space where the voices of young emergent bilingual children were the central focus of our shared experiences and guided our collaborative camp explorations. This article presents four major lessons learned from the first two years of the camp experience that were aligned with and supported by Goodlad's four-part mission and NNER's Agenda for Education. These lessons included the importance of sharing leadership, cultivating interactions, using language flexibly, and engaging in reflective practices.

Keywords: *emergent bilinguals, shared leadership, reflective practices, summer camp, literacy, flexible use of language*

Imagine an educational space where every child knows they matter. A space where children are free to communicate using the language they choose. A space where children see themselves and their experiences reflected in the learning materials. A space where teachers put their own agendas aside and instead recognize the children's voices as the guiding and dominant presence in the room. A space that honors and respects each child's cultural identities, where learning about those identities is the teachers' driving motivation.

After imagining such a space at NNER's summer institute 2018, Erin returned from New York energized and hopeful. She wanted this imagined space to become a reality for young emergent bilingual children in her community. Working together with colleagues, two of whom subsequently attended NNER's summer institute, the four of them embarked on a journey to utilize their growing understanding

of NNER's Agenda for Education to build a literacy-based summer camp for young emergent bilinguals.

The camp was organized around our commitment to create a space where the cultural identities of emergent bilingual children were valued and honored as rich contexts for learning. We wanted the children to interact with learning materials that mirrored their culture and to use language freely and flexibly as they interacted with their peers and teachers. As native English speaking, white, middle-class females, this meant we had to constantly engage in critical reflection, questioning ways our own identities might be impacting the decisions we made about the camp. Ultimately, we were intent on building an educational space where the voices of young emergent bilingual children were the central focus of our shared experiences and guided our collaborative camp explorations. This was our collective vision, born from our shared understanding of NNER's Agenda for Education. Here, we tell our story of the camp, detailing the valuable lessons we learned and the ways those lessons, as they relate to NNER's Agenda for Education, can impact other educational spaces that are committed to equity for all.

Literature Review

The emergent bilingual population is growing at a rapid pace (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018), and yet inequities in education for this marginalized group abound (Alim and Paris 2017; Lazar, 2018). Creating a translanguing environment in which young children are valued as the cultural and linguistic experts they are (Bucholtz, Casillas, & Lee, 2017; Hamel, Yearta, & Barger, 2019), involves implementing principles of translanguaging classrooms (Garcia and Wei, 2014). Translanguaging is not simply code-switching; in fact, the term refers to the complex language practices of bilinguals in actual communicative settings (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018).

Garcia, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) identified four purposes of the translanguaging pedagogy: (a) to support students as they engage with and understand increasingly complex content and text; (b) to provide students with opportunities to develop in their linguistic practices regarding academic contexts; (c) to make space for students to develop in those linguistic practices; and (d) to support students' social-emotional development and bilingual identities. Our vision for

camp targeted making space for emergent bilingual children as they developed their bilingual identities.

Since language is closely bound with identity (Bucholtz, Casillas, & Lee, 2017; Cain, 2017), educators must “acknowledge, respect, affirm, and value” the languages and identities of their students (Cain, 2017, p. 486). This can take the form of dynamic bilingualism in which children implement “flexible, content-based use of different language practices, depending on students’ goals and purposes” (Lazar, 2018; p. 7). A few ways in which educators can support students’ translanguaging and dynamic bi- and multilingualism is by encouraging students to think about and discuss ideas and concepts in a language other than English, by providing access to multilingual texts in the classroom, by sharing their own language learning experiences, and by developing students’ metalinguistic awareness (Daniel & Pacheco, 2015).

It is important that educators begin to move from “authentic caring,” in which they form relationships with students, to “critical caring,” in which they serve as advocates for our students, using their funds of knowledge, valuing their home literacies, and teaching in a culturally responsive manner (Lazar, 2018).

If you build it, they will come. We hoped Ray Kinsella’s mantra in *Field of Dreams*, (Robinson, 1989) would ring true for our Summer Literacy Camp for Emergent Bilinguals. The camp aimed to provide literacy experiences where children and families saw themselves reflected in the learning space and where their cultural identities were honored as rich contexts for learning. To date, the summer camp has been offered for two years in a row. While our hope has always been to recruit campers from elementary schools local to the university where we served as faculty, that first year was challenging. Erin initially reached out to administrators and educators at the Spanish language immersion school, located within one mile of the university. Recruitment efforts yielded fewer applications than we anticipated. We were asking families to send their young children to a camp at an unfamiliar location with teachers they had never met. In an effort to cast a wider net, Erin reached out to a second local elementary school, contacted the school district’s family resource center, and visited a local *iglesia* (church). That first year of camp, 16 campers attended. By Year 2, we recruited campers from three additional elementary

schools (five in total) and hosted 41 campers. We built it and they came!

Our Story: The Emergent Bilingual Summer Literacy Camp

The two classrooms were spacious with high ceilings and large windows. They were physically arranged to host whole group meetings and a variety of learning centers. The camp was offered for five half days, from 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. In year 1, children were all together in one classroom. In year 2, children were organized into two groups: kindergarten and first grade; and second and third grade. Each classroom had two teachers, one bilingual and one English-speaking, two English-speaking University faculty, and four bilingual mentors.

A typical day began when campers were dropped off by their parents or the bus, which picked up children from a local *iglesia*. As students entered the classroom, they were greeted by the teachers and encouraged to play with other campers. Then campers were called to the whole group meeting area for group time that included a song and movement activity, a read-aloud, and discussions conducted in Spanish and English. An important aspect of our camp was the freedom to use language when and how children wanted. We wanted campers to “strategically utilize the language resources that are of most use to them at any given moment” (Fu, Hadjioannou, & Zhou, 2019, p. 29).

By 9:00 a.m., children were actively engaged in learning centers of their choice. Centers included book-making, blocks, dramatic play, reading, science, math, manipulatives, listening, and art. Again, an important part of camp was the freedom of choice. Children made choices about which centers to visit, the length of time spent there, and the people with whom they worked. This kind of freedom allowed children to explore their interests and to naturally engage in meaningful interactions with other campers and their teachers.

After an hour, children cleaned up their centers and came together for a family-style snack. Tables were set with plates of child-prepared snacks (such as quesadillas and sausage biscuits), bowls of fruit, silverware, napkins, cups, and pitchers of water and juice. After children cleaned up, they went outside or to the gym for free play. The playground had swings, monkey bars, climbing structures, a sand

box, wagons, balls, and a green space for running. The indoor gym was stocked with balls, tricycles, hula hoops, climbing structures, and foam toys. All campers, teachers, and researchers were together for free play.

Around 10:45 a.m., children came back inside, washed hands, and participated in a transition activity, like yoga, an interactive poem, fingerplay and/or song, and then went back to centers. At 11:40 a.m., children joined a whole group meeting to wrap-up the day's events and share a book, play games, or sing and dance. Camp concluded at 12:00 p.m. and students were picked up by their families or got back on the bus to be driven to the *iglesia*.

Participants

Our camp included four participant groups: campers, peer mentors, teachers, and researchers. As we increased our enrollment from year 1 to year 2, the numbers shifted. The roles, however, remained the same (see Table 1).

Campers

Children were recruited from the school district (local to the university lab school) to participate as campers. In year 2, 90% of the children were native Spanish speakers and the native English speakers were enrolled in the language immersion school of choice program within the school district.

Peer mentors

Bilingual students, ages 9-16, most of whom were enrolled in the language immersion school of choice program, served as peer mentors at the camp. Their role was to support the children and teachers in the camp experience. Examples of this invaluable support included assisting with translation between children, teachers, and parents; working with campers in small groups and one-on-one; playing with children during free play; setting up the classroom; and preparing snacks.

Teachers

There were four early childhood teachers. One was employed as a kindergarten assistant in the language immersion school of choice program, and three served as lead teachers in the university lab school

classrooms. Each of the two classrooms were served by a bilingual and an English-speaking teacher.

Researchers

Throughout the week-long camp, four English-speaking university faculty researchers were participant observers in the field (Wolcott, 2001). At times they quietly typed observational notes, while at other times, they actively engaged with children.

Table 1

Number of Participants in Year 1 and Year 2 of Camp

Participants	First Language			
	Spanish		English	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
Campers	10	37	6	4
Peer Mentors	3	7	2	1
Teachers	1	2	1	2
Researchers	0	0	3	4

Lessons Learned

Erin’s experience in the NNER’s Summer Institute resulted in the initial development of the camp. As we, the researchers, prepared for the first year, our hope was to reimagine what school literacy experiences look like for emergent bilinguals. We collaborated with the teachers to plan culturally relevant and sustaining curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Alim & Paris, 2017) that focused on cultural identity and sparked joy (Love, 2019). Our conversations often focused on ways we might utilize the talents and expertise of marginalized children, those often not recognized as resources for learning in schools.

Over the course of two years of summer camp sessions we learned valuable lessons for reimagining schools. These lessons included the importance of sharing leadership, cultivating interactions, using

language flexibly, and engaging in reflective practices. Through our thoughtful analysis of the camp experience, we recognized our findings were supported by and aligned with Goodlad, Mantle-Bromely, and Goodlad's (2004) four-part mission of schooling (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Four-part mission of schooling

The four-part mission of schooling, “as articulated by the proponents of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy can be succinctly stated as:”

1. Enculturating the young into a social and political democracy (p. 29)
2. Providing access to knowledge for all children and youths (p. 29)
3. Practicing pedagogical nurturing with respect to the art and science of teaching (p. 30)
4. Ensuring the responsible stewardship of the schools (p. 32)

As we reimagined a vision of schooling in our camp setting, our understanding of Goodlad’s vision was deepened. To this day, these lessons continue to inform camp development and implementation, as well as our work in teacher education and beyond.

Sharing Leadership: Enculturating the Young into a Social and Political Democracy

Schools are systemic entities charged with a variety of directives such as providing children with a safe space to learn and grow. One of the responsibilities of schools is enculturating children into a political and social democracy (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromely, & Goodlad, 2004). It is not enough to discuss the ideas of a democracy; educators must also make connections with the ideals that informed democracy (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromely, & Goodlad, 2004). Specifically, educating children in a democracy entails preparing them to assume and share leadership roles as well as engage as active citizens.

The foundation of our camp was committed to the ideal that the children’s voices would be central to the camp. Their culture, their language, their families, their interests, and their questions were the heartbeat of the camp. Placing the campers at the center of the camp meant that the children would lead their own learning. To support them in this leadership role, we built physical spaces that were open and inviting, encouraging children to make decisions and to work together. We created collaborative engagements that provoked children’s curiosities and interests. We purposefully created a schedule that included large blocks of time for children to explore,

play, and learn. While at camp, children were given the freedom to choose which engagements they would participate in, how they would manage the engagements, with whom they would engage, how long they participated, what materials they would use, and what language they spoke. Providing so many freedoms and opportunities to engage in shared leadership requires collaboration and cooperation. When disagreements arose, and were unresolved by the children on their own, teachers stepped in to guide and support them through a problem-solving process, deepening their understanding of conflict resolution in a democracy. Teachers took these opportunities to help children engage with one another respectfully, listen to and consider diverse perspectives, and present reasonable and empathetic responses (Greenblatt & Michelli, 2019). These disagreements were rare and brief. For the majority of the time, teachers stood back, so that the children could lead.

Additionally, teachers shared leadership with peer mentors. They charged peer mentors with responsibilities throughout the week, which included engaging with the children in centers, facilitating snack, reading to children, and supporting children's play in the gym. Peer mentors were uniquely instrumental in breaking down language barriers between campers and the teachers and researchers who spoke English as their primary language. Conversations were more complex and sustained when there were peer mentors available to help translate and participate. Additionally, peer mentors served as a bridge in communication with families, as they often were present for drop-off and pick-up to converse with families. Their leadership, and bilingualism, were invaluable to campers, teachers, researchers, and families.

Finally, we shared leadership with families. In our camp, we recognized the vital relationship between young children and their families. Because young children are so intricately entwined in the family web, we knew it was crucial to position families as integral members of our learning community. Building rapport and establishing trust with families was key. We created opportunities to meet them prior to camp by hosting a kick-off event on site. During this time, we enjoyed a potluck meal together, took them on a tour of the camp facility, video recorded their sharing of information about their child, and hosted a family photo booth. This kick-off event proved to be a valuable and meaningful context for the

beginnings of a relationship built on mutual trust and respect. Through this event, families were able to share important details about each child and that information was subsequently used to inform camp curriculum and procedures. In this way, families assumed leadership roles in guiding camp decisions. Once camp was underway, children and families engaged as active developers and participants in the camp community. For example, families were asked to share stories about the heritage of their child's name. *Why was their name chosen? What meaning does the name have? What makes it special to their family?* Their responses were included in "All About Me" books the children created. On the last day of camp, families were invited to join us in a final celebration. We sang, danced, presented artwork and shared snacks prepared by the children. Teachers reminisced about the week with family members and children eagerly toured them around the classrooms, proudly explaining their work and classroom materials.

Lesson learned:

Sharing leadership provides opportunities for children to participate as active citizens, enculturating them into a social and political democracy.

Cultivating Interactions: Practicing Pedagogical Nurturing

Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) posited that practicing pedagogical nurturing, with respect to the art and science of teaching, is largely about relationships. While teachers must have a strong command of their content, knowing and understanding those they teach is most critical. Therefore, relationships must be built and sustained. We intentionally designed our curriculum and daily routines to allow opportunities for multiple and varied interactions with one another, which was key to developing relationships in our camp.

We practiced pedagogical nurturing by cultivating relationships with the camp's stakeholders. At its conception, the camp was dependent upon a wide variety of stakeholders, including teachers and administrators of local elementary schools, Parent Smart (a local school district-based, family resource center), emergent bilingual/multilingual children and their families, area Latinx churches, camp teachers and researchers, and university

administrators. Meaningful relationships and engagements with these stakeholders was important to the success of the camp. For example, we collaborated with teachers and administrators of our local schools who proved particularly vital to enrolling the first group of campers. Without their support, we would not have had any campers. Our relationships with local teachers and administrators, along with the camp's success that first year, helped us grow from 16 children in year one to 41 children in year two. Additionally, we cultivated relationships with the children's families. When we noticed, in the first iteration of the camp, we needed more time to develop relationships with families, we held our "camp kick-off" the following year (an event explained in the previous section). Getting to know the families helped us to determine how to better prepare camp for the children who would be attending. It provided us with connections to family and a sense of comfort as we shared a meal together.

We practiced pedagogical nurturing by designing curriculum intended to cultivate interactions among campers. In year 2, with the addition of the kick-off event, teachers were better prepared for the arrival of children on the first day. We knew more about their families and their interests. Teachers were able to provide more culturally responsive materials for each classroom. Books were selected to reflect the identities of campers. Criteria for selecting books included authentic voices of authors, bilingual books, and topics that reflected campers' interests and experiences. Titles like *We are Cousins/Somos Primos* (Bertrand, 2007) and *Islandborn/Lola* (Díaz, 2018) invited children to discuss their families and their dreams. Based on the selected read-alouds, campers participated in a variety of reader response activities. For example, they wrote stories, drew pictures of their families, made collages, and painted self-portraits. Campers had access to a variety of multicultural materials representing various skin tones (e.g., markers, paints, colored pencils, crayons and construction paper) throughout the classroom. These activities were selected to help nurture campers and their connections with literature, their peers, and their teachers.

Finally, teachers created daily routines that cultivated interactions in a nurturing learning experience for campers. See Figure 2 for the daily schedule.

Figure 2

Daily Schedule of Camp Activities

Daily Camp Schedule	
8:30	Arrival, hand washing, and transition to Group Time
8:35	Group Time
9:00	Learning Centers
9:50	Clean-up and transition to snack
10:00	Outdoor play
10:30	Yoga/Dancing and transition to Learning Centers
10:40	Learning Centers
11:35	Clean-up and transition to Group Time
11:40	Group Time
12:00	Dismissal

Every morning before camp started teachers, campers, peer mentors, and researchers could freely interact and enjoy one another's company on the playground. Inside the classroom, each day began with a shared group time, reading a book and discussing personal connections to texts. During center time, children had the freedom to direct their own learning over extended periods of time, nurturing their educational interests. Snack time provided a structured setting for children to sit, share a meal, and engage in natural conversations with teachers, peer mentors, and researchers. The authentic and varied interactions that took place throughout the day allowed campers to develop meaningful relationships.

Lesson learned:

Cultivating interactions contributes to the creation of a nurturing learning environment.

Using Language Flexibly: Providing Access to Knowledge for All Children

Access to knowledge is paramount to learning and “opportunities to gain access to the most generally useful knowledge have traditionally been poorly distributed within and among most schools” (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromely, & Goodlad, 2004, p.30). Additionally, there is an inequitable distribution of funding which often results in emergent bilingual children attending underserved schools with less access to highly qualified teachers (Garcia & Kleifgan, 2018). Camp was facilitated by knowledgeable teachers that had their own lived experiences and previous work with emergent bilingual children to build upon. These teachers made knowledge accessible to children

through their own flexible use of language and the ways in which they provided a space for children to flexibly use language as well.

We modeled the flexible use of language at the camp kick-off, which we hoped would serve as a forum for all participants (i.e., campers, families, peer mentors, teachers, and researchers) to get to know one another. The camp director and one of the bilingual teachers introduced all of the participants, teachers, peer mentors, and researchers, and gave a welcoming presentation in Spanish and English with directions for the activities. Parents and caregivers recorded video introductions about their children via the web-based platform, Flipgrid. Using Flipgrid allowed parents to speak in whichever language they preferred. If they chose to speak in Spanish, the Spanish-speaking teachers and the peer mentors could help translate for the English-speaking teachers. Additionally, the English-speaking teachers could make use of the translate feature embedded in Flipgrid. The opportunity to engage in the bilingual camp kick-off set the tone for children to use language in flexible ways once the camp officially started.

Unencumbered by the systemic restraints often present in traditional schools, the emergent bilingual children were able to use language in flexible ways throughout the camp. Specifically, the children, peer mentors, and two of the four teachers regularly engaged in dynamic bilingualism, the “flexible, content-based use of different language practices, depending on students’ goals and purposes” (Lazar, 2018, p. 7). During the camp, children would oscillate between speaking Spanish and English throughout the day as the situation warranted. For example, one of the children in the second and third grade classroom told a researcher about how he and his dad liked to make tamales; the conversation took place entirely in English. Minutes later, he joined a group playing in the kitchen center; one of the children in the kitchen center spoke only Spanish, so this child effortlessly started speaking with her in Spanish. These types of conversations allow children to live a “rich, engaged, and vital life” (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromely, & Goodlad, 2004, p. 30) in schools that incorporate those lived experiences into the curriculum.

Lesson learned:

Creating a space for children to use language flexibly increases the possibility for all children to access knowledge.

Engaging in Reflective Practices: Ensuring Responsible Stewardships

As responsible stewards of our profession, researchers and educators, we believe in the importance of and are fully committed to engaging in life-long learning. Together, we asked questions, participated in comprehensive book studies and training, found answers that lead to more questions, and continued the cycle. Engaging in continual professional development and practicing what we learn are integral to our professional lives. This “continuous renewal” (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromely, & Goodlad, 2004) allows us to perpetually deepen our understanding and improve our practices; we lived this process throughout the camp experience.

Prior to the camp, teachers and researchers engaged in professional development. We read articles and book chapters about culturally sustaining practices (Alim & Paris, 2017), reflected on our current beliefs and practices, and engaged in professional dialogue. This process informed the collaborative decisions we made about camp materials, curriculum, and procedures. Furthermore, through our professional development, we came to collectively acknowledge that bias has become normalized, and deficit-views are rampant in many classrooms (Baines, Tisdale, & Long, 2018). With this in mind, the teachers and researchers examined the environment, curriculum, book materials, and language use for instances of bias, privilege, and oppression. They also engaged in consistent and sustained reflection before, during, and after the camp; they asked questions, discussed improvements, and evaluated opportunities to grow the camp towards more culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and sustaining pedagogies. Some decisions were made outside of the camp day. For example, when Lindsay recognized all the printed literacy charts prioritized English (it was at the top or on the left), we deliberately created new literacy charts that prioritized Spanish. Other changes were made in the moment and on the spot. For example, sometimes teachers presented read-alouds in Spanish first, even when the books were not written that way.

After our first camp, we spent time analyzing the curriculum, schedule, teacher journals, researcher journals, and images from the camp. We discovered the key components that contributed to our community, and researched more about translanguaging communities (Fu, Hadjioannou, and Zhou 2019). Our reflective

practices allowed us to make improvements to the camp in the second year. Again, we analyzed the curriculum, journals, work, and images from our second year of camp and went to work on improvements to make for the third year.

Lesson learned:

Engaging in reflective practices allows children to be the center of an experience, as we continue to revise how we honor who they are and their experiences in this learning community.

Final Thoughts

It is our hope that the lessons we learned about reimagining school spaces in our summer literacy camp for emergent bilingual children can inform the practices of others who engage in this important work. These lessons might serve as guiding tenets for those who seek to dismantle educational systems of oppression and build reimagined educational spaces that exemplify Goodlad, Mantle-Bromely, and Goodlad's (2004) four-part mission and NNER's Agenda. Acknowledging the ongoing nature of the renewal process, we understand our work is never finished. Some of our ponderings for our next year of camp include: (a) How might we involve a Latinx researcher, someone to offer perspectives other than white, female, mainstream experiences? (b) How might we continue working to develop curriculum that sustains children's culture? (c) How do we focus on the interactions with families to build more community? and (d) What are the implications of our lessons learned and how can we extend them into partnership schools? We remain committed to immersing ourselves in the renewal process and to documenting our journey as we inch closer to the democratic schooling every child deserves.

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Using a Problem-Posing Approach in the English as a Second Language Classroom

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Abstract

A mission of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy is the importance of teachers utilizing a nurturing pedagogy (Goodlad, 2004). In this article, I examine the research question of the impact of a problem-posing approach, an instructional approach that aligns with nurturing pedagogy, on the engagement of students in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. Paulo Friere's critical pedagogy serves as the theoretical framework which suggests teachers and students can learn together by constructing meaning together to support liberation they participate in social action, advance democracy, or promote equality (Shor, 1993). Data were collected through pre- and post-surveys, pre- and post-interviews, student work artifacts, informal interviews, and field observations. The findings reveal an increase in student engagement through a problem-posing approach. Key themes of increased students' value of collaboration, an environment that disarmed the fear of speaking, and connections to the workforce surfaced. These findings support the use of an equitable educational practice with ELs.

Keywords: *problem-posing approach, student engagement, English as a Second Language, critical pedagogy, Agenda for Education in a Democracy*

Have you ever observed students very talkative and engaged in conversations while waiting for class to start or outside of the classroom? Have you ever observed the same group of students as silent and disengaged once class begins inside the classroom? Perhaps, there are structures both visible and invisible which silence voices in the formal structure of a classroom, especially an ESL classroom.

As the 21st century evolves, education in America continues to face challenges associated with meeting the learning needs of all students. The population of students learning ESL has expanded over the past few decades. Cosentino de Cohen, Deterding, and Clewell (2005) highlighted that English Learners (ELs) are increasingly

attending schools across the United States; however, 70% of the EL students are enrolled in only 10% of America's schools. Typically, these schools are geographically located in urban areas. The student demographics of these schools typically include disproportionate numbers of economically disadvantaged or minority students. Consequently, EL students are separated from English-speaking peer role models (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). As the number of EL students increases, the need of equitable educational practices related to second language acquisition is imperative.

In this article, we first examine the historical trajectory of ESL instruction in the United States, John Goodlad's thoughts of the role of human conversation in democracy and education, and an instructional approach for enhancing human conversation and fostering democratic ideals within a classroom environment. The historical context of ESL instruction in the United States is highlighted with a focus on understanding how democratic processes such as legislation have shaped its trajectory. John Goodlad's vision and life work's mission of fostering democracy within public education is explored with a focus on the thread related to nurturing pedagogy through human conversation. Then, an instructional approach of problem-posing, based on Paulo Freire's work, is detailed as a strategy of supporting education renewal in schools based on the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (2004).

Historical Context of ESL Instruction

Since the 1800s, ESL instruction has been provided in the United States. With the annexation of the Territory of New Mexico in 1850, a curriculum could be written in English, Spanish, or both languages (Leibowitz, 1971; Woodrum, 2009). At the turn of the century, with an influx of eight million immigrants, instruction focused on the assimilation of culture and language in an attempt to Americanize immigrants (Higham, 1992; Ovando & Combs, 2018). Immigration legislation established a quota system in the 1920s. As a result, there were less immigrants coming to the United States and many second-generation immigrants used English as their first language (Crawford, 1992). ESL instruction became almost obsolete.

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 ended the immigration quota system (Kammer, 2015). The field of ESL

instruction grew as there was an increase in immigration, refugee youth, and international students attending higher education institutions coming to the United States. Reauthorization legislation has continued to increase funding, protection against discrimination, service opportunities, training for teachers, and instructional programming as students receiving ESL instruction continues to grow (Ovando & Combs, 2018).

The Role of Human Conversation in Democracy and Education

John Goodlad, an American educator and theorist, spent his life's work developing and casting his vision and mission for public education. His influence is far-reaching as evident in the numerous publications of his work which spanned decades. Arguably his most popular work focused on his development of "moral dimensions" of teaching which then framed his renewal effort in a "four-part mission of schooling" (Goodlad et al., 2004, p. 28) which laid the foundation for his later work of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (Goodlad, 1997).

In a narrower thread of Goodlad's (1994) work, he often focused on interactions within educational contexts to support a democratic society as such:

The most productive instructional methods combine "interaction models" with "social systems" models. The former include such elements as using positive reinforcement, ensuring that the learning task is appropriate to the students (for example, not hopelessly over their heads), redirecting the classroom activity when it clearly is going off the track instead of sticking grimly for the entire period to what has been planned, varying the length of episodes, being sure the task is understood, and so on. The latter models address the matter of sustaining a positive set of interactions among students and between students and the teacher. For example, the degree of involvement invited by the task can significantly reduce or even eliminate the need for the teacher to use controlling behaviors, especially abrasive ones. The teacher expresses positive interest in what the students are doing and in them as individuals. (p. 90)

Consequently, Goodlad (1994) believed instruction should focus on "interactions, relationships, and interdependencies within a defined environment" (p. 90). The focus is on students with a humanistic lens

of perspective as compared to a factory output model. The relationships included student-to-student and student-to-teacher; yet Goodlad also believed parent-to-teacher relationships were imperative as well within a democratic society (Goodlad & Anderson, 1963).

The role of human conversation in supporting democracy is imperative and aligns with the second part of Goodlad's mission for schooling in which students learn thoughtful participation in social and political democracy (Goodlad et al., 2004). Exposure to knowledge or human conversation does not simply support enculturation, Goodlad et al. (2004) expanded:

It is precisely such (substantive) participation, such active engagement, that is too often lacking as schools strive to provide access only to selected fragments. Participation in the human conversation and access to all the varied knowledge that goes with it are important because they are what develops a person's intellectual and social skills and abilities and what best prepares that person to interpret the human experience. (p. 30)

The problem-posing approach aims to provide framing to curate human conversations and their associated benefits.

A Problem-Posing Approach

Historical Context

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and theorist, spent his career committed to promoting social justice, critical knowledge, and social action (Shor, 1993). Freire sought to challenge the elite who promoted their culture and values as societal norms (Leonard & McLaren, 2002). Freire, Faundez, and Coates (1989) argued that any standardization in education is a reflection of the oppressor enforcing their views. He revolutionized education systems globally with this work of critical pedagogy.

Rather than the student solely learning from teachers, critical pedagogy suggests that both the student and teacher can learn together to construct meaning. The aim of critical pedagogy is to enhance students' literacy and knowledge while students engage in advancing democracy, promoting equality, and social action. Critical pedagogy is a process that creates a classroom atmosphere that

honors democratic spaces through dialogue. The problem-posing approach affords the opportunity for democracy to cultivate among teachers and students. A transformative relationship is built between the teacher and students, students and learning, and students and society.

Theoretical Base

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1972) first detailed the banking approach to education. In banking education, teachers deposit knowledge into students. Banking education is education as the practice of domination. Teachers attempt to control students' thinking. The purpose of banking education is to adapt students to their oppressive contexts. Students are considered passive objects while being treated as marginal stakeholders in society. Interconnections between students are nonexistent.

Freire (1970), drawing on his life experiences, challenged the banking approach that is commonly found in the American education system. Rather than students being simply receivers of knowledge, Freire suggests the problem-posing approach as a foil to the banking approach. Within the problem-posing approach, students are orchestrators of their learning. The purpose of the problem-posing approach is education as the practice of freedom. The relationships between the teacher and students are equitable. Thus, both the teacher and students teach and learn from one another.

Shor (1993) explained that the problem-posing approach allows students to *do* education as compared to having education *done* to them. Students shift from simply answering questions to questioning answers through the problem-posing approach of critical pedagogy.

While Freire recognized the complexity of inequities in education, he suggests an instructional approach that attempts to engage people who have been marginalized by eliciting their lived experiences and knowledge. While many progressive education movements continue to still utilize the banking approach, Freire (1970) contended the problem-posing approach is the only way to transform the world by using emancipatory education.

Five Aspects of a Problem-Posing Approach

Auerbach (1992) highlighted five aspects of the problem-posing approach. As a way of teaching critical thinking skills, the aspects

provide a fluid-structure for adult learners to gain confidence and comfort to think critically. The five aspects are the following: (a) describe the content, (b) define the problem, (c) personalize the problem, (d) discuss the problem, and (e) discuss alternatives to the problem. Teachers facilitate the discussion of the problem from concrete to analytical by progressing through inductive questioning. Ultimately, the problem-posing approach assists students to identify the problem, determine its relevance to them, distinguish the causes of the problem, generalize to others, and create possible solutions for the problem.

For students, the first aspect of the problem-posing approach is to describe the content. Teachers share a code with students. The codified form includes a representation of a meaningful topic by a form of media such as a photograph, drawing, narrative, or written dialogue, texts from newspapers, signs, community brochure, food stamp form, insurance form, school newsletter, cartoon, or magazine (Wallerstein, 1983). Because experiences or concerns of students are the catalysts for the selection of the codes, they are relevant to the students. The students are given time to examine the code, then the teacher asks questions such as: “What do you see in the picture (photograph, drawing, etc.)? What is happening in the picture (photograph, drawing, etc.)? What is this dialogue (story, article, message) about? What is happening in the dialogue (story, article, message)?” (Nixon-Ponder, 1995, p. 3).

During the next aspect of problem-posing, students discover and define the problem presented in the code. It is possible that students may discover and define multiple problems. If multiple problems are discovered, the teacher asks students to determine one problem to focus on while the other problems can be used in future activities. At times, students identify two problems that are interdependent; then, the students can proceed by attempting to solve the problems together (Nixon-Ponder, 2001).

Then, the teacher shifts to a facilitator role. The teacher guides students with the following questions: *How does the problem make you feel? What does the problem make you think about?* The goal is for students to internalize the problem by connecting the topic to their own daily lives, background experiences, or cultures. It is important for the teacher to ensure that all students have an opportunity to share their thoughts. However, if a student is uncomfortable sharing then they

do not have to share. At this point, students may learn that peers have experienced similar events, have commonalities among their lives and cultures, or affirm their being (Nixon-Ponder, 2001).

Discussing the problem occurs next. During this aspect, the facilitator should be intentional to allow conversations to flow freely without creating barriers or expounding beliefs on students (Nixon-Ponder, 2001). The facilitator uses the following questions to guide the discussion towards the political causes and social reasons of the problem: *Why does this problem exist? How has this problem impacted you?* The purpose of this step is to create a safe environment for students to openly discuss problems that impact them while gaining ownership over the dialogic conversation.

Finally, alternatives to the problem are uncovered (Nixon-Ponder, 2001). Students create possible solutions or alternatives to the problem. By highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of the solutions, students become aware that they have the answers to their problems. It is important for the facilitators to encourage students to uncover several alternatives to the problem or topic so that the solutions are practical and attainable.

It is important to note as a caveat that the five aspects are not formulaic in nature but rather fluid and discussion driven. In practice, the problem-posing approach allows both the teacher and students to assume the role of both positions so that learning occurs for both. The problem-posing approach allows both teachers and students to deeply explore problems within a social and personal perspective lens. Problem-posing “offers students a forum for validating their life experiences, their cultures, and their personal knowledge of how their world works. Problem-posing is dynamic, participatory, and empowering” (Nixon-Ponder, 1995, p. 4).

Study Methods

Within the ESL classes, enrollment had increased. Low-level student engagement had been observed through student behaviors and student responses. When answering questions, students’ answers were evasive and did not connect to content being taught. Students had shared that they were more willing to talk in their ESL class as compared to other classes, afraid to ask questions in classes because they were often made fun of regarding their pronunciation of words,

or not given opportunities to talk in other classes due to the instructional practices used of lecture or direct instruction. One student described their science class as a place where they sit, listen, and must read to learn, which was very challenging. For this study, the definition of student engagement was the extent to which students engaged with activities that were likely to lead to learning (Coates, 2006).

Research Site

Using qualitative methods, this action research study sought to examine the impact of a problem-posing approach on the engagement level of students in an ESL writing class at a community college in the mid-Atlantic region. The context and setting of the study are important. Using a wider lens of perspective, the study took place in a community college of about 5,600 students in the mid-Atlantic region. The community college served six rural, agricultural counties and one city. Access, academic rigor, student success, community impact, professionalism, intellectual viability, and diversity were values that the college esteemed. A majority of the students (79%) were enrolled on a part-time basis. The college offered one-year certificates, two-year associate degrees, continuing education, and workforce training. The college had agreements with the state's four-year universities for automatic transfer of students pursuing bachelor's degrees.

Research Positionality

The researcher was the instructor within the ESL classroom of this study. Her daily and long-term mission was to promote the success and wellbeing of all students and staff. Naturally, the researcher's positionality and subjectivity influenced her as an instructor. The instructor-researcher defined her role as providing insight to strengthen the skills and/or learning of students within the language domains of reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

As the instructor assuming the role of researcher in this study, the instructor-researcher's autobiographical positionality is important (Chavez, 2008; Efron & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015). Her ancestry included English, German, Scandinavian, and Cherokee heritage while her cultural heritage was a legacy of middle-class Americans with a nuclear family. She was raised in a middle-class

environment. Many extended family members lived nearby fostering daily interactions. She was curious about the implications of diversity in education due to minimal exposure as a child and increased exposure as a practitioner. She believed the problem-posing approach was an inclusive practice that supports both equity and social justice. Her research decisions were focused on promoting social justice and inclusion for all learners while empowering students to create their own journey of success rather than society's projected path of success.

The role of the instructor as the researcher in the study was important to consider. A key aspect of action research methodology is the positionality of the researcher (Chavez, 2008; Efron & Ravid, 2013; Herr & Anderson, 2015). Positionality relates to action researchers' relationships with their context and participants. "Positionality can contain elements of both insider and outsider or change during the research process" (Herr & Anderson, 2014, p. 37). Thus, it was important to navigate the implications of the researchers' relationships within the study.

Within the context, the researcher served as the sole ESL instructor for the community college. Responsibilities of the instructor included instructional design, informal advising, assessment and evaluation of students, and vertical alignment of curriculum to the ESL pathway. As the ESL instructor, the researcher provided insight to strengthen the skills and/or knowledge of students with the intent to enhance student learning. Within the study, the instructor-researcher collaborated with participants.

Participants

The participants for the study were volunteers of the population of students enrolled in the ESL class for writing composition at the community college. While there were 19 students in the class, seven students were actual participants in the study. Inclusion criteria for the participants included students enrolled in ESL 13 Composition of Writing. Each student either passed the prerequisite ESL class for writing composition (ESL 12) or was placed into the class based on their ACCUPLACER® score (200-300). Students who completed ESL 12 the previous semester had the researcher for their instructor. The participants included one who attended the community college full-time, while six participants attended the community college part-

time. Another inclusion criterion was that all participants have a first language that is not English. Home countries of student-participants included the following: Iraq, Afghanistan, Thailand, United States (Hawaii), Syria, and Palestine. Participant consent was another inclusion criterion.

The seven student-participants are described below. For the purpose of the study, pseudonyms were used for names and places.

- Maria was a female who was 30-39 years old. Her home country was Afghanistan. She began college at this community college; it was her first academic term. She had a sibling who had attended college. She had a high school diploma. She attended college full-time.
- Jen was a female who was either 18 or 19 years old. Her home country was Thailand. She began college at this community college; it was her second academic term. She had a sibling who had attended college. She had a high school diploma. She attended college part-time.
- Younis was a male who was 25-29 years old. His home country was Palestine. He began college at this community college; it was his third or fourth academic term. He had a sibling who had attended college. He had a high school diploma. He attended college part-time.
- Baram was a male who was 40-49 years old. His home country was Syria. He began college elsewhere; it was his second academic term at this community college. His siblings and spouse/partner had attended college. His highest degree of attainment was an associate's degree. He attended college full time.
- Grace was a female who was 25-29 years old. Her home country was the United States. She was from Hawaii, where her first language was not English. She began college at this community college; this was her third or fourth academic term at this community college. Her spouse/partner had attended college. She had a high school diploma. She attended college part-time.
- Lucy was a female who was 30-39 years old. Her home country was Afghanistan. She began college at this community college; it was her second academic term. Her mother, father, and

sibling attended college. She had a high school diploma. She attended college part time.

- Hanna was a female who was 25-29 years old. Her home country was Iraq. She began college elsewhere; it was her first academic term at this community college. Her mother, father, and siblings had attended college. She had a bachelor's degree. She attended college part time.

Design

During 12 on-campus class sessions throughout a 6-week data collection period, a problem-posing approach was used. Pre- and post-intervention measures were used. The class met on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Tuesdays, students worked through the first three steps of the problem-posing approach. On Thursdays, students worked through the final two steps of the problem-posing approach.

Data collection included observation field notes, student-participant surveys, structured student-participant interviews, informal student-participant interviews, and student artifacts. The purpose of writing down field notes of observations was to create a rich picture for reflection and data analysis after data collection. The field notes helped the researcher capture various informal student interactions, responses, and behaviors.

The Student Engagement Surveys were instructor-created using adaptations of national student engagement survey questions and relevant research on higher education student engagement. Surveys were given to students both before and after the intervention. The surveys sought to examine students' perspectives of student engagement. The survey had three subsets of questions: (1) demographic information, (2) behavioral, and (3) personal development.

The structured student-participant interview protocol was instructor-researcher created. The interview protocol's purpose was to gain student-participants' insight related to the research question. Students participated in interviews using the same questions pre- and post-intervention of the problem-posing approach. Students were able to write their answers to mitigate participants' language proficiency that may impact results.

The researcher noted informal interviews that occurred between the researcher and participants throughout the implementation phase

of the intervention. When the instructor asked questions to different students, answers were noted. The intent of this data measure was to collect students' perceptions throughout the intervention.

The researcher collected artifacts of students' writing throughout the study. The artifacts were journal entries. The journal prompts were not artificial as they came from the participants' perspectives. Students answered the journal prompt of, "How do you solve problems?" at the beginning, middle, and end of the intervention phase. The journal entries provided participants with an opportunity to explore their voice as well.

Data Analysis

Data analysis drew from grounded theory. As a research methodology, grounded theory aims to create a theory of the explanation of social interactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Thus, emergent coding was mostly used for data analysis because it allowed themes and content patterns to emerge from the data measures. Participants were able to provide their own interpretations of the problem-posing approach. Following the emergent coding, content analysis and thematic analysis was used to identify content or themes shared by the participants. A priori coding and emergent coding were used to analyze the structured student-participant interviews.

For the research question, the instructor-researcher used multiple measures to determine the impact of the intervention of using the problem-posing approach. The instructor-researcher's field notes, artifacts, and informal interviews were analyzed using emergent coding. Using emergent coding was appropriate for the research questions because it afforded the opportunity for themes or content patterns to emerge from the data measures.

Furthermore, since the study was inquiry-based, emergent coding aligned with the goal of the study to explore the effect of the problem-posing approach on student engagement. By using emergent coding, participants were afforded the opportunity to supply their own interpretations of the problem-posing approach. This was helpful for the research because it created a reliable representation of the participants and supported a quality criteria of action research. After completing emergent coding, processing and analysis of the data was an intricate act. The instructor-researcher used content

analysis and thematic analysis to identify patterns in content or themes presented by student-participants.

Another data instrument for the research question involved interviewing student-participants. The student-participant responses of the interviews were analyzed using a priori coding and emergent coding. These coding methods were appropriate for the research question because they allowed the instructor-researcher to predetermine some topics to look for that were associated with the constructs or theoretical framework, such as problem-posing and student engagement.

Findings

The study sought to examine the impact of using the problem-posing approach on student engagement in an ESL classroom. As a result of the intervention of using the problem-posing approach, students perceived an increase in their own engagement. By using the constant comparative approach of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mertler, 2014), three overarching themes of increased students' value of collaboration, an environment that disarmed the fear of speaking, and connections to the workforce emerged from the data collection.

Value of Collaboration

The first theme that emerged post-intervention was students felt as though they valued collaborating with others. Scores on the survey improved in the areas related to working with students on class projects and working effectively with others. Grace added, "Group activities share our knowledge with each other in class."

Before the intervention, Jen shared, "I feels like I learn more if I talk to the teacher face to face." After the intervention, Jen felt as though English was easier to learn in groups and described solving problems with others as important because "they have other way[s] of solving problem[s], while you have [the] other way around. But in the end, you work it out how to solve it." Then, she shared that she prefers "when we interact with other people so that I can learned about them in life.

Younis shared, "[During the problem-posing activities], it was good working together as a team. It helped me in my job, because I have to do that and speak well," described Younis in class one day.

When asked what makes English easy to learn in the post-interview, Younis replied, “It makes it easy when we practice it every day of our life, such as talking and listening to people around us... when we have to learn.” Regarding problem-solving, he shared, “Working with others solving a problem can make a huge help. By working together as a team, it makes you stronger and give[s] you confidence, and you will feel good about yourself knowing that there are people there to help you.”

Furthermore, when asked how the problem-posing approach activities were impacting her student engagement after the fourth session, Hanna shared, “I have learned to listen to others and realize that others have stories that I can learn from. I think it has helped my writing too because I am trying to look at things from different perspectives, so I have more details to share.”

Furthermore, journal entries demonstrated an increased awareness of the value of collaboration. The comparison of journal entries from the beginning, middle, and end of the intervention phase described an increased likelihood to involve others in problem-solving in order to collaborate. For example, in Maria’s first journal entry, she highlighted working hard and talking with family in regard to problem-solving. In her final journal entry, she included the topics of consultation and brainstorming of the causes of the problem coupled with asking for help from others. In Younis’s first journal entry, he only noted determining the cause of a problem. In his final journal entry, he discussed identifying the cause of the problem, brainstorming possible solutions, conversing with others about it, and connecting it to world problems as aspects of problem-solving. The specificity of the students’ writing confirmed an increased value of collaboration.

Environment Disarming the Fear of Speaking

The findings suggest that the use of a problem-posing approach helped create a classroom environment that disarmed the fear of speaking. Based on survey results, students perceived that their ability to speak clearly and effectively improved. In the pre-interviews, a majority of students shared that they preferred to learn English through the memorization of grammar as compared to practicing speaking. In post-interviews, a majority of students shared that they preferred to learn English through only speaking or a combination of

speaking and learning grammar as compared to only learning grammar and facts.

Grace shared during an informal interview, “I did not like them at first. I do not always like speaking or did not know much about the picture. But then, I realized I know some stuff about things and should talk and share my thoughts.” “I love working with my classmates because it is really helping me with my conversation. [It] also makes me feel more confident to talk with other people in society,” stated Lucy post-intervention.

Post-interviews expanded on this theme. Lucy further described, “It’s a little harder for foreigner(s) to learn English[.] It’s because English is the 2nd language for them but for sure, it’s not impossible if they take classes and watch shows and read and continue to talk to improve their speaking.” She noted, “I love working with my classmates because it is really helping me with my conversation. Also [it] makes me feel more confident to talk with other people in society.” Younis said, “It makes it hard when we don't practice it every day. Like the days I don't speak English or I'm [with] friends or family for some time, then come back to the outside and talk to my English-speaking friends, they can tell that I haven't used English for some time.”

Finally, observations recorded in field notes revealed an increased practice of speaking during the intervention phase. Initially, Maria and Grace rarely spoke. Near the end of the intervention phase, they were both comparable contributors to conversations at their peers. During the middle of the intervention phase, when asked about the problem-posing activities, she shared, “I did not like them at first. I do not always like speaking or did not know much about the picture. But I realized I know some stuff about things and should talk and share my thoughts.” Baram added, “I never talked last semester with you, but now I do talk in class.”

Connections to the Workforce

Interestingly, students found the use of the problem-posing approach connected to their jobs. This theme emerged as data analysis revealed that students found the problem-posing approach helpful for both the academic and professional aspects of their lives. The greatest growth for students on the survey related to gaining information for

career opportunities and perceiving the development of clearer career goals.

Near the end of the intervention phase, Baram shared, “They (the problem-posing activities) have helped me at work. We often have problems at the hospital. I have learned to ask others question[s] and know there are solutions.” Grace included, “It helps me at work so much. (She closes her eyes). Work is hard, but I try to think like we do in class there to help.”

Post-interviews revealed an aligned connection to the workforce. Maria said,

Working with others can help us to achieve ourselves. I work at [redacted] medical center and we face so many problems every shift and I have found effective communication between team members is the principal issue in many problem[s] we have faced.

Younis stated,

It makes it easy when we practice it every day of our life, such as talking and listening to people around us. And also, it [is helpful] by using only English in times we have to learn [it] can also help such as class or workplace.

While there may have been other factors that contributed to the increased student engagement, it can, however, reasonably be concluded that the use of the problem-posing approach had a positive impact on student engagement. Triangulation of the data collection demonstrated students perceived an increase in their own engagement through a problem-posing instructional approach. Overall, the study revealed increased student-participants’ value of collaboration, an environment that disarmed the fear of speaking, and connections to the workforce resonated as key themes. The findings from this study support the use of a problem-posing approach in an ESL classroom so that all students can engage and develop their second language acquisition.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of a problem-posing approach on student engagement in an ESL classroom at a community college. The problem-posing approach was used as the intervention due to its

ability to engage people who have been marginalized by eliciting their lived experiences and knowledge (Freire, 1970). The frame of thinking allowed student-participants to determine possible solutions to their problems through dialogical learning. The findings from this study support preparing students for democracy through using a problem-posing approach to increase student engagement. Through using a problem-posing approach, students can learn how to distinguish useful information, consider the legitimacy or logic of arguments, and come to a peaceful resolution through persuasion and compromise.

Collectively, the problem-posing approach expands the capacity of students engaging in dialogue. It is a participatory pedagogical approach which fosters an environment in which students feel comfortable, safe to speak, and engage in discussions. Consequently, it is extremely important for teachers to implement the problem-posing approach as it values all voices to be heard and valued within the classroom as compared to some voices being silenced. The problem-posing approach facilitates teachers and students engaging in democracy within the classroom by learning to ask and answer questions to tackle problems while creating solutions.

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An Online Book Study Approach to P-12 Teachers’ Professional Learning Experience

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Abstract

P-12 teachers frequently report low satisfaction levels with professional development (PD) because they are one-time, top-down, passive experiences determined by district leadership. Some school districts have begun to shift from PD to Professional Learning Experiences (PLE), where teachers are treated as co-creators of their knowledge development journey, have opportunities to collaborate with their peers, and are designed to meet the needs of the teachers. Using Kirkpatrick’s Evaluation model to assess an online book study PLE, this quantitative survey research study found the online format effective. Participants supposed involvement would positively impact their personal lives and exchanges with colleagues and students.

Keywords: NNER, book study, Professional Learning Experience, online

One of the fundamental principles of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) is the belief that the members are “responsible for improving the realities of our schools, universities, and communities” (National Network for Educational Renewal website, n.d.). This research study evaluates a book study professional learning experience offered by a university college of education’s partnership office for P-12 teachers, staff, and administrators employed in the university’s partnership schools. The book study was conducted online using synchronous and asynchronous technologies to make it easier for participants from geographically distant school districts to attend. An online book study was selected as a professional learning experience because it encourages active over passive learning where participants use adult learning principles (Knowles et al., 2020). The book study was

designed using a social constructivism framework (Vygotsky, 1978). This research study is important to the field as it highlights the need to move away from traditional, one-shot, ineffective professional development (PD) workshops to more effective, creative, and collaborative professional learning experiences (PLE) for P-12 teachers.

Literature Review

Professional Development (PD) vs. Professional Learning Experiences (PLE)

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2014) found that teachers frequently report low satisfaction levels with professional development (PD). Stewart (2014) referred to PD as one-time, one-size-fits-all, top-down, passive experiences determined by school leadership where teachers never think about the information again. Teachers often react negatively to PD sessions with “resignation, resentment, and cynicism” (Cabusao et al., 2019, paras. 3). Research has found that traditional PD yields disappointing results and is often thought ineffective (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). The New Teacher Project (TNTP) found that educators make little educational improvements due to attending PD sessions (Adams, 2015).

Some districts have begun to shift their PD offering to PLEs where teachers are co-creators of their knowledge journey, have opportunities to collaborate and learn from their peers, and meet the teachers’ needs (Cabusao et al., 2019). Research found that PLEs need to include the following elements to have a positive impact on teachers’ beliefs and behaviors: (1) Duration, (2) Content, (3) Coherence, (4) Active learning, (5) Collective participation, and (6) Expert facilitation (Desimone et al. 2002). PLEs are not one-shot events but extend over time where follow-up activities are included (Penuel et al., 2007). For a PLE to positively impact teachers’ beliefs, they need to be designed with relevant and useful content so teachers can connect to their instructional practices (Penuel et al., 2007). PLEs need to move from passive delivery to include practice-based activities where participants reflect, analyze, and actively work with content to build their knowledge. A successful PLE moves away from an all-knowing lecturer toward collective participation that includes teachers’ involvement in sharing and collaborating to move to higher

learning levels (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). An effective PLE needs a proficient facilitator with a deep understanding of the content that can expertly lead the learning community (Borko et al., 2014).

Theoretical Perspectives

Two interrelated theoretical perspectives guided this book study PLE. First, the book study PLE can be understood from a social constructivism perspective which theorizes people construct their learning based on their experiences and prior knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The first principle of constructivism states that learning is an active process where learners develop their knowledge and cannot be poured into their heads like empty vessels. The second principle holds that learners must make meaningful connections between their prior knowledge and new knowledge for deep comprehension. The third principle posits that learning is social, and all knowledge is socially constructed. The fourth principle maintains that knowledge is personal and that each learner develops a distinct point of view because of pre-existing knowledge and beliefs. This causes learners to develop different understandings and takeaways from the same lesson. The fifth principle is that each person creates their own worldview, which does not necessarily match any existing worldviews. A person's reality stems from their perceptions of the world and will continually be updated as they construct their interpretations of reality (Vygotsky, 1978).

The second theoretical perspective that guided the book study PLE can be understood from the andragogy adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2020). The five assumptions that Knowles et al. (2020) make about adult learners as they mature include: (1) They move toward being a more self-directed learner, (2) They draw on their prior experience to make connections to new knowledge, (3) They prefer learning that is relevant and useful to their job or personal life, (4) They move away from simple memorization to authentic problem centeredness, and (5) Learning motivation is internal. Applying the andragogy adult learning theory to the development of a PLE, Knowles et al. (2020) recommend getting adults involved in planning and evaluating the instruction, including opportunities for experience and self-discovery, designing lessons that have immediate relevancy, and moving away from lecture memorization to task-oriented activities.

Book studies used for teacher educator PLEs work well when designed within the theoretical frameworks of social constructivism and andragogy principles (Grierson et al., 2012, Steeg & Lambson, 2015). Book studies conducted over an extended time permit the teacher participants to process implications of the content they are reading and make connections to their teaching environment (Steeg & Lambson, 2015). They also allow teachers to collaborate and work as a community to achieve their learning goals (Adams, 2015; Chen & Bryer, 2012). Collaborative learning is more effective than individualistic education because learners benefit from the community of practice and reach higher achievement levels (Johnson et al., 2000; Snowman et al., 2015). Book study discussions can help participants persevere in reading the book because other participants share positive perspectives (Blanton, 2014). Participants also report that book studies develop into a learning community that provides companionship, camaraderie, and a collegial atmosphere (Barab et al., 2007; Weber et al., 2008). Book study discussions allow participants to test their ideas and integrate others' opinions to better understand the content (Reznitskaya et al., 2007; Weber et al., 2008).

Online PLEs

PD sessions are frequently conducted in a face-to-face localized format (Heck et al., 2019). As school districts begin to move from PD to PLE sessions, more creative offerings such as online sessions can be offered. Moving PLEs online allows for connections between colleagues from geographically separated partner schools (Erixon, 2016; Heck et al., 2019). Since the book study was designed using a social constructivism framework, the online technologies were not used to post content for knowledge transmission but to find ways to build a community of learners engaged in reflective discourse (Erixon, 2016). Participants were provided flexible options by completing asynchronous text-based discussion threads and synchronous web conferencing to accommodate demanding schedules. Synchronous web conferencing offered real-time communication that made it easier to develop deep discussions (Reneland-Forsman, 2009) and build high social presence levels (Lomicka & Lord, 2007). The asynchronous text-based discussions allowed participants with scheduling conflicts to take part in the book study. Another advantage of the text-based discussions is that participants had time

to read and reflect on posts before adding to the discussion (Knowles et al., 2020).

Kirkpatrick Model

James and Wendy Kirkpatrick (2016) reported that many training professionals stay in the comfortable levels of evaluating training with participants' initial reactions and learning levels. However, research shows that training is not always effective, with only 5% to 20% of what is learned being applied on the job (Mooney & Brinkerhoff, 2008). Training professionals need to develop evaluations that move beyond simply measuring participants' reactions and learning toward assessing participants' changes in behaviors and the results of those changes. While \$18 billion is spent each year on teacher development, teachers report that current PD is not relevant, ineffective, and makes little change in their behaviors to help their students learn (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). A goal of moving from PD to PLE is to create changes in teachers' beliefs and behaviors, resulting in improvements in teaching and learning (Scherff, 2018). Kirkpatrick's model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016) is one of the most influential frameworks for the evaluation of training programs because it measures the four levels of training: *Level 1* Reaction, *Level 2*, Learning, *Level 3* Behavior, and *Level 4* Results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). *Level-1*(Reaction) measures participants' sense of the training's value. Questions may gauge participants' thoughts on the training's success, whether it was worth their time, and strengths and weaknesses. *Level-2* (Learning) measures what they have learned, what they will do differently, confidence levels, and extent of motivation. *Level-3* (Behavior) measures how well participants feel they can apply the information learned. *Level-4* (Results) measures the results of the training. Evaluation questions on the results of the training are targeted toward outcomes that have been identified as being important for the organization.

Materials and Methods

Research Questions

This quantitative survey research (Fowler, 2014) was conducted at a mid-sized Midwestern university. The purpose of this research study

is to determine whether the book study PLE sessions were effective. This research study asks the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What were the participant's reactions to the book studys' online format being effective and encouraging high collaboration levels?

Research Question 2: What were the participants' suppositions that involvement in the book study will have an impact their personal lives or interactions with their colleagues or their students?

Instrument

After completing the book study, each participant was sent a link to complete an online Qualtrics survey to evaluate the book study. The survey was anonymous and included no self-identifying information. The Likert-scale questions on the survey were developed using Kirkpatrick's training evaluation (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). The survey included 16 Likert-scale questions to measure participants' reaction (four questions), learning (four questions), behavioral change (four questions), and overall results (four questions, Appendix), with 11 demographic questions and 12 open-ended questions. Likert-scale results were downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet and uploaded to IBM SPSS V27 for analysis. Open-ended results were harvested and coded into categories. The Likert-scale questions were marked as (5) Strongly Agree, (4) Agree, (3) Disagree, (2) Strongly Disagree, and (1) Not applicable.

Participants

There were 122 participants that started in the book study (Group 1 = 54, Group 2 = 68); however, due to attrition, there were 84 that finished the book study and completed the survey (Group 1 = 36, Group 2 = 48). After cleaning the data, there were 45 records remaining (Group 1 = 18, Group 2 = 27). Defining characteristics included:

- The book group was comprised primarily of females (Female = 40, 88.9%; Male = 5, 11.1%).
- The participants were mostly over 30 years old (21–25 = 5, 11.1%; 26–30 = 7, 15.6%; 31–39 = 12, 26.7%; 40–49 = 8, 17.8%; 50–59 = 9, 20%; and 60+ = 4, 8.9%).

- They were mostly middle school teachers (P–5 Teacher = 4, 8.9%; G6–G8 Teacher = 19, 42.2%; G9–G12 Teacher = 13, 28.9%; School Counselor = 4, 8.9%; and Other = 5, 11.1%).
- Almost all of the participants in this book group learned about the program from an email from their school district ($n = 38$, 84.4%).
- The majority of participants rated their technical abilities as *Proficient* (Highly Proficient $n = 11$, 24.4%; Proficient $n = 28$, 62.2%; Average $n = 5$, 11.1%; Below Average $n = 1$, 2.2%).
- The majority of participants reported reading 100% of the book (100% $n = 20$, 44.4%; 90% $n = 1$, 2.2%; 80% $n = 9$, 20%; 70% $n = 4$, 8.9%; 60% $n = 3$, 6.7%; 50% $n = 4$, 8.9%; 40% $n = 2$, 4.4%; 30% $n = 2$, 4.4%).

Learning Environment

The book study was conducted by the university’s teacher education department partnership office. Administrators, teachers, and staff from the P-12 partnership schools were invited to join this online book group. Participants were not charged to take part in this book study but were responsible for buying the book. This research study was conducted with two different book study groups.

The first book group started with 54 participants from six different schools and finished with 36 participants who completed the survey. The book group took place over two months. Participants had the option of taking part synchronously (four one-hour web conferences), asynchronously (four discussion topics), or a combination of the two to complete the book study. The book used for the first book study was *Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Heart* by Brené Brown. Records missing more than 10 responses to the survey were removed, resulting in 18 records.

The second book group started with 68 participants from six different schools and finished with 48 participants who completed the survey. The book group took place over three months. Participants had the option of taking part synchronously (five one-hour web conferences), asynchronously (five discussion topics), or a combination of the two to complete the book study. The book used for the second book study group was *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators* by Elena Aguiar. Records missing more than 10 responses to the survey were removed, resulting in 27 records.

Results

RQ1

The first research question asked participants' reactions about the book study's online format being effective and able to encourage high levels of collaboration. Likert questions indicated that participants had high levels of agreement that "*The incorporation of live web conference sessions allowed the participants to have robust interactions discussing the book*" (Q21, $M = 4.47$), "*The incorporation of live web conference sessions allowed me to have deeper and better understandings of the book*" (Q22, $M = 4.52$), and "*Participants in the live web conference sessions were able to interact at levels equivalent to what they would have done in a face-to-face session*" (Q23, $M = 4.27$, Appendix).

Participants were asked several open-ended questions to determine their opinions about using the online format. Comments were broken into categories. Participants made 203 total comments, and 163 (80.3%) of the comments were positive regarding the online format. The largest positive category was that participants liked using technology and had no technology issues (82 comments or 40.4%), with comments such as, "*You can reach more people through this medium*" and "*Technology is wonderfully helpful for something such as this.*" The next largest positive category comprised participants' reporting that they liked the option of live synchronous web conferencing and asynchronous text-based discussions (55 comments or 27.1%), with comments such as, "*Strengths are the live interactions and community that can be built*" and "*Some people think better when they get a chance to reflect and . . . text post*". The smallest positive category commented that participants liked the flexibility provided in an online class (26 comments or 12.8%) with comments such as "*I preferred the postings, just because I work a second job and wouldn't have been able to participate*" and "*I absolutely loved that I was able to complete it from the comfort of my own home.*"

There were some negative comments about the book study's online design (37 comments or 18.2%). The top category of negative comments involved technology issues (22 or 10.8%), with comments such as, "*Not everyone has access to new technology or good internet connections*" and "*Connectivity issues related to the sound.*" The next category of negative comments pertained to scheduling issues (nine comments or 4.4%): "*Getting a time that works for everyone*" and "*Time constraints are an issue.*"

Therefore, most participants in this book study overwhelmingly confirmed that they found the online format an effective design that encouraged high participation levels.

RQ2

The second research question asked the participants' suppositions that involvement in the book study will have an impact on their personal lives or interactions with their colleagues or students. Likert-scale questions were analyzed, and comments were broken into categories. Participants made 49 comments, and all of them (100%) confirmed the book study's positive impact.

Impact on participant's personal life. Participants had high levels of agreement that "*Learning and discussing the book study content will have a positive impact on my personal life*" (Q27, $M = 4.47$, Appendix). Participants were asked open-ended questions about the impact on their personal lives, and all comments ($n = 40$, 100%) indicated a positive impact, with comments such as, "*Many of the chapters I have put to use in my personal life*" and "*Yes. All of it. I have already started putting some things into practice.*"

Impact on interactions with colleagues. Participants had high levels of agreement that "*Learning and discussing the book study content will have a positive impact on my interaction with my colleagues at my workplace*" (Q28, $M = 4.51$, Appendix). Participants were asked open-ended questions about the impact on their interactions with their colleagues. All comments ($n = 4$, 100%) indicated a positive impact, with comments such as, "*[The book study] is going to affect my whole outlook and how I interact with co-workers, students and family*" and "*Helping colleagues and having tough conversations.*"

Impact on interactions with students. The average number of students that participants interacted with each year was indicated to be 209. Participants were also asked to estimate the percentage of students impacted by content learned in the book study (80%). Therefore, each participant indicated participation in the book study would impact 167 students. Since 84 people finished the book study, over 14,000 students will be influenced each year by the content learned in this book study. Participants had high levels of agreement that "*I plan to share this content from this book study with my students*" (Q20, $M = 4.31$), "*Learning and discussing the book study content will have a positive impact on my interactions with my students*" (Q29, $M = 4.47$), and "*Sharing*

the content from this book study with my students will have a positive impact on their lives” (Q30, $M = 4.36$, Appendix). Participants were asked open-ended questions about the study’s impact on their interactions with their students. All comments ($n = 5$, 100%) indicated a positive impact, commenting that the session will “*Help my students to become more enlightened about how they treat themselves & how they treat others*” and “*I learned a lot from each chapter that I will be able to use in my classroom.*”

Therefore, almost all participants felt participating in the book study would positively impact their personal lives and interactions with their colleagues and students.

Discussion

Each year, a huge amount of money is spent on the professional development of P-12 teachers (\$18 billion), and teachers spend a substantial amount of time attending development sessions (89 hours) (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). Teachers are dissatisfied with the current professional development offerings, with only 29% being highly satisfied. Most teachers report that the existing PD offerings do not help prepare them for their job's changing nature (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). Teachers often react negatively to PD sessions with “resignation, resentment, and cynicism” (Cabusao et al., 2019, paras. 3).

School districts need to replace the one-shot, passive, top-down PD sessions with creative, collaborative, flexible PLEs. Teachers do not want PD sessions that make them feel like they are being held hostage, and they do not wish to have PowerPoint slides read to them. Teachers prefer PLE sessions that make them feel fired up, energized to return to their class, make them feel supported, and have opportunities to brainstorm solutions (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). The PLEs need to encourage active over passive learning where participants use adult learning principles (Knowles et al., 2020) and are designed using a social constructivism framework (Vygotsky, 1978). Attention needs to be given that the PLEs include the researched principles that have a positive impact on teachers’ beliefs and behaviors: (1) Duration, (2) Content, (3) Coherence, (4) Active learning, (5) Collective participation, and (6) Expert facilitation (Desimone et al. 2002).

There are many barriers to developing effective PLEs, with teachers and administrators citing lack of time, insufficient funds, and lack of expertise (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). One solution for this is for P-12 schools to partner with universities to help provide high-quality PLEs. School-university partnerships are mutually beneficial as teachers can enhance their knowledge with PLEs facilitated by faculty experts, and universities have the opportunity to keep updated, conduct research, and improve their experience and skills (Walsh & Backe, 2013).

This research study showed participants appreciated the online format of these book studies PLEs. The participants enjoyed the asynchronous text-based discussion postings because it allowed them the opportunity to reflect and make connections to their classrooms. The participants also appreciated engaging in the synchronous web conferencing sessions because the sessions allowed them to interact directly with their colleagues to get different perspectives (Bach, 2019). The online design gave the P-12 participants flexibility to fit the book study PLE into their busy lives and also made it more manageable for the university faculty member to facilitate these book study sessions for several geographically distant P-12 partnership schools. The flexible online access was especially appreciated when the schools shut down during the second book study due to the COVID pandemic. Because the book study was already being conducted in an online format, it was able to continue with no interruptions.

Study Limitations

There were 122 initial participants in the book study; however, due to attrition, only 84 were left to complete the survey. Attrition was attributed to teachers' signing up for the book study but finding that their hectic personal and professional lives made it impossible to complete. Due to missing data, there were only 45 records after cleaning the data. Therefore, due to the low numbers in this research study, results cannot be replicated in other environments.

Data for this research study was self-reported data from the P-12 teacher participants sharing their feelings, attitudes, and beliefs and may have validity problems due to respondents' biases (Garcia & Gustavson, 1997). Another limitation is that the COVID-19

pandemic arose during the second book study, which created unique stresses and challenges.

Conclusion

This research study highlights the need to move away from traditional one-shot, ineffective professional development (PD) workshops to more effective, creative, and collaborative professional learning experiences (PLE) for P-12 teachers. This research study attempted to measure a book study's success as a PLE for the P-12 environment using adult learning and social constructivism principles. The research study found that the online format proved to be an effective design for a book study group that encouraged high interaction levels. Participants also surmised that taking part in this book study would positively impact their personal lives and interactions with their colleagues and students.

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Appendix

Participant's Self-Reported Reactions, Learning, Behavior, & Results

LEVEL 1: REACTION	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q13 Participating in the book study was worth my time.	45	4.62	0.490
Q14 I enjoyed interacting with participants in other classes, schools, and school districts while completing professional development sessions.	45	4.71	0.458
Q15 I enjoyed using web conferencing to conduct the book study discussions.	45	4.64	0.484
Q16 I feel like most of the other participants completed their required readings before each book study session.	45	4.27	0.495
Total	45	18.24	1.48
LEVEL 2: LEARNING	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q20 I plan to share this content from this book study with my students.	45	4.31	0.514
Q21 The incorporation of live web conference sessions allowed the participants to have robust interactions discussing the book.	45	4.47	0.505
Q22 The incorporation of live web conference sessions allowed me to have deeper and better understandings of the book.	44	4.52	0.505
Q23 Participants in the live web conference sessions were able to interact at levels equivalent to what they would have done in a face-to-face session.	44	4.27	0.585
Total	43	17.63	1.73
LEVEL 3: BEHAVIOR	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q27 Learning and discussing the book study content will have a positive impact on my personal life.	45	4.47	0.505
Q28 Learning and discussing the book study content will have a positive impact on my interaction with my colleagues at my workplace.	45	4.51	0.506
Q29 Learning and discussing the book study content will have a positive impact on my interactions with my students.	45	4.47	0.505
Q30 Sharing the content from this book study with my students will have a positive impact on their lives.	44	4.36	0.487
Total	44	17.84	1.79
LEVEL 4: RESULTS	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Q34 [University] should continue programs like this book study.	45	4.84	0.367
Q35 This book group should be conducted in a face-to-face format in the future and not in an online format.	42	2.67	0.650
Q36 [University] should continue to offer more online professional development sessions in the future.	45	4.80	0.405
Q37 I wish my school district had online technologies such as learning management systems and web conferencing to be able to conduct online education and training sessions.	42	4.55	0.550
Total	39	16.80	1.13

Likert scale 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Disagree, 2=Strongly Disagree, 1=Not Applicable

Preparing “Guardians of Democracy”:

How Elementary Social Studies Methods Courses Can Support Participatory Democracy

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Abstract

How can elementary social studies methods courses prepare elementary teachers to offer the kinds of social studies instruction that support democracy? To answer this question, we draw on survey data, syllabi, and interview data collected from a regional sample of methods instructors. We view our data through the lens of five qualities of social studies identified by the National Council of Social Studies as supporting democracy: Social studies experiences for elementary students should be meaningful, value-based, integrative, challenging, and active (NCSS, 2017). Using these qualities as lenses, we identify and share four cases to show that—and how—elementary social studies methods courses can prepare teachers to instantiate these qualities in their work with elementary students. We call on elementary social studies methods instructors to engage in joint work, self-study, and greater use of extant documents pointing us towards the kinds of social studies that supports participatory democracy.

Keywords: *democracy-based teacher preparation, social studies instruction, elementary education*

Many believe that schools can and should be “guardians of democracy” (Gould et al, 2011; see also Annenberg, 2011; Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley & Goodlad, 2004; Soder, 1995). Research shows that effective, school-based civic education can improve outcomes that support democracy, including voting, becoming engaged politically, and possessing knowledge and dispositions underpinning democratic participation (Gould et al, 2011).

If schools are to be guardians of democracy, then elementary teachers are on the frontlines of this pressing work. The maintenance

and strengthening of democracy requires developing knowledge, skills, dispositions, and character (i.e., traits like honesty, compassion, and courage; Goodlad, 2001). Such development can and should start right from kindergarten. Students' first experiences of public education should create foundational understandings, habits, and beliefs related to how we work together with others and how the social and political world work.

Unfortunately, many elementary teachers come into the profession with limited commitment to—or interest in—the school subject most directly associated with preparing citizens for democracy, social studies (Owens, 1997; Lanahan & Yeager, 2008). Elementary teachers often have limited social studies content knowledge (Passe, 2006; Slekar, 2009) and an indifferent or negative attitude toward the subject (Owens, 1997; Slekar, 2006). Perhaps these elementary teachers are reflecting the wider public belief that social studies is not an important subject (Leming, Ellington, & Schug 2006; VanFossen, 2005).

We also know from research that, however, that social studies has been diminished or has disappeared in many elementary schools as high stakes tests and accountability pressures have incentivized improving reading and math scores (e.g., Bailey, Shaw, & Hollifield, 2006; McGuire, 2007; Rock, Heafner, O'Connor, Passe, Oldendorf, Good, & Byrd, 2007). Teachers who are not confident in their knowledge of social studies or committed to teaching the subject seem less likely to find time for it and to make efforts to infuse it into other subject areas.

Elementary social studies methods courses (ESSMCs) would be an ideal place to develop effective practices and improved attitudes towards the subject, including the underlying rationale for enculturating youth into the “human conversation” and civil discourse we need in a democracy (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004, 96). We know from research that methods courses can impact teachers' rationale for teaching (Adler & Confer, 1998; Milson & King, 2001), lesson planning (Combs & White, 2000; DeWitt & Freie, 2005), and pedagogical practices (Caron, 2004; Jobe & Pope, 2002; Grossman, Valencia, Evans, Thompson, Martin, & Place, 2000). Methods courses for elementary social studies may matter even more than those for other areas because of social studies' diminution at the elementary level; methods courses in preservice

programs may be the only setting in which to provide students with effective rationales, pedagogies, and dispositions for teaching social studies (Lanahan & Yeager, 2008).

In order to use ESSMCs as a leverage point for strengthening democracy, it would be helpful to explore whether—and how—such courses can address qualities of social studies instruction likely to prepare an informed and engaged citizenry for democracy. Thus, this article addresses two questions:

- What are the qualities of social studies in elementary school most likely to prepare citizens for participatory democracy?
- How can ESSMCs promote qualities of elementary social studies we identified as most likely to prepare citizens for participatory democracy?

We answer each of the questions above in a subsequent section of this article.

To address the first question about desirable qualities of social studies for democracy, we summarize work done by the National Council of the Social Studies.

For our second question—exploring whether and how ESSMCs can address the most promising forms of elementary social studies for preparing citizens—we looked at the qualities of social studies supportive of democracy that we identified in response to our first question. We then looked at data about the ESSMCs we collected in 2009. We identified the best example of an ESSMC addressing each quality—in our estimation—after reviewing syllabi, survey responses, and interviews with instructors. We draw on these data sources to offer examples that suggest how others might address these desirable qualities of elementary social studies. To improve the trustworthiness of the data, the four instructors of courses we highlight read our summaries. Three offered minor or no revisions, and a fourth didn't correct inaccuracies but suggested small additions; we incorporated input from these instructors. Readers interested in more details about our methods should read Appendix A.

Qualities of Elementary Social Studies Instruction that Support Democracy

The preeminent organization championing social studies in the United States is the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS).

NCSS issued a 2009 position statement on “Powerful and purposeful teaching and learning in elementary school social studies” which it updated and re-issued in 2017 (NCSS, 2009, 2017). These statements create a vision for elementary social studies “grounding children in democratic principles and immersing them in age-appropriate democratic strategies” (NCSS, 2017, p. 31). The original statement and the updated statement define the same five qualities of elementary social studies “foundational to the development of children’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions as participating citizens” (NCSS, 2017, p. 31). We have adopted these qualities as a conceptual framework to guide our selection and interpretation of examples within this analysis. We offer these qualities here as the field’s best answer to our first question regarding qualities of elementary social studies that will prepare citizens for participatory democracy.

Meaningful

History can seem like the “irrelevant” study of “one damn fact after another” (Pyne, 2000), a joyless forced march through names and dates disconnected from students’ everyday lives. Some elementary teachers attempt to overcome boredom by making social studies fun, but the fun comes from disconnected, incoherent, and superficial celebrations of ethnic food, festivals, or heroes. In contrast, NCSS calls for elementary social studies that is meaningful for young learners (NCSS, 2009). Elementary social studies is meaningful when it responds to the needs, interests, and diversity of elementary students, and when it builds from what students know and are interested in to larger concepts and worthwhile questions valued in the social studies (van Hover & Hicks, 2018). Thus elementary teachers design meaningful and coherent units of study addressing big ideas and questions while attending to students’ current developmental readiness for conceptual thinking and existing knowledge about the world (Silva & Mason, 2003).

Value-based

Some of our deepest conflicts as a society and a polity result from conflicting values and priorities. Citizens in a democracy must be ready to understand, tolerate, and work through conflict and ambiguity. Elementary teachers should structure age-appropriate opportunities for students to thoughtfully engage with controversial

and ethical issues, develop critical thinking skills, and see issues from multiple perspectives. Such teaching sometimes surfaces individuals' and groups' values or highlights conflicts in values.

Integrative

Since social studies is “integrative by nature” (paragraph 12, NCSS, 2009), elementary teachers should integrate content and skills from across civics, economics, geography, and history. Students will need key concepts and skills from all of these disciplines to be informed and engaged citizens responding to current issues. Teachers should also integrate social studies with other subject areas like reading, math, science, and the arts.

Challenging and Active

The final two qualities are more focused on pedagogy and are described more briefly in the NCSS statements. They overlap in meaning. Thus, we have condensed them into one. To teach “challenging” social studies, elementary teachers make decisions that allow for depth of study and application of critical thinking skills rather than superficially covering a lot of content in ways that lead to passive learning and rote memorization. To teach “active” social studies, elementary teachers guide learning rather than directly convey information.

The 2017 NCSS statement's endorsement of inquiry pedagogy is consistent with the call for active and challenging teaching and learning. In fact, given the importance of inquiry as a specific pedagogy that addresses all of the qualities described in this section, we encourage elementary teachers and teacher educators who are not promoting inquiry to learn more about it from the C3 frameworks and the website associate with it (NCSS, 2013).

How Teacher Education Programs Might Prepare Future Elementary Teachers to Teach Powerful and Purposeful Social Studies

Elementary social studies methods courses will not support informed participation in democracy if they reinforce a boring, didactic version of social studies represented chiefly by rote memorization of places, names and dates. In this section, we provide four examples to suggest

that—and to explore how—ESSMCs can address each of the qualities we identified above as most promising to prepare elementary students for participatory democracy. We weave together data from an interview, a survey response, and a syllabus for each course to depict how we see our four cases (of methods courses) instantiating these qualities. We hope these illustrative cases will further clarify: the nature of powerful, purposeful social studies; the relevance of such instruction for preparing citizens for participatory democracy; and the feasibility of creating courses and university-based experiences that can help preservice elementary teachers appreciate and adopt more ambitious approaches to social studies that support democracy.

Helping Children Learn from Other Children in History: Preparing Elementary Teachers to Teach *Meaningful Social Studies*

NCSS calls for elementary social studies that connects to what typical and diverse kinds of elementary learners already know and are interested in to make it meaningful (NCSS, 2017).

One ESSMC instructor in our sample became interested in building on young learners' natural interest in other children after her preservice teachers reported that “students don't seem too excited by social studies.” Inspired by the work of Dr. Matthew Downey, she decided “to motivate children for inquiry and civic participation” by “connecting children with their historical peers using primary sources created by or about these children and young people in the past who participated in and/or lived in the time period being studied and those who have engaged in civic participation.” She used pictures—especially of children—drawing from collections like the jackdaw.com primary source collection; regarding pictures, she argues that “everyone can use them.... Everybody can think of something to ask.” As such, she invites her preservice teachers to interact with pictures of child laborers and experience the questions and curiosity such images create.

She also uses readings in the text *Connecting Children with Children, Past and Present: Motivating Students for Inquiry and Action* (Fresch, 2004) to provide her preservice teachers with information and sources about children in history. Preservice teachers learn this approach in her class by engaging as adult learners in analysis and use of sources. Before she models using pictures and primary sources from children

to get at larger themes in social studies, she asks her preservice teachers to think about “the schema that you would tap into for children” to bridge between young learners’ current knowledge and interests and the new material; for instance, when talking about child labor, the instructor would model asking elementary children, “have you ever worked? Do you work around the house? What kind of jobs do you do?” She consistently asked preservice teachers to consider or learn what schema—what webs of knowledge—elementary children know that could be tapped to support new learning.

Attention to children’s prior knowledge, natural interest in children, and ability to use visual sources comprise ways this instructor helps future elementary teachers make social studies meaningful.

Noticing Perspectives and Values in How We Write and Teach History: Preparing Elementary Teachers to Teach *Value-Based Social Studies*

NCSS calls for elementary social studies to be value-based, with the aim of engaging young students in controversial or ethical issues, critical thinking, and multiple perspectives. Citizens should not just learn what they value themselves, but should also think critically and seek out multiple ways of understanding a current issue so that they can judge from more than their narrow self-interest or initial point of view.

Historians’ work, at its core, requires constant comparison of perspectives and assessment of sources’ trustworthiness. Thus, one elementary methods instructor focused solely on the nature of history and teaching it to children. She taught foundational concepts, or tools for making sense of history, such as “hero-making,” interpretation and speculation, “source perspective, reliability, and subtext,” and “understanding that perceptions of the past requires an examination of the values at the time.” Readings from *In Search of America’s Past* (VanSledright, 2002), *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (Loewen, 2007), and *Historical Thinking and other Unnatural Acts* (Wineburg, 2001) support students viewing issues from conflicting perspectives through conflicting primary sources.

Throughout the course, students do short assignments addressing conflicts in history or historical interpretation while developing critical thinking skills. They compare textbooks with regard to

treatment of Columbus, for instance, or compare primary sources. They then consider how they would apply such experiences to give elementary students the chance to see values and perspectives in primary and secondary sources. When asked how the course has changed over time, the instructor noted that she has “made the course goals of teaching ‘historical thinking’ more transparent in the course design.” This emphasis on thinking like a historian illustrates one way that a methods course can focus students on thinking more critically about the perspectives they will encounter regarding current as well as historical issues.

Seeing the Intersection of Social Sciences and Other Subjects in Current Events: Preparing Elementary Teachers to Teach *Integrative Social Studies*

Understanding and engaging with current social issues often requires multiple social sciences, such as seeing the intersection of geography and history to understand racial re-segregation. It also calls for the integration of other subject areas; understanding climate change benefits from weaving science and numerical representations of change over time with study of government and history.

The NCSS calls for social studies that promotes disciplinary integration within the social studies and interdisciplinary teaching of social studies and the other subject areas. One instructor opens her social studies methods course for K-8 teachers by having students look at the NCSS webpage to see the organization “defining social studies as more than just history.” She has students remember effective social studies experiences and notes how these went beyond “just dates and history and dead people,” and then has students look at some current issue. In the semester before we talked with her, she used President Obama’s first *Inaugural Address* and asked small groups to look at the text and identify all that they needed to know across social science disciplines to understand the text. When she deconstructed this and other current events, students saw not just history—such as the history of slavery—but “a lot of sociology, a lot of geography...culture, maps, civics.” Having laid a foundation for integrating social science disciplines—for teaching more than just history—she proceeded to teach a course emphasizing connections to other subject areas. Students “do assignments related to creating lessons with a social studies theme but where you’re actually doing

literacy skills” in the unit they create. At least one of the well-developed lessons they write must address literacy. She states, “I do a lot of literacy work with my students,” including asking students to learn from “really good strategies that are specified towards social studies” on www.readingquest.org. She models the use of children’s literature to teach about life in early 1900’s textile mills. She notes that literacy connections are just “one of the ways that we talk about integration.” Students talk about water as a current issue. They consider both how needs for water impacts culture and current events. They then consider how elementary students could also be learning the water cycle and doing water testing that would teach scientific concepts.

The Methods Course as Preservice Teacher Doing, Not Teacher Talking: Preparing Elementary Teachers to Teach *Active and Challenging* Social Studies

Traditional didactic social studies leaned on teachers lecturing or having students quietly read textbooks and fill out worksheets. Such teaching seems more likely to train students for passivity than for active learning and deep thinking. Active and challenging social studies calls for engaging elementary students in a proactive and rigorous process of asking questions and engaging more deeply with material. It may position and scaffold young learners’ work with sources to construct their own ideas.

One instructor summarized her approach to teaching—and a philosophy that promotes active and challenging social studies—when she told us that “Learning is mostly talking and teaching is mostly listening.” She explained, “I understand that I have a role as the expert teacher, but I’m very quickly building the feelings of self-efficacy in my students so that they feel they, too, are experts....So I’m putting the students (preservice teachers) in situations like debates and role playing and designing various activities that make them think about various things, and then having them design those activities.” When we asked this instructor to describe her class, she said, “it’s a very active class. Students create a lesson plan a week based on the topic area and the textbook that I use,” and “present it [their lesson plan] to their peers. They may present it in a classroom in a local school, and they critique their experience....they’re doing it. They’re learning by doing.”

The instructor explicitly seeks to create a “learning community” over the 14 weeks of the course; this happens as students engage in “interactive discussions that may start with a question or a controversy, case studies, vignettes, peer learning, learning cells, role-playing, and class debate.” The instructor is explicit about the value of these opportunities for building a learning community and improving teaching and learning. Her syllabus informs students “that engaging learners in active, authentic learning opportunities promises the greatest opportunities for learning.”

This instructor also uses writing to promote active engagement with the content of her course. In addition to creating lesson plans, students complete weekly reflections on current events topics and provocative treatments of history, including *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (Loewen, 2007) and *A Peoples History of the United States* (Zinn, 1980). Students share their reflections with each other in pairs, small groups, and/or full class discussions. In other words, this class models and relies on active and challenging pedagogies, constantly positioning students to act, to articulate stances, and to use the provocative historical content and engaging social studies pedagogies they are learning.

Discussion and Implications

In the opening of this article, we noted how research has shown that methods courses influence teachers’ pedagogies, planning, and rationale for teaching. We also noted another body of research showing that effective civics education promotes outcomes relevant to democracy. Thus, it seems reasonable to propose that elementary teachers who have access to a social studies methods course—or any course giving significant attention to social studies—are more likely to adopt pedagogies and an underlying rationale for citizenship preparation.

We found elementary social studies methods courses using innovative approaches to prepare elementary teachers for the kinds of social studies we identified as likely to support participatory democracy. We saw the use of visual and print sources about children and children’s activism in history, the immersion into historical thinking exercises that highlighted the conflict of values endemic in history and in current events, and the attention to the intersection of

social science disciplines and other subject areas while studying current events. Elementary teachers often enter their profession with limited knowledge of or commitment to social studies (Owens, 1997; Lanahan & Yeager, 2008). We hope these examples suggest how a methods course might build preservice teachers' understanding and appreciation of social studies as a subject relevant to children and important for democracy.

Given the importance of preparing citizens for participatory democracy and given our finding that ESSMCs can encompass features of social studies that support democracy, we call on all elementary education programs to examine whether their own courses addressing elementary social studies attend to qualities of social studies likely to support participatory democracy. Individual instructors might tap networks—like the National Network of Educational Renewal, the Persistent Issues in History Network, the College and University Faculty Assembly of the National Council for the Social Studies—to engage in reading groups, joint analysis of curriculum, and peer feedback on revised course syllabi—as they revisit how ESSMCs best support democracy.

Although the field would benefit from more studies of individual ESSMCs, current scholarship on the nature of social studies methods courses is “particularistic and unsystematic” (Adler, 1991, p. 211, a finding confirmed in Adler, 2008). Extant studies only occasionally look across more than a single methods course to identify patterns or commonality (e.g., Bolick, Adams, & Wilcox, 2010; Lanahan & Yeager, 1997). More systematic approaches to research would, as Crocco and Livingston (2017) pointed out, “bring social studies into alignment with research being done on teacher education for other school subjects” (p. 361). For example, it would be helpful to have more research—ideally across more than one setting—to explore how various pedagogies and approaches to teaching the methods courses impact elementary teachers' planning and instruction. Instructors might use artifacts of their own teaching and student work to document and explore how work revising the course has any impact compared to baseline data they could collect, for instance. The development and validation of more surveys and observation protocols reflecting outcomes valued in citizenship education would also help future research. Such standardized measures could enhance our ability to understand whether—and how—efforts to improve

ESSMCs create attitudes and practices. These kinds of research are not intended to standardize ESSMCs. On the contrary, “the goal would be to see how similar challenges are met in differing contexts and to become smarter...about possible alternatives to taken - for - granted practices and beliefs” (Hahn, 2017, p. 589).

We also encourage programs and course instructors to draw on the NCSS statement on powerful, purposeful social studies from the NCSS (2017) and the C3 frameworks for K-12 social studies (NCSS, 2013) to consider how their courses can prepare educators to enact the kinds of instruction and inquiry that these documents specify. Professionals engaged in joint and ongoing professional development often amplify and expand the kinds of learning that they do compared to those who engage in individual efforts (e.g., see Curry, 2008; Levine, Howard, & Moss, 2014); such work often benefits from intentional decisions to develop shared capacity with group routines like use of protocols to examine student work or individuals’ professional challenges (Levine & Marcus, 2010).

The divergent strengths in the examples of ESSMCs we shared suggest that methods instructors themselves might have much to teach each other. The National Network of Educational Renewal might sponsor a subgroup or host conversations and connections across institutions focused on social studies methods courses, given the uniquely important role such courses play in supporting the larger mission of the organization. NNER could also explore a partnership with the NCSS, another organization devoted to the civic mission of schools, to create conversation around elementary social studies.

Concluding Thoughts

Freedom House, a non-partisan, non-governmental organization, conducts research on democracy and political freedom. For the fourteenth year in a row, its annual report found that democratic norms are weakening in democracies around the world (Repucci, 2020). Scholars (Howe, 2017; Ingraham, 2020) and leaders of non-partisan civic organizations (Pilkington, 2020) focused on the United States have similarly worried about the health of democracy in our own nation. Such concerns add urgency to the work of preparing preservice elementary teachers to enact meaningful, challenging, and engaging social studies instruction that fosters “children’s knowledge,

skills, and dispositions as participating citizens” (NCSS, 2017, 31). Research has shown that methods courses can impact teachers’ rationales, lesson planning, and practices for teaching content; thus, elementary social studies methods courses (ESSMCs) are one logical site to improve social studies instruction.

In this paper, we explored how elementary social studies methods courses can address features of social studies supportive of participatory democracy (NCSS, 2017). Encouragingly, we found that elementary social studies methods courses can model and address the qualities of purposeful, powerful elementary social studies championed by the National Council for the Social Studies (2017), breaking a tradition of didactic, teacher-driven social studies focused on memorization of names and dates. As K-12 schools and schools of education foster teachers’ ability to offer more meaningful, active, and challenging social studies experiences for elementary learners, we help our schools realize their potential as guardians of democracy.

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Appendix A: Methods

Data are drawn from a larger study of curriculum and instruction in elementary social studies teacher education. We gathered data from instructors in New England, the most northeastern region of the United States that includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. We chose this geographic limit because seeking all of the elementary education preparation programs in one region would encompass a variety of types of institutions (research-intensive and teaching-intensive, larger and smaller) and because we wanted to keep open the possibility of subsequently arranging a meeting or some other kind of professional development among instructors.

In 2009, we identified teacher preparation programs that offered elementary certification and then determined the presence of courses addressing social studies by consulting: lists of educator preparation programs created by state departments of education; publicly available plans of study, course catalogues, program descriptions; and other websites explaining individual elementary education programs. Courses whose title or description seemed relevant to preparing teachers for social studies were included.

If a course devoted at least 1.5 credit hours to one of these relevant areas, we counted the course as an ESSMC. As noted in the manuscript, we also counted courses labelled as methods courses if they seemed likely to devote at least 1.5 credit hours to social studies even though they also addressed other subject areas. We reasoned that preparing future teachers to consider the nature of the social studies and pedagogies for teaching them would require no less than 21 hours for sufficient modelling and discussion. Thus, a 3-credit course addressing both elementary social studies and science methods counted, based upon our assumption that equal 1.5 credit hours would be given to each subject area; a 3-credit course addressing more subject areas did not, as we thought more general methods courses that more briefly gave attention multiple subject areas would not achieve sufficient depth, focus, and insight to position elementary educators to think about and enact best practices in social studies instruction.

To achieve our aim of exploring whether—and how—courses could address the most promising forms of elementary social studies for preparing citizens, we looked at the categories of powerful

purposeful social studies described above. We then subjectively identified the best example of each quality from our sample. While we had survey data and syllabi connected to 30 courses, we limited ourselves to the ten courses where we had also interviewed instructors; we intentionally divided our set of 30 courses into six groups, and then randomly selected from each group to insure variety of instructors for two factors (Ph.D. versus M.A. versus B.A.-granting institutions; more experienced and less experienced instructors of the course).

We invited each of the four case course's instructors to read our accounts, correct inaccuracies, note how we "misrepresented the spirit of your work in any way," and make any other comments. Three offered minor or no suggestions while approving the overall account; we made the one change and corrected the one misspelling found through this member-checking. A fourth didn't comment on accuracy but offered a few revisions and additions which we accepted, since they enhanced the account.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

- 1) Please describe for us your role or work at your college. Don't just focus on the specific course that interests us: What is your job? What are you expected to accomplish in it?
- 2) Thank you for letting us glimpse your wider responsibilities. For the rest of this interview, we're going to focus on your course which addresses elementary social studies. When you teach this course, what is the key message you are trying to convey to your students?
- 3) What are the one or two most important outcomes you want the course to achieve?
- 4) How does your course seek to achieve these goals? In other words, what can a course do which helps to achieve these outcomes?
- 5) *Questions for specific instructors, based upon review of syllabus and survey data.* Example: How do you use video? Which videos do you use? If we could be a fly on the wall in your classroom, what would we observe you and students doing while you use video?
- 6) To the extent that you can remember, tell us about how you choose the text and other readings for this course?
- 7) [optional, for instructors that use a core text] We've noticed a huge variety of S.S. texts being used in methods course, and few texts being used in more than one course.
 - a. How satisfied are you with the text you are currently using for the course?
 - b. What are its strengths and weaknesses?
- 8) [ONLY for teachers who do not use a core methodological text] some teachers have chosen to use a core text addressing methodologies of teaching elementary social studies. Other teachers do not choose to use a core text like this. Could you please tell us your thinking around your decision to use or not use such a text?
- 9) In some colleges, instructors are left quite free to design courses on their own. In others, programs expect or require instructors to include certain assignments, readings, or topics. To what extent have you had freedom while teaching this course? What has your program required or expected you to do?
 - a. [ask only if not very free] If you had more freedom, what would you do differently?

- 10) Imagine that you were turning this course over to a new professor to teach. Assume that the professor generally shares your objectives for the course. The professor asks you for advice about how the course should be taught. What would you tell this professor?

Questions to ask more briefly or even skip if time is short:

- 11) Several brief questions about your work developing this course:
- Please try to remember when you first started teaching the course. What resources did you have—if any—that helped you think about what to teach and how to teach it?
 - Does your university/college provide you with any kinds of professional development or resources that help you to improve this course?
 - Does your university/college offer any kind of incentive or encouragement for your continuing to work on this course?
 - Since you've been teaching the course, have you found any more resources which have helped you continue to improve your course? [If yes, tell us more about them.]
 - **Have you had any experiences beyond teaching the course itself which were useful for your work in this course?
- 12) I'd like to ask you about four specific topics which probably do not appear in most courses on elementary social studies. If I can find anyone teaching about one of these topics, I'd like to hear about their experience teaching about the topic, and their rationale for including it in a social studies methods course.
- Within the limited time you have, does your course address how to use *discussion* while teaching the social studies? [If yes, please tell me about what you do.]
 - Within the limited time you have, does your course address how to teach *public speaking skills*? [If yes, please tell me about what you do.]
 - Within the limited time you have, does your course address how to handle *controversial public issues* in the classroom? [If yes, please tell me about what you do.]
 - Within the limited time you have, does your course address how to teach *Social Studies content and skills to English language learners*? [If yes, please tell me about what you do.]

Questions to ask if there is time:

- 13) You have already developed a course addressing elementary social studies. At this point, can you imagine any kind of print or on-line resource you wish you had, and that you'd make time to use to help you in teaching this course? Is there anything more you think you need that might be provided online?
- 14) Has your participation in any organization influenced your methods course? If so, how?
- 15) Do you have any questions for us?

Appendix C: On-line Survey

- 1) Could you please put a check mark in front of any of the sentences below which accurately describe the context for your course: I usually have MASTERS students in this class; I usually have undergraduate SENIORS in this class; I usually have undergraduate JUNIORS in this class; I usually have undergraduate SOPHOMORES in this class; I usually have undergraduate FIRST YEAR STUDENTS in this class;
- 2) Could you please put a check mark in front of any of the sentences below which accurately describe the context for your course: Students in this class are usually OBSERVING in clinical placements concurrently; Students in this class are usually ENGAGING IN STUDENT TEACHING concurrently; Students in this class are usually DONE WITH STUDENT TEACHING when they take the course.

Please briefly describe the nature of your teacher preparation program and the place where your course fits within it. [i.e., “teacher certification coursework occurs over final two years of undergraduate career; students must take this course in fall semester, senior year, before spending spring semester student teaching.”] [Text box allowed open-ended response.]

YOUR BACKGROUND FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE

- 3) For how many semesters have you taught this methods course (or any other methods courses preparing elementary social studies teachers)? [text box allowing two digit entry] (Please count courses that could be considered advanced or elective elementary social studies methods courses, and note such courses in the text box below. Include courses you’re now teaching.)

Additional explanation (in most cases, not needed) [Text box allowed open-ended response.]

- 4) For how many semesters have you taught any SECONDARY social studies methods courses? [text box allowing two digit entry] (Please count courses that could be considered advanced or elective secondary social studies methods courses, and note

such courses in the text box below. Include courses you're now teaching.)

Additional explanation (in most cases, not needed) [Text box allowed open-ended response.]

- 5) If you have had teaching experience in K-12 schools before teaching this course, please describe it in the spaces below by job title, level of school, and years experience (social studies teacher, middle school, 2 years). [Five one-line text boxes for job title, school level, pull down menu for number of years]

Additional explanation (in most cases, not needed) [Text box allowed open-ended response.]

- 6) What academic degrees have you earned? For each, what was your major or specialization? [i.e., B.A. (English), M.A.T. (English education); Ph.D. (Multicultural Education)] [Five one-line text boxes]

COURSE ACTIVITIES

- 7) We'll use your syllabus to understand what you're teaching and what you aim to accomplish. If we could observe your course across the semester, what would we see you and/or your students doing? Please estimate how much of the course's class time is spent in the following ways (categories may overlap; answers will not add up to 100%):

- Instructor-led presentation of material/lecture/direct instruction ____%
- Open ended discussion of issues ____%
- Small group or pair work ____%
- Student presentations or model/micro-teaching ____%
- Explicit modeling of pedagogies ____%
- [other: define] [text box] ____%
- [other: define] [text box] ____%

YOUR EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING THIS COURSE

- 8) What do you enjoy most about teaching this course? [Text box allowed open-ended response.]

- 9) What do you enjoy least about teaching this course? [Text box allowed open-ended response.]

- 10) If we're able to interview you by phone, is there an activity, pedagogy, or course objective that you'd particularly like to share with us? We're looking for "wisdom of practice" regarding the purposes and pedagogies of preparing elementary teachers for social studies education...Please describe one topic or aspect of your course that you think we might be interested in hearing about. [Text box allowed open-ended response.]

- 11) How has your course changed over time?

- 12) Please describe one or two tensions, dilemmas, trade-offs, or challenges that you experience while teaching this course.

Revisiting the Tripartite Council Model:

Considering the Collaborative Possibilities between the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Education

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Abstract

This paper examines the history and intent of the tripartite council conceptual model of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER). The perspectives of education faculty and liberal arts faculty representing the content areas of math, English and history are shared. The importance of active and engaged teaching, the growth of the public humanities, a need for more service learning opportunities, and ideas for deeper and more impactful work are discussed. This paper invites those in the network and beyond to begin conversations or renew collaborative relationships between colleges of liberal arts and sciences and colleges of education.

Keywords: *tripartite council, colleges of arts and sciences, colleges of education, partnerships, simultaneous renewal*

The *tripartite council* conceptual model has existed for decades as part of Goodlad’s vision of the possibilities for education for democracy. It is remarkable that addressing this inequity has not been one of urgency among educators and decision makers concerned with equity and social justice. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (2018) stated, “The early care and education (ECE) system in the United States is built upon a foundation of structural inequality based on gender, class, and racial inequities that are woven throughout American institutions and culture”.

The tripartite council, as defined in the article “A Tutorial for NNER Newcomers! Welcome to the NNER,” is represented by a triad of leaders from among the primary stakeholders in teacher preparation. As defined by Lucero (2010), the tripartite council

includes a representative of the CAS at the university level, a representative from the college of education, and a representative of the local PK-12 school/school district. This tripartite council advises the governing council on the NNER activities, conference topics, and policy statements. However, Goodlad's intent was not only for these bodies to convene at an annual NNER meeting, but instead to be fully engaged with one another in the important work of preparing educators.

Teaching is both a privilege and a responsibility. The current political and racist context in which we live could be considered an indictment of the public education system. We need educators who are willing and able to cultivate culturally responsive learning contexts in which students are centralized in the learning process, engage students in thinking critically and creatively, and encourage students to construct knowledge that will equip them to become responsible, proactive, compassionate, anti-racist members of a democracy. The weight of the responsibility for preparing this type of educator must not fall only on Educator Preparation Programs. Goodlad, understanding the primal role of the educator in sustaining a democracy, created the concept of the tripartite in an effort to broaden the foundations and supports for education preparation.

This paper will seek to bring some clarity to Goodlad's original intent and goal for designing the tripartite council. We will frame a context for our current understanding of how the tripartite is functioning and then explore ways in which the model could be more effective by truly operationalizing the relationships between and among Educator Preparation Program faculty, Colleges of Arts and Sciences faculty and school-based educator preparation partners. We will entertain perspectives from Colleges of Arts and Sciences history, math and English professors; we will explore ways that the tripartite model can impact teacher education recruitment; and we will briefly implore our readers to influence policy and to consider dual appointments as one way to bridge the gap between Education Preparation Programs and the College of Arts and Sciences. The article will respond to the following shared and guiding questions in

an effort to explore the history of the tripartite council and examine its utility when operationalized:

Shared and Guiding Questions

1. How can colleges of arts and sciences and colleges of education work together to ensure that a pipeline of well-prepared teachers will enter public schools, specifically in secondary content areas?
2. How can colleges of arts and sciences and colleges of education work together to increase pre- and in-service teachers' fidelity to content and pedagogy?
3. How can colleges of arts and sciences and colleges of education simultaneously renew each other in ways that will benefit the students, faculty, and university?

Context

Having been educated as a teacher in a National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) institution and having become a faculty member in the same institution thereafter, I have lived and taught the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) since the early 1990s. During my tenure at the university, another faculty member, Robin Hands, was hired to direct the school/university partnerships. For 10 years, we collaborated to bring the mission of the NNER to fruition in our work with pre and in-service teachers. We have won two Clark Exemplary Partnership awards, hosted the annual NNER conference, served on the tripartite and governing councils, and served as editors of the NNER journal. The missing part for us was always the connection to the college of arts and sciences (CAS). At around the time of the annual conference, we would reach out to the person who served as a liaison in World Languages, and sometimes she would agree to attend the conference with us. Our relationship was collegial, but lacked the integrity that Goodlad intended when he put these ideas forward. At the conference, it seemed that the other colleges and universities were faced with the same challenge of engagement, which was indicated by the lack of representation of CAS. We continued in this mode for many years because we were not quite sure which CAS faculty we should engage with and in what ways we should achieve our goals.

Earlier this year (2020), Robin Hands and I found ourselves working together again, but at a different institution. We came from a large research-intensive state university, but our new environment,

a small faith-based private college, provided and expected a new level of collaboration across colleges. When we read the 2021 NNER call for manuscripts, we knew we wanted to address the question “What is still missing?” and take up the idea of revisiting the tripartite council model. We reviewed the NNER journals from 2009 to present in order to inform the contents of this manuscript, to identify what others have done in relation to CASs, and to assist in crafting some operationalized ideas of what could be done in relation to the current educational and political climate. Also joining us in this paper were three new colleagues who represent the CAS: Cara Erdheim Kilgallen from the English department, Kelly Marino from the History department, and Julianne Howard from the Math department.

History and Charge of the Tripartite Council

The NNER is a democratic body possessing many layers of decision-making groups. Representatives across the network constitute the tripartite council, which convene each year at the annual meeting to discuss the issues and current policies across the network. The tripartite council advises the governing council, which guides and informs the executive committee. Furthermore, the executive director and chair of the governing council, as well as the representatives across the network, make decisions together through the executive committee, with inputs from all the members. Clark (2009) described the continuing need for ongoing development and a commitment to understanding the role of the tripartite council as the leadership changes in universities and schools.

The educational principles upon which the NNER are founded include the following: all children should have access to education; public schools serve to prepare the citizens of a democracy; teachers need to implement a nurturing pedagogy; and attention must be given to the development of teachers as stewards of schools (Goodlad, 2004). These principles should inform practice and the national conversation. Those intimately involved in this endeavor include the schools of education faculty, the liberal arts faculty, and the school district partners (Lucero, 2010). Lieberman and Grolnick (1996) explained that the intention of the tripartite council is to “facilitate networks and create “public spaces” in which educators can work together in ways different from those typical in their institutions and

from much that is considered standard professional development. This process may involve building structures encouraging a respectful dialogue between and among school and university personnel, modeling more collaborative stances toward learning and support, enunciating important ideals, or leaving room for emergent goals” (p. 25).

This charge certainly goes beyond convening these constituents at an annual NNER meeting. “Building structures” across the academy is not an easy lift. Historically, colleges and universities are siloed in ways that seem counter-productive to the educative process. In addition, including public school partners in an ongoing “respectful dialogue” is often interpreted as the university telling the schools how to educate their students, as opposed to entering into the deep and substantive relationships that are required for true collaboration, goal-setting and simultaneous renewal.

The need for extended collaboration among education colleges, K-12 partner schools, and liberal arts departments should be of high priority (Goodlad, 1994). Schon (1983) framed these partnerships by encouraging the different fields or professions to inform the universities of their practical problems and by encouraging the universities, the unique sources of research, to give back new scientific knowledge to the different fields or professions. This type of simultaneous inquiry (Roselle et al., 2017), has the potential to not only create a foundation for schools and universities to work together to identify, analyze and implement the kinds of efficacious practices and dispositions that will help shape tomorrow’s educators and ensure the integrity of content knowledge and content-specific pedagogies, but also to develop pipelines for recruiting and retaining teachers in critical shortage areas. The stewards of the teaching profession safeguard these interactions and value the contributions of all those who are part of the educative community.

Historical and Contemporary Collaborative Possibilities of the Colleges of Education and Colleges of Arts and Sciences

History

History and social studies are important but often underemphasized areas of education at all levels, from grade school to college and university. In colleges and universities, the courses on these subjects

are important not only because they can make the students more well-rounded in terms of their liberal arts experiences and skills but also because they can cultivate an interest in the teaching profession in the students, provide them with recent examples of pedagogy, and shed light on the key debates, theories, concepts, questions, and themes in the different study disciplines, which are crucial to creating effective lessons. At the secondary level, history and social studies courses also help provide the students with the basic knowledge, values, and skills that they need to begin the process of becoming active citizens and members of the democracy to which they belong. These courses reach a broad scope of the population at a critical age. Therefore, professors, teachers, and teacher education candidates have a particularly important role to play in the society. By directing and organizing the students' classroom experience, they serve as role models, socializers, and mentors of the future generations, helping shape their notions of civic engagement and their domestic and global worldviews.

Mathematics

Part of the role of education is to prepare students to thrive in an ever-changing society. No longer are today's students learning merely from textbooks and notebooks. In the current age of technology, it is necessary for educators to instruct their students through innovative action learning. At Sacred Heart University, the mathematics instructors in the CAS employ technology to engage their students in real-world problem-solving applications. The professors present slideshows of lecture materials, run simulations to model theorems, utilize online graphing calculators, and collect data on spreadsheets for subsequent analysis. These are just a few of the mechanisms used to introduce, reinforce, and excite the students in the field of mathematics. Moreover, the students learn more effectively through instructional lessons incorporating active participation. By using interactive technology and creating a comfortable, non-judgmental learning environment so that the students can ask and answer questions, the educators may increase the students' success in the field of mathematics and may inspire the students to teach mathematics. At Sacred Heart University, a student can become a classroom learning assistant (CLA) for a particular section of a mathematics course. The CLA acts as a tutor for the class,

thereby gaining firsthand experience in teaching. Additionally, senior seminars provide students with an opportunity to research a topic and work with a mentor regarding content and delivery. The senior project, which serves as the capstone of the senior seminar, enables the students to present their findings to the faculty and their peers. Such opportunities engage the students in developing and lecturing on mathematical ideas while exposing them to the fundamentals of teaching.

To borrow from the National Inventors Hall of Fame (n.d.), “Incorporating role models into everyday lesson planning is one of the most effective ways to increase engagement, boost confidence, and inspire students to take an active role in pursuing their dreams.” Teaching is a profession, and the students need positive exemplars to cultivate their personal aspirations. Science and mathematics educators cannot compete with industry practitioners income-wise, but the personal rewards that they obtain are immeasurable. Influencing another life is the most fulfilling experience one can ever have. If students are introduced to the personal satisfaction of teaching mathematics at a young age, they may become more inclined to enter the field of teaching, particularly mathematics teaching. There are many programs in place that can inspire young individuals to become peer leaders, tutors, or teaching assistants. Public-school programs such as the Connecticut Pre-Engineering Program (CPEP) expose students to project-based assignments in mathematics and science while giving them opportunities to teach and present their own developed concepts in competitions. High schools also offer programs for voluntary senior interns. Some of these internships are in schools, allowing seniors to work with the students and faculty for coursework credits or community service hours. In addition, through various youth programs, such as Norwalk’s Summer Youth Employment Program, the students are given a chance to work in different parts of the community, such as in a tutoring center. While earning an income, helping the community, and building their résumé, the students gain exposure to the rewarding field of mathematics education. Through the expansion of these programs, particularly in underserved communities, the society may be able to inspire students to consider a career in mathematics education.

Teachers must inspire their students to embrace the teaching profession particularly in their respective content areas by

demonstrating the value of being an educator. Ultimately, it is only through exposure to mathematics teachers who are positive role models and to creative mathematics education that students can become excited about teaching mathematics one day, which will usher in a potential for personal fulfillment.

English

As the sustainability of higher education and the liberal arts becomes an increasingly common concern in the post-pandemic scenario, improving the partnerships between the English and Education departments should become top priorities. The department and division chairs in the humanities, specifically languages and literature, benefit tremendously from cross-college collaboration with pre-professional programs in education that value literacy and linguistic expression. A large majority of undergraduate English majors pursue studies in teaching as a profession, so we must work collectively with professional educators to prepare our students for this path. Scholars and teachers of writing, language, and literature gain tremendous insight from their education colleagues on a wide variety of learning styles, thus enhancing their pedagogy by increasing its accessibility. If our undergraduates develop their passion for the written and spoken word in the English departments, they can then proceed to hone their professionalism in graduate teaching and education programs. We must thus embrace this profound and powerful partnership.

At Sacred Heart University, creative collaborations between the English and Education departments are ever present. Housed in the CAS, the Department of Languages and Literatures begins to scaffold the learning process for the undergraduate majors and minors, many of whom enroll in a five-year program in secondary teaching through the Farrington College of Education. Our faculty members offer two courses focused on teaching world and American literature, respectively, to aspiring secondary school teachers. The future plans may include more cross-listed courses, increased team or co-teaching opportunities, facilitated double majors or dual degrees, and more specialized course offerings, such as “Spanish for Secondary School Teachers.”

Recommendations for Stronger Collaborative Relationships

Creation of Liaisons in Each Content Area as a Recruitment Approach

Over the past few years, studies have shown a huge drop in the number of students enrolling in teacher preparation programs leading to teacher shortages, as sighted in the Learning Policy Institute's 2016 report titled, *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* (Sutcher, et al., 2016). Additionally, in a report produced by the Economic Policy Institute (March 26, 2019), García & Weiss contend that "The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought. When indicators of teacher quality (certification, relevant training, experience, etc.) are taken into account, the shortage is even more acute than currently estimated, with high-poverty schools suffering the most from the shortage of credentialed teachers" (p. 1). New efforts to build bridges between the colleges of education and the CASs can help reverse this national trend and can successfully engage more students in the teaching profession. There are many ways in which schools of education can build stronger connections with the history and social studies departments of CASs across the country, thus increasing teacher proficiency and recruitment in these areas. One way to advance these connections is to create new channels of communication, networking, and collaboration. Designated point people can be chosen within schools of education and the history and social studies fields to foster dialogues between programs and to raise an awareness of the opportunities and requirements for entrance into education programs.

Sutcher, et al, (2016) report "the emerging teacher shortage is driven by four main factors: A decline in teacher preparation enrollments, district efforts to return to pre-recession pupil-teacher ratios, increasing student enrollment, and high teacher attrition" (p. 1). These reports of the declining numbers of students in teacher education programs point to a student body that does not consider education a viable career option and that lacks knowledge about what teachers actually do and what resources their colleges currently have.

Faculty members with little knowledge of the education programs on their campuses are not helping reverse the aforementioned downward trends in and attitudes towards the pursuit of teaching as a career. Enlightenment and discussion are the keys to success in this

area. A more optimistic student outlook toward teaching as a career choice can be fostered by changes occurring from the top down. In other words, before students can become more engaged in teaching as a potential career, the faculty members across colleges must become more knowledgeable about the education programs and opportunities available to their students. Appointing liaisons to communicate between schools can foster respect for and awareness of the teaching profession and education programs among the broader faculty, which can trickle down to the students.

Designated representatives and liaisons in schools of education and CASs can communicate with the larger faculty inside and outside their departments to establish future-teacher recruitment as an important university goal and to shed light on the many opportunities and resources that are currently available for development in this area, of which some faculty members and students may not be aware. At key points in the semester, such as at the very beginning of the semester and in the middle (near the time of academic advising, when students may be considering their career paths and futures), faculty liaisons can be sent to first-year courses with a large enrollment of students from various disciplines to advertise the robust teacher education programs available on campus. Faculty members advising students in CASs can be provided with information about scholarships, internships, basic career information, and program requirements in teacher education, and about the contact persons in the school of education with whom their students can be connected if they happen to be interested in pursuing a teaching career. Liaisons can provide students with information in these areas and can help distribute handouts, posters, flyers, and important notices about related events that may be of interest to the students, thus making the advising process more effective and valuable. Liaisons can also relay important information to faculty members about the current trends in teacher education in their respective disciplines, and about the characteristics of ideal teacher candidates. The faculty members may use this information not only to answer their students' related questions, if any, but also to update and inform their own pedagogical practices.

In addition to making connections between the faculty members of different departments or institutions, the designated liaisons can work directly with the students to raise their awareness of the teacher

education programs for possible recruitment, by fostering new connections with the history, math, and other student clubs on campus. These outreach efforts can encourage the students to think about teaching as a viable career path, open their minds to the resources and opportunities available on campus, and dispel negative stereotypes about the profession. Some students do not consider pursuing a career in education because they are afraid of the responsibilities of running a classroom, have false beliefs about what constitutes a typical educator, or do not believe that one can make a decent living as a teacher. Liaisons can advertise and explain the practicum and field experience placements available in education programs to quell these student fears. They can also inform the students of other mentoring or volunteer opportunities for students that will allow them to experience working with younger learners before deciding to pursue the teaching profession. Furthermore, they can share information regarding important professional development events, lectures, or presentations on campus with the students who have an interest in the field, as well as help link multiple student groups together for collaboration. Liaisons can connect student groups with guest speakers, such as graduates of teacher education programs who went on to have successful teaching careers and who can tell the students about their experiences. These efforts can serve to show the students that a sound and secure future is possible in education, and can illustrate that teachers have diverse backgrounds and come from all walks of life.

Introduction of Changes in Course Content and Teaching Strategies

Furthermore, the faculty members in CASs, particularly those teaching the required and widely taken lower-division undergraduate classes, can do much to advance the goals of connection and recruitment for the college of education by making small changes in their course activities and assessments that can make their students develop an interest in teaching. Such changes can also improve the student engagement in these classes, which are often filled with non-majors who can benefit from more creative, varied assignments. Sometimes, students do not consider education as a career path because they have never had the opportunity to experiment with teaching skills or develop competencies valuable to the profession.

Often, they only get to passively experience work in the classroom as students but are never given the chance to play a more active role in education. Some students may have informally taught or tutored a member of their family or community or a friend but may not have considered how such experiences could translate into a job. Thus, professors can foster an interest in teaching in their students by allowing them to assume the role of an educator, a creator, or a group leader in different contexts. For example, in-class activities that subscribe to social and cognitive, discussion-oriented, and open-ended methods can allow students to experience teaching in a micro-setting. Instead of giving lectures all the time, professors can provide their students with more opportunities for group work, for leading class discussions, for generating questions and directly posing these to their peers, or for teaching their classmates different subject contents via in-class presentations that shed light on a particular topic or that serve as a hook or introduction to the professor's material for the day.

Open-ended assignments, such as the *un-essay*, have become increasingly popular in many disciplines, including history and social studies, to illustrate the students' knowledge and understanding of what was taught in class. In these assignments, students are given specific criteria to demonstrate their learning but are allowed to choose the format in which they will show or present their work, using their personal strengths or talents. These types of assessments are often more valuable than traditional assessments in that they empower students to make choices, thus more fully engaging them in the learning process. Through these assessments, students can try out new activities and create learning experiences for themselves that can be valuable with regard to shaping career images. For example, those interested in education may design a student game, a lesson plan, a mock quiz or test for the class, a simulation activity, or another type of project that will allow them to practice the skills that are valuable for teaching. These types of activities can give students a chance to build their communication, teamwork, and leadership skills and gain insight into what it is like to be an educator, possibly encouraging students to consider a career in education.

CAS faculty members can also inspire their students to pursue careers in education by modeling effective, updated teaching practices informed by the latest trends in relation not only to their subject

matter but also to pedagogy in general, which can go a long way in motivating students to become teachers. Updated information regarding the latest trends in teaching history and social studies, for instance, can be shared by the point people from colleges of education with their colleagues in CASs, who may be more focused on content than on pedagogy or strategy. By taking note of these current trends in pedagogy and using updated teaching strategies, professors can not only improve their courses for their students' benefit but also model successful instruction in their specific content areas for students interested in education.

In history and social studies classes, students interested in becoming teachers of these subjects can be exposed to captivating relevant readings and resources, important themes, questions to pose to their classes, topics to highlight, important debates and issues in the field, and the most updated, effective methods of delivering the material to the learners. The CAS faculty members can also serve as updated role models for their students before the latter enter careers in education. History and social studies professors can learn from the faculty members in schools of education how to incorporate nationally and internationally popular strategies in social studies teaching, such as using the inquiry-based learning model of lesson design, creating a more multiculturally inclusive curriculum representing diverse voices, and working toward making further local and contemporary connections. Their university classes are often the last major examples of teaching in a specific content area that students see before they go off to their own internship placements or careers. Therefore, the classrooms in CASs, in addition to those in colleges of education, can be significant learning spaces for students hoping to become educators in the future.

An additional asset to developing and sustaining tripartite relationships across university- and school-based educator contexts is the potential for CAS and education preparation program (EPP) faculty to help in-service teachers expand their knowledge of content and pedagogy, and vice versa. As we know, both content and pedagogy are continually evolving. Social justice content, as well as inclusive and culturally responsive teaching pedagogy, often referred to as critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972) or culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), is becoming more of a priority in the U.S. as the teachers across the country are seeking to diversify their course

contents and teaching methods in an effort to meet a broad spectrum of learning needs. College faculty members who have not taught in public schools in many years or ever can benefit tremendously from the current experiences and wealth of knowledge offered by public school teachers and administrators. Conversely, school-based educators who are confronted with the many challenges of teaching in the 21st century do not always have the time or resources to stay abreast of current developments in best practices and may benefit from the scholarship being generated at the university level.

Mobilization to Influence Policy

Michelli et al. (2016) pointed out how the NNER, as an organization committed to promoting democracy and social justice through education, should formally seek to influence policies that interfere with meeting its goals. They remind us that the NNER is uniquely positioned as the only national organization inclusive of faculty and administrators in education, arts and sciences, and p-12 schools. Also, they call us to proactively acquaint ourselves with executive and legislative policymakers who share NNER's vision rather than wait until an issue arises before we do such and try to enlist their support. As Michelli et al. (2016) said, "We should engage them before we need them" (p. 55). They recommend that members of the tripartite council, as a group, visit such executive and legislative policymakers in their respective offices, as well as include in their ranks representatives who are faculty members and administrators from colleges of education, CASs, and the NNER's public-school partners.

Implementation of Dual Appointments

Dual appointments have long been suggested and debated as a means to improve teacher education and undergraduate education. Dual appointments between CASs and colleges of education can integrate such colleges' respective knowledge bases, practices, and cultures to provide deep contents and content-specific pedagogical learning experiences for teachers. They can also serve as bridges between the different stakeholders in teacher education institutionally and in P-12. However, without institutional, college, and departmental commitment and support coupled with clear performance expectations, these positions can easily fail.

Conclusion

We are living in challenging times. The foundations of our democracy have been shaken, racism abounds, and a global pandemic is currently disrupting the world's systems as we have known them. Given this context, we need to pool together our efforts to learn from and with one another in an effort to provide the next generation with an education that will help them evolve as civilly conscious, empathic, discerning, loving human beings. Goodlad (2004) quoted Sirotnik as saying, "... the guiding assumptions about the purposes and structure of public education in a democracy [include] such notions as preparing well-educated, creative, and thoughtful citizens able to participate actively and critically in [a] democracy, ensuring equal access to the best educational practices for all students, and creating caring and socially just environments that model how equity and excellence can go hand in hand" (p. 19). This challenge is a daunting one, and public schools cannot take up such challenges and succeed by themselves alone; neither can universities do so without the support of and collaboration with their partners. Goodlad's intention was to conceptualize the tripartite model so as to provide a clear path for creating "a village" of people who together will attempt to tackle the major challenge of educating students for democracy. However, the concept of the tripartite model has not yet been fully operationalized; the purpose of this paper is to identify some pragmatic and actionable ways in which CASs can work with EPPs and public schools to create an effective triad whose impact on the education system can be significant and lasting.

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The Day After the Election: The Problem with Educator Neutrality

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Abstract

Recent general elections in the United States have provided a complex milieu for educators, especially those committed to educating in a democracy. This article provides a reflection from two teacher educators on how creating space for reaction and reflection the day after the 2020 general election fell short of the ideals of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. In addition, this article discusses how teaching is political work and when preservice and inservice teachers choose political apathy, the negative impact of power and privilege imbalances affects the most marginalized learners. The article concludes with a call to engage with the National Network for Educational Renewal towards commitment to specific recommendations that will strengthen educators' capacities for viewing their work as political and to more intentionally engage with civic and political problems.

Keywords: *Agenda for Education in a Democracy, teacher preparation, political, power, privilege*

In 2000, on the Wednesday after the Bush v. Gore election, I (Erin) was still a rookie, not even a semester through my third year teaching English at a small rural high school. I had never seen an election that “didn’t work,” and my students and I struggled together to understand what *had* happened, what *hadn’t* happened, what *was* happening. We looked up “hanging chad” in the dictionary. We pulled the government teacher in during his planning period to talk us through the Supreme Court’s role in determining this election’s outcome. We thought, “We’ll never see anything like this again.” History in the making.

In 2008, I was up long before my alarm, too excited to sleep for one more minute. I practically floated to my subway stop. I popped in the bodega to spring for a copy of *The Times* instead of the free daily *Metro*. There was a noticeable buzz on the uptown 4-train. When I arrived at my public high school in the South Bronx, there were

already students waiting outside, eager to start school-day celebrations.

“Yo, miss, you excited?”

I smiled. “You have to ask, Rishawn?”

It was a Day After the Election highlight. Career educators know the impact of those words. In the 21st century alone, notable Days After the Election have included George W. Bush’s election in 2000, Barack Obama’s election in 2008, Donald Trump’s election in 2016, and Joe Biden’s election in 2020. Quite a list.

On each of these Tuesdays, educators stayed up late into the night – or, perhaps more likely, arose very early, earlier than normal the next morning – to check election results. In 2008 and 2016, we knew the result the next teaching day. In 2000 and 2020, we didn’t. In all cases, we drove, walked, trained, biked, or bussed to school deep in thought about how to respond to our students’ frustration, jubilation, confusion, indifference.

The Agenda for Education in a Democracy

In teacher preparation, discussions of education in a democracy are not confined to election years. The Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) guides our inquiry, study, and conversation with students from the first day they begin our teacher preparation programs. For those of us who are teacher educators, our pedagogical and curricular approaches may include a focus on constructive social change. And in 2020, a year of such massive social upheaval, those of us who educate the educators have been forced to ask some difficult questions: To what degree are we responsible for a voting public so widely susceptible to misinformation? To what degree have we failed to effectively teach media literacy or critical thinking? To what degree does our silence contribute to inequity and injustice? To what degree do we allow systemic racism to go unchecked in our schools?

The day after the 2020 election, it seemed important to create space for reaction and reflection with our teacher candidates. I (Erin) began each class – ranging from a 100-level foundations class with first years, to a 200-level development class with mostly sophomores, to a 300-level methods class with juniors and seniors – with a free write. For some students, that writing was enough. After about ten

minutes, I opened up time for sharing, responding, or asking questions if students needed to say anything or process collectively. This social-emotional check-in wasn't out of the ordinary; I often begin classes in such a way throughout the semester. On this particular Day After, the 100-level students were mostly and predictably quiet; the 200-level students were noticeably much more subdued and less participatory than normal; the 300-level students, many of whom I had worked with for three consecutive years, were surprisingly stone-faced.

Most written responses were vague; they said things like "Just trying to get through the week!" In an apparent effort to avoid politics, they focused on individual concerns: "My work schedule is crazy right now so I'm not getting much sleep" and "My thesis is taking way longer than I expected." One of the seniors in the methods class was a mature, socially engaged, thoughtful student who was always willing to share and offered nuanced perspectives on a wide range of topics, whether how to engage adolescent learners, how to recruit community partners, or how to consider power dynamics in a classroom. This student didn't say a word the day after the election, and their written response stunned me: "Unfortunately, I don't think there's much for me to say...just hoping that everyone finds something apolitical to focus their attention on, soon. I find that the politicization of the present moment is reaching hysteria levels..."

This senior was six weeks away from their student teaching semester, and their impulse was to avoid the political moment – one that had significant implications for students in America. Were our teacher candidates so easily able to divest themselves from the national conversation? For so many having grown up in the Midwest, were they still afraid to talk politics, having been taught that such a thing is "impolite"? And hadn't we done anything in our teacher education program to unpack that? To create a space for dialogue and interrogation? How do we keep fidelity to our department vision of *Developing Educational Leaders for Constructive Social Change* if our candidates still believed teaching was apolitical?

The time has long past when educational leaders can tell themselves that politics and education don't mix. The simple statement during this senior's free write provides an indictment of both the K-12 educational system and the nearly 3 ½ years of educator preparation they have experienced at our institution. When

teachers strive for an apolitical classroom environment, we must acknowledge that such an environment actually increases the power imbalance between teacher and learner. Perhaps even more dangerous is that power imbalances are often veiled by a “neutral” classroom (Camicia, 2020). Political neutrality in a teaching and learning environment may be safe for teachers, but it is dangerous for learners. When teachers take a position of neutrality, they choose the path of least resistance; they abdicate their responsibility to engage students in conversation and problem-solving about real world challenges. A reluctance to address how our political system attempts to handle public problems may prevent a teacher from visiting the school administrator’s office, responding to a questioning parent, clarifying oneself to the union, or worse yet, hearing one’s name during the report of the public at the local school board meeting, but these safe choices do not benefit students or their communities. These safe choices do not engage students in naming and solving problems like housing inequities, food deserts, income disparity, or voter disenfranchisement – problems that many of our students and their parents are experiencing in real time.

Political Neutrality and Teacher Disclosure

We recognize the complexity of managing partisan ideologies in a classroom. Dunn, Sondel, and Baggett (2019) suggested these complexities are influenced by teachers’ perceptions of student age appropriateness, stances of parents and colleagues, and perhaps most importantly, the teacher’s uncertainty about how to navigate various orientations of political action. There is no paucity of testimonies from school leaders regarding the difficulty of dealing with ideological crossfire (Beem, 2006; Dunn et al., 2019; Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017), but we must be aware that the mere ability to position oneself as neutral reveals a level of privilege and distance from political implications. Many students don’t have that privilege. The policies and narrative spin coming from the statehouse or Washington D.C. are real and dynamic to our students and their families. Avoidance of the political aspects of education reminds us of Freire’s (1970) idea of a narrating Subject (the teacher) providing a reality that is motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. The lives of our nation’s children are anything but that in 2021.

Previous research (e.g., Apple, 2004; Dyke Gordon, & Job, 2017, Journell, 2011, Kincheloe, 2008, Ziegler, 1967) suggests in-classroom political neutrality is a desire among many in the teaching force. A review of the literature suggests that teachers' desire for political neutrality is grounded in one or more of the following arguments: 1) a fear of sanctioning, 2) a desire for "safe space" classrooms, 3) apprehension that these discussions negatively influence the learning of "academic" subject matter, 4) a belief in their authority and therefore fear of indoctrinating students, and 5) inexperience on engaging in political conversations. In addition, Kincheloe (2011) and Dyke, Gordon, and Job (2017) noted that teachers who fail to address socio-political issues are actually taking a distinct moral and political position and therefore a serious internal contradiction arises when they claim neutrality as an educator. To that end, we acknowledge that many teachers enter the profession with a belief that they are engaging in apolitical work but quickly find themselves struggling with neutrality in a profession that is, at its core, already not neutral (Dunn et al., 2019). Perhaps that is where our student finds himself, only months away from entering the workforce as a new teacher.

A more teacher-centered view of neutrality in the classroom leads to an examination of how and to what degree educators disclose their political beliefs. In Kelly's (1986) frame analysis of four theories of teacher disclosure, he advocated for a theory of committed impartiality. Kelly (1986) suggested that by utilizing the committed impartiality theory, teachers should: 1) state rather than conceal their own views on controversial issues, and 2) foster the pursuit of truth by ensuring that competing perspectives receive a fair hearing through civil discourse. Journell (2011) suggested that using Kelly's (1986) theory of committed impartiality allows teachers to actively use discussions as a tool for civic development rather than simply relying on content. Specifically, Journell (2011) found that social studies teachers who utilize a theory of committed impartiality while teaching during a presidential election year promote more vibrant discussions in the classroom—particularly with students who seemed to traditionally lack engagement.

Context and Call to Action

We are teacher educators at a private institution in the midwestern United States that prepares teachers at mainly the undergraduate level. The majority of the teacher education students at our institution come from this region of country, an area that Fowler (2013) depicted as having an “individualistic” political culture. Fowler (2013) described this culture as one where “politics are understood as a type of marketplace in which the government should serve utilitarian—primarily economic—purposes” (p. 83). Members of this culture believe that government should be kept to a strict minimum except to assure that the economic systems are working efficiently. Wood (2008) has helped us understand that this individualism (i.e., if it doesn’t impact me, I might want to ignore it) develops into a perception of education as a private benefit and not a public good which makes it difficult for us to justify any activity that requires individual sacrifice for the common good. This has been our experience and likely helps explain some of the political apathy of our teacher candidates, as opposed to their embrace of what Goodlad (2008) suggested, that “schooling is the essential starting point for addressing the well-being of a democracy” (p. 19).

We each teach an education foundations course in our teacher education program, one focused on philosophical perspectives and one on sociological perspectives. We structure these courses around some enduring understandings and wicked problems. Wicked problems, originally defined by Rittel and Webber (1973), are the complex, unpredictable, open ended and intractable social issues that frame education (Head & Alford, 2015). Introducing these wicked problems into our courses tends to be the catalyst for value-laden policy inquiry with our students. One of the goals of our courses is to introduce the tools students need to think deeply and critically about education policy. We challenge students to recognize power structures’ influence on social injustice and to gain awareness on how politics are intimately connected to ones’ values. The willingness for a student to remove themselves from the 2020 historical general election is exactly opposite of what we work towards with our students as we introduce these wicked problems – and we bear at least some responsibility for that. The uncertainty from this student (introduced earlier in this manuscript) is representative of many students, we suspect, and we believe it is real and relevant. We teach

our candidates about the importance of confidence (Teacher Voice, Teacher Presence, and so on) in facilitating a classroom, so it stands to reason they would shy away from anything they feel uncertain about, political or not. However, we must recognize and grapple with the fact that an overemphasis on confidence may have negative effects on new teachers engaging intentionally with wicked problems at all, let alone alongside their students.

The key question, then, is how often do we intentionally *model* uncertainty with our teacher candidates throughout the entire curriculum?

In our foundations courses, we are committed to what we might term the Uncertainty Frame, or what Kincheloe (2011) called a “critical complex empiricism” model. Throughout our entry-level foundations courses, we find ourselves in conversations with our students that sound like this: “This is a wicked problem. There are no easy answers, and that's hard. Let's sit with that discomfort. Let's talk through why and how this problem exists, the social issues that are connected to the problem, and who is most affected by it. Let's discuss what we might do about this problem. Let's acknowledge there are no easy answers and change is slow, but we have a moral imperative to work toward change without giving up hope.” Our goal in these conversations is to help students understand that knowledge about humans and their social practices is fragmented, diverse, and always socially constructed. Kincheloe (2011) suggested that a critical complex understanding does not lend itself to propositional statements—i.e., final truths – but rather it remains somewhat elusive, resistant to the trap of stable and consistent meaning. We wonder if our Uncertainty Frame discussion model deteriorates over the course of our program, as students move into more content-focused courses that require a greater technical focus ahead of licensure exams?

Our colleagues responsible for the more technical focused courses are no less committed to the democratic agenda or the Uncertainty Frame, but they may feel more pressed for time as they help students craft and develop lessons for the field, write measurable learning objectives, align activities and assessment with content standards, and prepare for summative assessments like the edTPA, student teaching semesters, and licensure exams. They still talk about theory and uncertainty, but it is more often in the context of aligning teaching

methods, activities, and assessments to an ever-shifting set of school-specific classroom dynamics and demands.

We join the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) in revisiting its organizational identity and mission. We strongly encourage the NNER to continue its work as it has potential to support new and practicing teachers in recognizing the political activity they do each day. It is clear based on work following the 2016 general election from Dunn, Sondel, and Baggett (2019), that teachers do not feel prepared to address or respond to elections. They note from the study of the 724 non-randomized sample, “while scholars continue to argue that teacher education is a vital component of teachers’ future practice, none of the participants in this study identified teacher preparation as having an influence on their postelection decision making” (Dunn, et al., 2019, p. 467). It seems to us that the NNER is positioned well, as it has been throughout its existence, to become a “chief worrier” of this disconnect. Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) reminded us that “it is a terrible failing for a teacher to avoid (or worse be required to avoid) discussing a topic simply because it is *too controversial*” (p. 92). Can we work towards Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2024, as a benchmark when our future teachers respond to the justice and equity implications of the previous day’s election with a conviction to explicitly help their future students differentiate between constructive and destructive beliefs?

To that end, we are committing to the following:

1. Reconsidering the canon within our foundations of education courses. It is time – past time – to move beyond the classics that one might find in these courses. Do the readings of Dewey, Giroux, Ayers, and even Freire inspire a teacher candidate in 2021 to see their work as political? It is clear that our courses ignore the reality of groups who are under-represented on college campuses but who are found in our nation’s schools. Similarly, are we ignoring the reality of the benefit that the white and privilege classes hold? Beyond the racist and patriarchal aspect of the education foundations canon, it is clear to us that preservice teachers’ first introduction to the study of education does not impart a commitment to political action.

Even after a re-evaluation and overhaul of course readings, it is incumbent upon us as instructors to help students connect the dots from educational theory – historical or contemporary – to educational and political practice. In their Fall 2020 exit letters, many of the students in our philosophical perspectives in education course discussed takeaways they gleaned from Dewey, Freire, and Noddings. They were now able to define important curricular and professional concepts such as “progressive education,” “the banking system,” and “ethics of care,” but despite our spending over a month studying the relationship between education and democracy, that still failed to emerge in their letters as an enduring understanding from the course. I (Erin) failed to help them connect the dots between political work – “relating to the government or the **public affairs** of a country” – and public education, the arena most of them will enter and arguably the most essential of all public affairs of the nation.

Bigelow, Bloomekatz, and Cornell Gonzales (2020) provided this challenge: “For educators, it’s not enough to teach about the great social movements of the past, it’s essential to join them today” (p. 6). For example, do our teacher candidates think to connect the Black Lives Matter movement to the very schools where they will be working in just a few short years? Do they know that schools “suspend Black students at four times the rate of white students and suspend Black girls at six times the rate of white girls”? (Bigelow, et al., 2020, p. 5). Do they know The Black Lives Matter at School movement began in Seattle in 2016 – or its four demands: 1) end ‘zero tolerance’ discipline and implement restorative justice; 2) hire more Black teachers; 3) mandate Black history and ethnic studies in K-12 curriculum; 4) fund counselors not cops? (Bigelow, et al., 2020, p. 6). Do we help them navigate any of these complexities? Do we model political engagement by having joined any of today’s social movements in public and vocal ways?

2. Learning how to adapt curriculum to respond to and create space for reflection about current events and national crises or traumas (Dunn, et al., 2019). The models of creating this space in curriculum (e.g., Cashmere, 2018; Tinson & McBride,

2013; Simmons, Baggett, and Eggleton, 2014) provide not only opportunities to share trauma but to learn about the systemic roots of students' struggle. In homogenous classroom settings, this isn't always easy. We may encounter resistance, especially when addressing privilege and race. Dyan Watson, teacher-educator at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, said, "My experience is that my white students tend to be less cognizant of how race mediates teaching and learning. Even those who can articulate that an intersection exists often struggle with the reality, and subconsciously resist learning about it" (Watson, 2020, p.14). We have found this to be the case with white students as well, and we share Dr. Watson's goal: "My objective for all difficult conversations – but especially those that involve race in some explicit way – is for my students and me to stay in the conversation. What this means is that no matter how hard it gets, keep talking and listening...white students often find this difficult. According to anti-racist scholars Robin DiAngelo and Ozlem Sensoy, white students tend to characterize courses and conversations that center on race as acts of violence. By giving wholly, they feel they will experience a loss of self and/or authority; thus, they resist it" (Watson, 2020, p. 14). Despite this resistance, we must persist in leading these conversations.

3. Amplifying school/university partnerships so preservice teachers can have access to knowledge around the political implications for children and adolescents in our nation's schools. As partners, we need to "commit to developing practices that recognize and honor the diversity within school populations, that prepare students for active engagement in a democratic society, and that promote social justice" (Goodlad, et al., 2004, p. 119). Practically speaking, this means engaging our clinical educators and administrators more fully and more intentionally with a shared programmatic mission. Our on-campus classes cannot and should not be the only places teacher candidates are asked to interrogate cultural bias or respond to a national trauma like police brutality. We want our clinical educators to also engage in conversation with our candidates about what their K-12 students are experiencing

inside and outside the classroom. We want to place our students with clinical educators who align themselves with a constructive social change mission and who will challenge our teacher candidates to take risks in the classroom.

4. Supporting the NNER and the Agenda for Education in a Democracy to ensure quality education for all. The results of the 2020 general election, the effects the COVID-19 pandemic have had on K-12 schooling, and the shifting landscape of higher education provide an opportunity for the NNER to reinvent itself as a network of partnership sites **and** individuals committed to bring about simultaneous renewal to schools and the institutions that prepare teachers through authentic political engagement in issues of common concern.

Conclusion

Motivated by what I (Erin) saw as my own failures in my fall 2020 foundations course, I cut some of the early Western philosophers and increased class time this spring on inequitable school funding models, segregated schools, the school-to-prison pipeline, and zero-tolerance discipline policies. I added readings by Dr. Bettina Love, co-founder of the Abolitionist Teaching Network. We're examining democratic models of pedagogy that innovative educators like bell hooks and art educator Judy Chicago have used for decades. Most of my students have never heard of any of these things; most have never experienced them. A sign of forward momentum from a first-year student's formative assessment after class one day: "I never knew the difference between equity and equality. And I have to be honest: I always thought everyone had a fair shot at education when I was growing up. Now I can see that's not the case, and I want to help."

2020 reminded us that it is difficult to predict the future. At this point, it is hard to make even an educated guess about who will face off in the 2024 presidential election or about the long-term effects of extended remote learning. Still, we commit to engaging our students in more intentionally progressive, culturally responsive, and timely political conversation throughout our teacher preparation program, starting with first year students. We commit to helping them embrace their work as inherently political – with inherently high stakes. We commit to modeling the Uncertainty Frame in all of our courses. We

commit to helping students connect the dots from equity, accessibility, and restorative justice in schools to the very public affairs of our nation. And we look forward to their unflinchingly transparent, community-minded, and socially just responses as seniors on The Day After the Election in the Fall of 2024.

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The Assault on Reason in the Human Conversation:

Libraries and Renewal in the Agenda for Education in a Democracy

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Abstract

The Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) calls for continuous renewal of teacher preparation programs and public education toward the goal of strengthening both public education and the democracy it serves. In light of the ongoing assault on reason in American democracy – which includes creeping authoritarianism, threats to press freedom, the political weaponization of disinformation, and the denigration of facts and science – this paper recommends a specific form of renewal: bringing librarians and an emphasis on information literacy into the NNER’s Agenda for Education in a Democracy. Since the AED expects teachers to model both intellectual and community leadership, incorporating information literacy in teacher education programs prepares teacher candidates to play a prominent part in protecting the human conversation from the contemporary assault on reason.

Keywords: *information literacy, political authoritarianism, preparation program reform*

This issue of *Education in a Democracy: A Journal of the NNER* examines the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) in light of the profound upheaval affecting American democracy at this time. 2020 was an exceptional year in many respects. A viral pandemic infected millions, killed hundreds of thousands, devastated specific economic sectors (while creating conditions for others to thrive), and stressed educators at all levels who adapted to deliver remote instruction (Singer, 2020). Fresh examples of extrajudicial killings of Black people by police inspired unprecedented numbers of Americans of all races to public demonstrations and marked a shift in opinion on the seriousness of racism in American life ("Significant Shifts in Attitudes on Race and

Policing - AP-NORC," 2020). A presidential election coincident with the pandemic and the protests recorded the highest level of voter participation in more than one hundred years. Almost two-thirds of eligible voters participated, with more than a hundred million casting early or absentee ballots (Schaul et al., 2020). Increased participation notwithstanding, American democracy continued to suffer a number of maladies.

This essay draws its focus to one of the particular conditions afflicting American democracy in our time, what political scientist Thomas Patterson called “the assault on reason” (Patterson, 2019). Patterson’s language suggests a violence perpetrated against one of the pillars of democratic practice: our ability to participate in public decision-making through deliberative processes, or what John Goodlad called “the human conversation” (Fenstermacher, 1999). We believe the Agenda for Education in a Democracy should lead the opposition to this assault on reason, by extending to librarians and media specialists a more prominent place among its partners, and further empowering teachers to steer the democratic conversation in a more factual, level-headed direction.

Warping the Human Conversation: The Challenge Peculiar to this Moment

Creeping Authoritarianism. At this moment, two distinct, but related, forces threaten the health of American democracy. Scholars have characterized the first as “creeping authoritarianism” (Walt, 2017). In recent years, political scientists have noted a growing number of threats to democracy around the world and drawn parallels to developments in the United States. Perhaps most famously, Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) conveyed tales of foreign leaders who failed to suppress authoritarians in their midst, in the mistaken belief that they could contain the ambitions (Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany, Chavez in Venezuela) of chief executives who dissolved the legislatures with whom they formerly shared governing authority (Fujimori in Peru); of still others who used instruments of state power to replace neutral judicial and law enforcement officers with loyalists, assume control over the media, suppress (if not outright imprison) opposition voices, and change the rules of political competition to make themselves harder to defeat (Correa in Ecuador, Erdogan in Turkey, Mohamad in Malaysia,

Orban in Hungary, Peron in Argentina, Putin in Russia). While the leaders named here spanned continents and centuries, and employed different approaches to creeping authoritarianism, Levitsky and Ziblatt noted that each was democratically elected, then successfully undermined his democracy from within.

Building on these examples and the essential work of Linz (1978), Levitsky and Ziblatt, identified four “key indicators” of authoritarian behavior among otherwise democratic leaders: 1) rejection of (or weak commitment to) democratic rules of the game; 2) denial of the legitimacy of political opponents; 3) toleration or encouragement of violence; 4) readiness to curtail civil liberties of opponents, including the media. Political elites in the United States have employed each of these indicators in some form in recent years. Weak commitment to the democratic rules of the game is evident in voter suppression techniques like voter purges, restrictive registration rules, and reductions in voting times (*Vote Suppression*, 2020). Denial of political opponents’ legitimacy occurs when politicians portray opposition leaders as deviant (Coppins, 2018) or deny a duly-elected president’s authority to exercise constitutional powers, as the Senate Republican leadership did when refusing to consider President Barack Obama’s nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court in 2016. Former president Donald Trump encouraged political violence repeatedly during 2020’s clashes between civil rights protesters and far-right groups, reprising a practice from his 2016 campaign rallies (Cassidy, 2020). Trump also exhibited a readiness to curtail press freedom when he threatened to propose legislation that would make it easier to win libel lawsuits (Grynbaum, 2018), and voiced his opposition to a proposed merger of AT&T and Time-Warner, which owns CNN (Ioffe, 2017). For his part, former president Barack Obama targeted news organizations as he increased federal efforts to prosecute leakers (Currier, 2013).

Another dimension of creeping authoritarianism undercuts popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty holds that government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the people and exists to serve their will. Hacker and Pierson (2020) argued that plutocracy has made significant gains in displacing popular sovereignty. They use the term “democratic backsliding” to describe a collection of efforts that result in a form of minority rule in the United States. These practices, carried out by conservative politicians working in league with affluent

interests, include 1) altering election rules, 2) outsourcing political organizing to groups like the National Rifle Association and the Christian right, and 3) mobilizing the forces of white identity politics. Fueled by large quantities of donated money, these efforts produce policies that advance the interests of corporations and wealthy individuals over both the interests and the preferences of middle-and low-income Americans.

The Assault on Reason. Another type of threat American democracy faces has been termed an assault on reason (Patterson, 2019), and includes a number of practices that disrupt the rational conversation on which deliberation about politics and policy choices rest. Misinformation is one category of this assault that disrupts democratic deliberation. As noted below, the Council of Europe defines misinformation as sharing falsehoods without intending any harm (Council of Europe, 2020). Most ordinary Americans have spread this benign form of misinformation from time to time. We pass along rumors at the office or share posts on social media without verifying them. Recent political history is rife with instances of Americans simply not having their facts straight. Incorrect estimates of how much the US spends on foreign aid is a perennial example (Klein, 2013), as is the belief that violent crime is on the rise (Perfas, 2018). To the extent we believe the information we disseminate is true, we should not consider such acts malicious. However, some misinformation can prove detrimental to ourselves or others, such as the beliefs that childhood vaccines cause autism (Hochschild & Einstein, 2015). Still more damaging, especially concerning democratic deliberation, are instances of political elites intentionally spreading misinformation for the sake of promoting political or policy goals. The Council of Europe calls this *disinformation*. Stories that President Barack Obama was born outside the United States (Cheney, 2016), that the Affordable Care Act mandated end-of-life counseling for Medicare recipients, forcing the elderly to face “death panels” (Rutenberg, 2009), and that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by scientists seeking research funding (Qiu, 2018) all originated with political elites aiming to discredit opposition or distort policy discussions.

While disinformation has always played a role in American democracy, the sheer volume of disinformation and the speed at

which it spreads make this moment in time different. Patterson (2019) used an historical example to illustrate the point:

When the John Birch Society in the late 1950s began touting the notion that fluoridation was a communist plot, it took a lengthy period for the claim to be widely known. Even the John Birch Society itself operated in relative obscurity until its founder... accused President Eisenhower of being a communist stooge, at which point the news media took an interest. (p. 10)

Contemporary propagators of disinformation need not wait for journalists to notice and disseminate their claims in order to reach a wider audience. Fake news websites, talk radio, social media, and Twitter bots promulgate disinformation at speeds previously unimaginable.

Efforts to minimize the role of science in democratic debate represent another form of the assault on reason. In 1995, when the Republican Party assumed majority control of the United States House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years, one of its budget-cutting initiatives was eliminating all funding for the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). An agency of Congress, the OTA provided research services on scientific and technical issues to members, for the sake of informing lawmaking. Among the reasons offered for shuttering the OTA was its perceived bias against conservative causes, particularly President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (Keiner, 2004). The scientific community and its own scientists in NASA and the Environmental Protection Agency regularly criticized the administration of President George W. Bush for suppressing climate change studies that contradicted the administration's policy goals (Revkin, 2004). More recently, *The Washington Post* reported in January 2020 on numerous efforts by the Trump administration to undermine scientific work by government. These included delaying awards of research grants, publicly disputing published research, leaving hundreds of scientific positions in the federal service vacant, and requiring executive branch agencies to eliminate one-third of their external scientific advisory panels (Gowen et al., 2020). In each of these episodes, political elites worked to minimize or remove scientific views from policy discussions, for the apparent purpose of silencing the authoritative voices that opposed the elites' policy aims.

While none of these patterns – creeping authoritarianism, democratic backsliding, and the assault on reason – alone signals the death knell of American democracy, collectively they illustrate how American democracy does not enjoy the robust health we might prefer.

Democratic Deliberation and the Human Conversation

The political behaviors that make up the assault on reason threaten the human conversation in the United States by distorting the deliberative processes on which democratic decisions necessarily rest. The school of democratic political thought known as epistemic democracy argues that democratic approaches to collective decision-making tend to arrive at correct decisions (Schwartzberg, 2015) by relying on a “wisdom of the crowd” (Surowiecki, 2004). Correct decisions account for both the policy choices that result and the processes by which democratic systems decide public issues. Correct policy outcomes must be both “fair” and “true.” Fair decisions must support basic human rights. True decisions must increase in the overall welfare of the population (Rothstein, 2018). In this line of thinking, if public policy choices undermine human rights or leave the people worse off, they cannot be democratic, regardless of the process used to make those decisions.

In the area of democratic procedure, relying on the wisdom of the crowd must necessarily include the crowd in decision-making. Correct decisions require deliberation, a reasoned exchange of arguments among participants. True to epistemic democratic theory, the value of deliberation lies in the results it produces: “The epistemic properties of deliberation stem from the fact that it ideally allows for the identification or the construction of the best solution to a given problem or, in the terms of deliberative democrats, the triumph of the better argument” (Landemore, 2012).

The triumph of the better argument is an idea as old as democratic theory itself. Aristotle justifies deliberation by connecting it to the collected wisdom of the crowd, particularly with regard to the interplay between expert and lay opinion in public deliberations. Wilson summarizes Aristotle’s argument: “Regimes built around the rule of multitudes may better capture the benefits of expertise because the experts will be moderated by their practice in being ruled, whereas ordinary citizens will have sufficient experience in ruling to

recognize expertise when appropriate” (Wilson, 2011). In other words, deliberative democracy asks participants to *weigh expertise*. This does not mean following the word of experts blindly. It may not even mean prioritizing the word of experts. It does mean appreciating when expertise is relevant to a given problem, recognizing pertinent facts, and judging those facts’ veracity and utility for addressing an issue under deliberation. Participants need not know all that experts know, but they need to understand when circumstances call for expertise and balance the recommendations of experts against other values.

People make decisions about which candidates to vote for and which policies to support based on our understanding of the world we observe and the information we consume. When political elites deliberately distort that understanding through disinformation or suppressing scientific evidence, our capacity for reasoned debate and the triumph of the better argument suffers. Bad faith by political elites further corrupts the democratic dialog by alienating people from our elected officials (Hochschild & Einstein, 2015).

The Agenda for Education in a Democracy and the Human Conversation

Goodlad’s Vision for Democracy. While democratic participation in general requires a population with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to engage in public deliberation, fighting back against the assault on reason requires a more specialized form of that famous trio: information literacy. We believe the Agenda for Education in a Democracy can and should mount a challenge to the assault on reason by prioritizing information literacy among its goals.

Since its inception by John Goodlad and his associates, the Agenda for Education in a Democracy has concentrated the role of public education on supporting American democracy (Goodlad, 1994). According to Goodlad, “Enculturating the young into the principles of democracy is at the center of the civil society we value and at the heart of schools’ moral responsibility to society. Only through the realization of both the process and product can we secure a democratic way of life”(Senge, 2000, p. 279). Seeing public schooling as the “essential starting point for addressing the well-being of democracy” (Goodlad, 2008, p. 11), the Agenda recognizes

that the unique position schooling holds in American life affords it almost universal reach:

Public schooling is the only educative experience shared by almost every single person in a free society. No institution exists in the modern world other than our schools that can begin to fulfill this most essential and fundamental responsibility. Democracy's tomorrow depends very much on what goes on in classrooms today. (Goodlad et al., 2004, p. 50)

In the view of the AED, public schools and health of democratic society are inextricably linked in a relationship that runs in both directions. Not only does the AED aim to strengthen democracy through schooling, but the agenda also seeks to use the instruments of democracy to strengthen schooling. As Fenstermacher (1999) stated, the main aim of AED is “to strengthen the voice of democracy in the ongoing discussion of the purpose and the future of public education in the United States” (p. 5). These mutually reinforcing influences create a feedback system that highlights the interrelationship between democracy and schooling.

Although the AED does not prioritize revitalizing civics curricula, Goodlad nevertheless viewed democracy as a delicate ecosystem, requiring educated, informed, and vigilant citizens to work together and hold political leaders to account. More broadly, the vision of democracy embraced by the AED extends beyond politics or participation in civil society. Instead, it closely tracks with John Dewey's belief that democracy is both a “mode of associated living” and a “conjoint communicated experience,” (Dewey, 1966 [1916]). Goodlad built on Dewey's theories by stressing the importance of the human conversation for sustaining a quality education system and a vibrant democracy, and by assigning teachers a prominent role in both spheres.

Centering Teachers and Teacher Preparation in the Practice of Democracy. The associative nature of teachers working and living in a social and political democracy form a significant part of Goodlad's (1999) vision of the human conversation. In addition to identifying citizenship preparation as a moral responsibility for teachers, Goodlad emphasized that “teachers should participate widely in the human conversation, in doing so, provide models of good judgment and clear communication”(p. xxvi).

To serve Goodlad's vision of educators modeling democratic practice while preparing students for active participation in a social and political democracy, the AED has directed its efforts at teacher preparation programs. This proved necessary when Goodlad and his associates discovered from their countless observations of schools and of education for educators that it is rare for teacher preparation programs to provide intentional, formal emphasis on the norms and competencies necessary for democratic citizenship preparation. Instead, most teacher preparation programs focus primarily on preparing teacher candidates for the role of instructor (Fenstermacher, 1999).

As a means to the end of preparing both teachers and their students to participate in the human conversation, the Agenda for Education in a Democracy prioritizes simultaneous renewal as a "core initiative" (Fenstermacher, 1999), "supporting ongoing local renewal in educational institutions, and developing a national cadre of educational leaders who share an intellectual and moral grounding for school renewal," (The John I. Goodlad Institute for Educational Renewal, 2020, p. 1). The implications of simultaneous renewal led Goodlad, Sirotnik, and Soder to create, the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER), a nationwide coalition of school-university partnerships that work together to improve schooling.

Among the defining – and compelling – characteristics of the AED is the four-part mission (Fenstermacher, 1999; Lucero, 2011). When Goodlad and his associates set out to study teacher preparation, they discovered that most teacher preparation institutions lacked a coherent mission. According to Goodlad, "We looked in vain for a mission of teacher education. If we're preparing teachers for schools, the mission for teacher education should arise out of the mission of schooling. But when we looked for the mission of schooling, we found fragmented goals" (Novak, 1993, p. 3). The four-part mission corrects this omission, by specifying worthy ends for schooling: 1) to facilitate the critical cultivation of the young into a social and political democracy (enculturation); 2) to provide all children and youth disciplined encounters with all the subject matters of the human conversation, and by identifying the teaching practices essential to attaining those ends (access to knowledge/equity and excellence); 3) to engage in pedagogical practices that forge a caring and effective connection between teacher and student (nurturing pedagogy); and 4)

to exercise responsible stewardship of schools (stewardship). Collectively, these four parts of the mission situate teaching as an inherently moral activity (Fenstermacher, 1999).

To address all of the aforementioned aims of democratic education and simultaneous renewal, the Agenda for Education in a Democracy adopted a tripartite structure that unites the dominant stakeholders in teacher preparation: schools of education, university faculty in the arts and sciences, and PK-12 schools. Goodlad formed this tripartite partnership to help engage these participants in teacher education in the Agenda and hold them responsible for its advancement.

From Teacher Candidates to Intellectual Leaders. Thus far, this overview of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy has focused on the infrastructure and goals the Agenda uses to advance its version of democratic schooling. The Agenda also concerns itself with the intellectual growth of teacher candidates and the academic rigor needed to advance their participation in the human conversation. These issues are addressed directly in the Postulates. By way of explanation, Goodlad and his associates in the NNER developed a framework of Postulates in order to identify a set of organizational conditions against which to evaluate renewal efforts. Numbering twenty in all, the postulates cover every aspect of the Agenda for Education in a democracy, and have “helped to reframe the conversation about teacher education” (Paufler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2016).

Postulates Seven and Eight directly attend to the academic side of the Agenda by addressing skills of literacy, critical thinking, and inquiry. Postulate Seven reads, “Programs for the education of educators, whether elementary or secondary, must carry the responsibility to ensure that all candidates progressing through them possess or acquire the literacy and critical-thinking abilities associated with the concept of an educated person.” Postulate Eight requires “Programs for the education of educators must provide extensive opportunities for future teachers to move beyond being students of organized knowledge to become teachers who inquire into both knowledge and its teaching.” (Goodlad, 1994). Together, these Postulates establish the expectations that teachers lead intellectually rich lives. However, the Postulates do not specifically address the

information literacy skills called for in contemporary American democracy.

To date, the Agenda for Education in a Democracy has done commendable work in delivering on the “fair” and “true” sides of the epistemic democracy model, through its emphasis on enculturation, equality, and inclusion, as well as its conception of teaching as an inherently moral activity. When it comes to the deliberative aspect of democracy, we believe the AED has moved only partway toward the goal of preparing teachers for democratic deliberation. Such deliberation should benefit more directly from the expertise of teachers. Well-prepared teachers bring both subject matter proficiency and skill at judging the veracity and utility of information to the task of democratic deliberation. As such, teachers can and should serve as intellectual leaders in the human conversation.

Since the AED funnels much of its work through teacher preparation programs, schools of education should supplement the work of faculty in the arts and sciences with the work of faculty in academic libraries. Librarians share the AED’s commitment to democratic practice and possess the requisite knowledge and skills to help teacher candidates participate in the necessary work of combatting the assault on reason that is currently denigrating public debate.

We are not alone in calling for reform of the Agenda. Recent requests from members of the NNER invite an examination and renewal of the four-part mission and Twenty Postulates. Years of reductionist federal and state policies related to standardized testing and accountability led Paufler and Amrein-Beardsley (2016) to call for a re-examination of the Twenty Postulates. Michelli and colleagues (2018), also reminded us of our moral obligations as educators in a democracy and urged transforming the NNER into a more activist organization.

Natural Allies: Librarians, the AED, and the Human Conversation

The need for educators in a contemporary United States democracy to be information literate should seem obvious. Providing pre-service teachers with the necessary skills, however, is not something that faculty in colleges and schools of education and the arts and sciences are necessarily equipped to do. Academic librarians can, however,

help college students become more savvy information consumers. Moreover, academic librarians are already committed to the work of the AED, whether they realize it or not.

Libraries and American Democracy. Libraries have long associated themselves with democratic values. Benjamin Franklin, often credited with establishing the first public library in Britain's North American colonies (Free Library of Philadelphia, 2020), believed education should be available to all, not just the wealthy, and could promote social mobility (Tyack, 1966). In this sense, libraries serve as great equalizers within communities by offering access to books, databases, computers, media, and user spaces, regardless of the patron's financial or class status. As PK-12 and higher educational institutions increasingly expect student access not only to computers, but also to reliable internet connections, libraries attempt to fill this need, as well. In recent years, libraries' circulating resources have expanded to include technology tools such as devices and mobile hotspots. This is particularly important in rural communities, where distances may be a barrier (Public Library Association, 2021). In short, libraries provide near-universal access, along with a welcoming climate, and an infusion of diversity (Brimhall-Vargas, 2015). More than buildings or even online warehouses of information, libraries are central to any institution of learning.

Democratic deliberation relies on the free exchange of information between groups of people, both small and large (Jaeger & Burnett, 2005). Libraries serve the human conversation by providing the access to knowledge and the exchange of information that make democratic conversation work. Indeed, Sturges (2017) connected the democratic role of libraries to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Rights. Article 19 states "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to *seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media* and regardless of frontiers" [emphasis added]. The direct reference to the freedom to seek and receive information and ideas grounds the social role of libraries to democratic activity.

Since the assault on reason has entered American political discourse, librarians (P-12, public, and academic) have recognized the increased need for access to credible information, as well as the enhanced skill needed to evaluate and weed out misinformation. But

misinformation and the relegation of science are not the only contemporary problems librarians are poised to address. Many individuals suffer from a form of information overload. As explained by Kurelovic and associates (2016), information overload through “digital technologies and digital media.....can decrease the attention span, making thinking, memorizing, and learning more difficult, which can lead to stress and mental exhaustion” (p. 906). This overload can be caused by too many resources, as well as differences in the reliability of information. The Council of Europe, an international human rights organization, coined the term “information disorder,” to describe the latter phenomenon, identifying three different types: 1) Mis-information means sharing false information without intent to harm; 2) Dis-information means sharing false information knowing that it will cause harm; and 3) Mal-information means sharing genuine information to cause harm, often by moving private information into the public sphere (Council of Europe, 2020). Librarians teach information literacy strategies to combat information overload and all forms of information disorder. Historically, media specialists have been central to teaching PK-12 students how to evaluate resources. All pre-service teachers should learn to use this skill effectively, as well.

Academic Libraries and Teacher Preparation. A rigorous effort to identify needs and objectives underpins the work of teaching information literacy. The American Library Association (ALA) created Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education to assess the skills of the “information literate individual” and continue the work that was being done at the PK-12 level (American Library Association, 2020). The ALA updated these standards as the internet expanded the availability of information. Subsequently, in 2016, the ALA’s Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Division’s Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education replaced the Standards and provided a set of six frames and related knowledge practices: 1) Authority is Constructed and Contextual; 2) Information Creation as a Process; 3) Information Has Value 4) Research as Inquiry; 5) Scholarship as Conversation; 6) Searching as Strategic Exploration. (*American Library Association, 2020*). This framework provides guidance for librarians and teaching faculty – who ACRL refers to as *partners on campus* we

would note – to adapt to their own needs, including designing learning outcomes.

Let us make clear, skills related to information literacy must be taught. Too often faculty ascribe to their students a higher level of information literacy ability than they possess. Prensky (2001) introduced the term “digital native” to describe students who are “native speakers” of the digital language of the internet, computers, mobile phones, and video gaming. While contemporary students may be considered digital natives, their proficiency on a phone does not directly transfer to proficiency in finding quality information. Students may be digital natives to social media, but no one is born knowing how to decipher fact from fiction.

To address students’ innate shortcomings, librarians have offered information literacy sessions, and many faculty take advantage of a one-shot library instruction sessions. While it is important that all university students receive this instruction, Earp (2009) found it essential for teacher education students in particular, who must not only be information literate themselves, but also be able to teach information literacy in their PK-12 classrooms to help their students possess this skill set.

Library-faculty collaborations offer one way to achieve these instructional goals. Winner (1998) suggested that simply working with faculty is not enough; successful collaboration requires the interaction between librarians and faculty in all elements of curriculum planning (Winner, 1998). Still, Winner (1998) acknowledged the difficulties with such collaboration, noting there is still “no widespread acceptance of the librarian’s role in curriculum planning and course-integrated instruction. Teaching faculties are appreciative of the support given by librarians; however, librarians are not universally recognized as playing an integral role in course planning and teaching” (Winner, 1998, p. 25). For library-faculty collaboration to work, teaching faculty should involve librarians in assignment design at minimum. To integrate information literacy into teacher preparation most fully, we believe the collaboration should involve librarians in curricular design and program renewal. We further believe librarians would welcome the invitation.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that contemporary circumstances call for a revision to the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. While the AED has long advocated for schools as democratic spaces and for teacher preparation to provide both curricular and democratic competencies, the political culture of the United States has created a more acute need for teachers to develop advanced capacities in information literacy. Information overload, misinformation, disinformation, and a diminished role for science in policymaking discussions combine to make mastery over information more necessary to democracy in the United States than was previously true. Thus, we recommend expanding the Agenda for Education in a Democracy to include librarians among its partners. Bringing librarians to the table benefits not only classroom instruction for pre-service teachers but can lead to new directions in program renewal at the curricular level. Making information literacy, and research generally, a more prominent part of the AED culture enriches the overall program and addresses the seemingly endless cries for more academic rigor in teacher preparation programs.

Public education itself stands to gain from this change in two significant ways. First, more focused instruction in information literacy for teacher candidates will positively redound to their future students. Sharing the burden of information instruction with P-12 media specialists can only reinforce the reach and importance of this work. Second, teachers themselves will be better equipped to participate in the human conversation, especially when it comes to countering the assault on reason. The Agenda for Education in a Democracy expects teachers to be active participants in democratic communities, whether those communities exist inside or outside of school. In the current political climate, participation may not be enough, though. Democracy in the United States needs a new cadre of leaders who are well-informed, articulate, and experienced at calling out nonsense when they see it. When teachers fulfill this role, they elevate the quality of democratic discourse and cement the importance of schools to sustaining democratic institutions.

To honor Goodlad's devotion to the human conversation and critical inquiry, and to advance the Agenda for Education in a Democracy, we argue for a more prominent space in the Agenda for librarians. Specifically, we propose that the tripartite be revised to

include librarians. Including PK-12 media specialists, university librarians, and community (public) librarians, the librarian tripartite would bridge PK-12 schools, schools of education, the arts and sciences, and communities in acquiring essential information literacy skills, as well as contribute to the process of simultaneous renewal of schools and universities.

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Cross-College Collaboration and Successful Civic Engagement Through On-Demand Digital Content

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Abstract¹

Wyoming's fiscal environment and COVID-19 have placed great pressure on Wyoming's education system, but also have created great opportunity to forge new relationships to bridge long-standing silos at all levels of education in the state. This case study highlights the innovative collaboration between the University of Wyoming Malcolm Wallop Civic Engagement Program (located in the College of Arts and Sciences) and the College of Education Trustees Education Initiative that has produced a K-12 virtual curriculum catalog of resources available free of charge for all of Wyoming's social studies teachers. This project embraces the challenge to bring a richer understanding and explanation of controversial content to the forefront of the classroom in meaningful, civil, and productive ways, making it of interest to educators from across the primary, secondary, and higher education spectrum, demonstrating how higher education can be contributing, meaningful, and relevant partners in invigorating K-12 education.

Keywords: *civic engagement, innovative collaboration, controversial content*

Amid the pandemic and significant economic pressure applied by forces beyond our state, a central problem confronting Wyoming educators is that the body of knowledge and expertise at the University of Wyoming and Wyoming's community colleges does not get disseminated beyond our campuses, out into the state. This challenge can be addressed by leveraging effective partnerships that deliver the high-quality content

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and expertise available at our institutions of higher education to Wyoming's K-12 classrooms scattered across the state. Noted researcher and education reform advocate John Goodlad saw the relationship between colleges of arts and sciences and colleges of education as vital in delivering comprehensive teacher training in content and pedagogical areas (Goodlad, 1999a). Goodlad's valuable work led to the founding of the Wyoming School-University Partnership, as one of the foundational settings of the National Network for Educational Renewal (Goodlad, 1999b). Building on the expertise from the College of Arts and Sciences' (A&S) Wallop Civic Engagement Program and the College of Education's Trustees Education Initiative (TEI), the Malcolm Wallop Civic Engagement K-12 Curriculum Project was launched to address the need for Wyoming's institutions of higher education to be contributing, meaningful, and relevant partners in K-12 social studies education (See Paufler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2016).

Civic engagement occurs when institutions of higher education act to improve the quality of life of our communities – e.g., teachers and students – by thoughtful development and application of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to contribute to healthy, functional, democratic society (see Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi). Working together, the Wallop Civic Engagement Program and Trustees Education Initiative have produced a project critical to the development of responsible citizenry while modeling the best practices of inter-departmental/interagency “symbiotic partnership” (Goodlad, 1999a). The project explores both the importance of bringing controversial content to the forefront of the classroom, in meaningful, civil, and productive ways and accomplishing this through statewide partnerships, at all levels of our educational system. This article begins by situating this project within the University's public land-grant mission and broad commitment to civic and community engagement. Throughout the discussion, key Agenda for Education in Democracy values emerge. The Wallop partnership model drives these values and accepts the significant challenge to make the public school setting the starting point for addressing the welfare of our nation (Goodlad, 2008; Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley & Goodlad, 2004).

In civic education, we need structures and processes that bridge long-standing silos within educational institutions. The Wallop-TEI collaboration does this through development of mutually beneficial

partnerships with stakeholders at all levels of education. This is a commitment to the generation, exchange, and application of mutually beneficial and socially useful knowledge and practices developed through active partnerships between the academy and the community. Thus, by design, this is a commitment to programs rooted in scholarship and evidence-based practices, addressing larger societal issues as well as projects that link campus teaching, learning, and research to civic responsibility and community well-being (Campus Compact, 2000; Dunifon, Duttweiler, Pillemer, Tobias & Trochim, 2004; Reason and Bradbury, 2008).

Defining the role of the Wyoming Land-Grant in Civic Education

The Malcolm Wallop Civic Engagement Program-Trustees Education Initiative (TEI) collaboration aligns with UW's 2017 strategic plan *Breaking Through 2017-2022: A Strategic Plan for the University of Wyoming*, which prioritized the relationship between the University and Wyoming communities. The plan re-envisioned the University's land-grant mission and service to communities. Subsequently, our project adopted the Carnegie definition of "community engagement," to shape our work with K-12 educators, recognizing the work between university faculty with those of the public and private sectors necessary to accomplish the University's core mission to "prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good" (Carnegie Foundation, 2020, p. 1). In the 1990s, Carnegie's emphasis on 'community-engaged' institutions coincided with forums such as the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, work of the newly formed Campus Compact emphasizing the public purpose of higher education and benchmarks for democratic partnerships, and the focus on community engagement within the American Association of Land Grant Universities (APLU). They each share the conviction that public institutions should be responsive to the needs of today's and tomorrow's students, and one which forms partnerships with communities to put knowledge and skills to work to address today's most critical problems (APLU, n.d.; Boyer, 1996; Campus Compact, 2000; Campus Compact, n.d.; Carnegie

Foundation, 2020; Kellogg Commission, 1999). As Wyoming's only four-year public university, UW is therefore uniquely positioned to serve the state in new and innovative ways.

The Wallop Civic Engagement Program takes seriously the broad responsibility to be of service to our constituents. This civic engagement partnership is committed to the generation, exchange, and application of mutually beneficial and socially useful knowledge and practices developed through active partnerships between the academy and the community. Thus, by design this is a commitment to programs rooted in scholarship and evidence-based practices addressing larger societal issues as well as projects that link campus teaching and learning to civic responsibility and community well-being (Campus Compact, 2000; Dunifon, Duttweiler, Pillemer, Tobias & Trochim, 2004).

Even amidst the dual challenge of economic crisis and viral pandemic, the University is renewing efforts to serve as an entrepreneurial engine to address Wyoming needs. Yet tough financial circumstances in Wyoming predated the COVID-19 pandemic and will last beyond its end. Thus, the virtual engagement elements inherent to the Wallop K-12 program design will remain an increasingly important contribution to public education (from both fiscal and access perspectives), given this stark financial reality at all education levels. The Wallop K-12 program embraces this new opportunity to demonstrate how higher education can reinvigorate many of the goals of civic engagement approaches and the values the Agenda for Education in a Democracy that support and shape public education positively.

Seizing the Virtual Opportunity Amidst COVID-19

Prior to the pandemic, civic engagement programs and in-person presentations in schools had been limited by geography, funding, and time, while their positive impact was limited to the audience at hand. The COVID-19 pandemic, and cancelation of face-to-face engagement programs, required rethinking the scope and design of the project, and how best to serve our constituency in new and enterprising ways. After canceling public programs and school visits due to public health policy in spring 2020, discussions with teachers revealed that a digital format for our programs could address

immediate and long-term needs, as it provided a way to deepen the partnership with the education community. The groundwork was laid for the discussion of a more ambitious K-12 project in the virtual catalog project we see today. The project's focus developed in three stages: 1) develop objective(s) and link(s) to the audience intended to serve, 2) work with campus and community partners throughout the planning process, and 3) build in an evaluation and assessment plan from the start.

1. Be Clear about Objectives and Link Purpose to the Audience Intended to Serve

The decision to put together virtual public programs came from discussions with high school partners to ascertain their needs. The onset of COVID-19 and related behavioral changes were the context needed to shift our mindset and resources toward virtual programming that would allow us to use available technology to reach the statewide K-12 audience for the first time. The Zoom sessions were successful within their limited scope, but the wider takeaway was the realization that an expansion of our focus would allow an innovative way to reach *all* K-12 social studies classes across the state with virtual content. While teachers were scrambling for virtual content, UW faculty newly comfortable with online platforms and tools such as Zoom and VidGrid due to the University's shift to fully online instruction were in position to address the need directly. The faculty could utilize this technology to reach teachers and their students across the state, on an unprecedented scale, for the first time.

In August 2020, a wide invitation to participate went out to UW faculty, Wyoming community college faculty, and other subject matter experts, to invite topics that bring the relevant and necessary social and political inquiry and conversations to the forefront of our K-12 classrooms. In the Wallop K-12 Project, the recruited faculty compose content within a specified format including a brief video recording on the topic of roughly fifteen minutes in length. They introduce the topic generally, then dive into an interesting facet of it that would not typically be covered in a survey-style textbook. The recordings end with thought-provoking questions that classes can follow up on. Each video is accompanied by a resource guide, including links to (additional) related content, as well as discussion questions for teachers to consider for class discussion.

This digital content was organized to form an online catalog such that teachers can easily find content tied to Wyoming’s state content and performance standards. The catalog is available through WyoLearn², the public-facing component of UW’s Canvas learning management system. Classroom teachers make use of the catalog as best suits their needs by downloading, streaming, or linking to our content. Furthermore, to complete the engagement cycle, they can schedule a synchronous discussion with the faculty member after their class uses the videos/resource guides. In this way, the video/resource guide becomes a priming event for the discussion with the faculty member and can lead to guest lectures and spur further content development. The launch of the catalog on December 15, 2020, included twenty video/resource topics, created by a dozen faculty and other experts from the first cohort. Topics ranging from the Amazon Rainforest to Wyoming’s indigenous tribes offer resources with both depth and breadth to enrich the state’s social studies classrooms. Early feedback from teachers reveals a mix of encouragement and requests for specific content.

The Wallop K-12 program recruited a second cohort of faculty for new content production that was made available in March 2021. A focus group of teachers was recruited to provide feedback on the content of the virtual catalog. Within the catalog itself, feedback is sought from teachers about the projects they used, how they used it, and what additions they would like to see. In summer 2021, there will be a faculty-teacher professional development workshop to further shape content and formal and informal delivery structures in the evolving design of the partnership.

The Wallop-TEI partnership remains committed to modeling the fundamental democratic process of deliberation of controversial topics (Goodlad, 2008). While not every topic and content piece created through the Wallop project “begs” or “shouts” controversy, the spirit behind the Wallop K-12 project and broader Wallop Civic Engagement Program – to drive thought, conversation, and action on topics crucial to our community and humanity – fosters critical thinking and civil discourse, often challenging the status quo. Bringing awareness and richer discussion and understanding of various “controversial” topics in catalog resource packages such as

² See for more information: <https://uwyo3.catalog.instructure.com/>.

“History of Elections Hacking,” “Coca, Culture, and War on Drugs in Bolivia,” and “Free Speech for Students,” among others, are critical to the preparation of our students to become members of healthy communities. With these goals in mind, the Wallop K-12 project provides teachers with evidence-based materials and some guidance through suggested questions and activities, but also the freedom to use the resources as they see fit, and furthermore, a process to influence how the project evolves (See Dunifon, Duttweiler, Pillemer, Tobias & Trochim, 2004; Reason and Bradbury, 2008).

To date, the project rekindled and strengthened relationships between postsecondary and K-12 educators and opened a broader dialogue and network on how to collaborate to better serve the needs of our youth. By tailoring content offerings to the state’s curricular needs and encouraging both synchronous and asynchronous dialog on those topics, the project directly contributes to the ongoing dialog of civic society and directly supports the curricular needs of Wyoming’s K-12 social studies classrooms.

2. Building a Collaborative Partnership by Working with Campus and Community Partners

The Wallop partnership with TEI was integral to creating a product that was not only more accessible to teachers but also more relevant to their curricula. Our cross-campus partnership achieved these valuable outcomes by leveraging TEI’s established statewide relationships with educational stakeholders, including the Wyoming School-University Partnership, to provide feedback during developmental stages and also to introduce the project to the state during its public launch (Wyoming School-University Partnership, n.d.).

Early discussions between the Wallop team and TEI revealed the importance of crafting the content catalog in such a way that it addressed the Wyoming Social Studies Content and Performance Standards, to maximize its utility to our audience of teachers. Subsequent conversations with College of Education teaching faculty led to their key inclusion in the partnership. From that point forward, the production of videos and resource guides produced by content experts included consultation with UW’s faculty on Wyoming social studies standards.

Each project was designed to fit the content expertise of the faculty to one (or more) of the six broad social studies topics identified in the state standards³, established by the Wyoming Department of Education:

- 1) Citizenship (Government and Democracy)
- 2) Culture and Cultural Diversity
- 3) Production, Distribution, and Consumption (Economics)
- 4) Time, Continuity, and Change (History)
- 5) People, Places, and Environments (Geography)
- 6) Technology, Literacy, and Global Connections

The curricular framework adopted in sessions with faculty presenters, along with the evolving content of teacher resource guides, help assure integration of content into classrooms and ongoing plans. To date, two of the most innovative components of the project include: 1) the specific link of video projects to Wyoming social studies standards – thus better assuring their utility and user friendliness for Wyoming teachers, and 2) the “Ask Me Anything” guest lecture opportunities via Zoom that provide that ‘in-person’ excitement that we experience with face-to-face presentation. In a time where human contact is sparse and restricted, this live component lends an element of vibrant humanity, even as we expand our interconnectedness through technology. Once we leave the COVID context, it continues to provide an effective way to engage with stakeholders across the state.

With the help of TEI partners, the project hosted a wider range of discussions with external stakeholders for input as well as to ask for assistance in the initial rollout of the virtual catalog content – an important step to widen adoption of the resource materials. Consultations included presentations to principal and teacher groups, a breakout session at Wyoming’s Educational Innovation Conference, and meetings with various divisions of the Wyoming Department of Education, including their social studies and professional development teams. Feedback from these discussions was sought and

³ See for more information: Wyoming State Board of Education, 2018, Wyoming Social Studies Content and Performance Standards, available: https://1ddlxtt2jowkvs672myo6z14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Social-Studies-Standards-20142018-additions_FINAL.pdf.

these networks were used once the project went live. These connections were essential to engage with education stakeholders to inform them of the forthcoming project as well as to seek feedback on the design of these projects. In the first three months, educators from 13 of Wyoming's 23 counties have accessed the catalog, with over 1,500 page views to date. Those encouraging usage metrics are an indication that this project is a step toward alleviating the curricular development and delivery strain caused by the shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid instruction. Furthermore, the Wallop project offers access to an evidenced-based digital alternative to the increasingly acrimonious content available via other public media, be it social media or news organization.

The commitment to collaboration and recognition that we must operate in a complementary fashion with the public education system at all levels are important elements of the project's approach, but they are also practical necessities in working with autonomous local school districts. An evidence-based approach, adopted in the land-grant model, means the commitment to honest and straightforward information and transparency of project design. We believe the resources provided and partnership commitment to cultivate them will nurture growth and promotion of democratic thought in the classroom, by honing critical inquiry and judgement in students across our state (Goodlad et al., 2004). This is in alignment with the NNER mission to make sure the nation's young have the skills and knowledge needed for effective participation in their democracy and access to understandings and skills to lead satisfying and responsible lives (National Network for Educational Renewal, n.d.). It is not the charge, nor intent of the Wallop Civic Engagement K-12 Project to replace school district autonomy or to replace K-12 leadership and structure, quite the contrary. UW's commitment to the land-grant mission, when viewed through the lens of the reciprocal partnerships described in the Carnegie model and Kellogg Commission report, reflects its distinctive ability to support public education at all levels throughout the state by making widely accessible the university's instructional and research expertise.

Now, more than ever, in light of priority shifts in the education system and with the pandemic impacting how and what we provide in the classroom, Wallop and TEI are getting the information to in-

service teachers. The Wallop and TEI collaboration reinvigorates the focus on civic engagement and democratic purpose with a commitment to bring content experts directly to teachers and their students across the state of Wyoming, while also seeking and building upon the feedback received from those teachers and students. The Wallop and TEI approach has developed a set of sustainable relationships to assist teachers through online social studies content.

3. Building an Evaluation and Assessment Plan from the Start

Throughout the design of this project, the feedback received has improved the content and focus of the K-12 content materials. Learning from the land-grant and other established civic engagement models such as Campus Compact, we also have learned the importance of staying flexible, learning and adapting as we build this program, and to make adjustments accordingly. As a first step, informal discussions with teachers provided early feedback that shaped initial project design. A survey tool was built into the WyoLearn Canvas learning management system (e.g., mechanisms to ascertain participant and organizer experiences, the impact of outputs, etc.).

The K-12 project is an ongoing and iterative process that allows us to learn and adapt from past experiences; past and current activities will inform future activities. Regular evaluation and assessment help to build more sustainable programs, which “works best” when evaluation is integrated into daily operations and long-term objects and becomes a tool to improve the partnership rather than simply a report on its successes and failures (Campus Compact, 2000, p.34).

We recognize that assessment for classroom learning is essential for both the student and the teacher. Assessment allows teachers to ensure students are meeting learning goals and showing growth and improvement. A commitment to assessment for learning means the information received through this evaluation is used to mold both teaching and learning. The overarching goal of assessment in this project will be to see how the project impacts student outcomes relative to the learning goals set by the teacher and to use methods of examining and improving student learning (Black and William, 1998; Popham, 2008). This assessment strategy will include both qualitative and quantitative methods of assessing a student’s learning

progression and include surveys and focus group discussions with teachers (See Waters and Anderson-Lain, 2014).

The Wallop Team launched a Qualtrics survey in March 2021 that has gone to all social studies teachers in the state of Wyoming to assess their use of virtual resources during the COVID pandemic and plans for ongoing use in the classroom. The planned summer 2021 teacher professional development workshop provides additional opportunities to evaluate and assess the Wallop-TEI collaboration model.

TEI is measuring teacher effectiveness and the engagements between teachers and students through implementation of the Common Indicators System, an assessment tool rigorously developed by the Deans for Impact and its member teacher preparation programs (Deans for Impact, n.d.). The Wallop team and TEI are exploring ways to integrate the Teacher Beliefs and Mindsets Survey (TBMS) and Beginning Teacher Survey (BTS) into the Wallop program, for continued tailoring of the Wallop content to teacher and pre-service teacher needs (Deans for Impact, 2019).

Discussion and Conclusion

The Wallop-TEI partnership has adopted a participatory action research (PAR) approach to bridge educational silos to meet Wyoming teachers' needs in social science education. This approach emphasizes the role of communities of inquiry – in this case higher education professionals in partnership with Wyoming teachers – working collaboratively and through reflection, trying to understand and change the world. Through this collaboration we address questions and issues in civic education that are significant for partners at all levels of education. Particularly through the relationships we will continue to build in the summer 2021 teacher workshop, we will adopt the PAR approach which unites action focusing on content and sound pedagogy with research grounded in building a community of inquiry and reflective project evaluation to better meet the goals of civics education (see Reason and Bradbury, 2008)

The Wallop-TEI collaboration has taken the necessary first steps to address needed change in social science education. First, we designed the project to focus on the central role that higher education should play in our society to address the public good. Recognizing

the instrumental role of our K-12 teachers in this civic engagement and development, we are creating and delivering content that fosters a classroom where students and teachers “form relationships, enter the human conversation, and exercise responsibilities as engaged citizens” (Pickett & Kleinsasser, 2016, p. 185). Second, we followed best practices in design of outreach and engagement projects that emphasize that effective project outcomes require partnership with a varied set of community stakeholders. COVID-19 proved to be the galvanizing situation to make these goals become realities in our K-12 project.

Through its shared goals, complementary strengths, and commitment to best practices, the Wallop-TEI collaborative launched a successful project bringing much needed, accessible social studies content to K-12 teachers that speaks directly to their needs. There may be many instances where higher education failed to provide a service to the expectations of the communities it shares, but the Wallop-TEI partnership is one example of how a university-driven partnership that involves the breadth of necessary education stakeholders from the start can succeed. The K-12 project recognizes the reciprocal relationship between good schools and good teacher preparation and takes as one of its central purposes the charge/responsibility of flagship/land grant/community college missions to include/continue/further arts & letters education through accessible, responsive, and equitable content development and delivery that involves teachers in this work. At the university level, this means fostering the kind of collaboration at UW between the College of Arts & Sciences and College of Education embodied in this project. This collaboration acknowledges the important point raised by John Goodlad throughout his career of the shared responsibility for good teacher training between the content education primarily provided by departments in the College of Arts & Sciences and the professional training teachers receive from the College of Education (See Tell, 1999).

But we are not done, and more work is needed to deepen the partnership across all levels of education. The focus on statewide distribution of virtual content reflects the commitment to broaden exposure to relevant content that previously had not been accessible to students/educators/schools/communities, due to geographical and (socio)economical limitations. Equality and equity in access were

always challenges in our civic engagement efforts. Practical budget realities make this model the way we maintain access in the most affordable and effective way. The WyoLearn platform makes our materials much more accessible, but it is an imperfect vehicle – as it was never designed to function as a content catalog. We will continue to expand format and access options, and we will listen specifically to the needs of our constituents. Partnering with teachers is the best way for us to reach previously underserved populations (in this case, students, more generally). The solution is to build upon faculty-teacher relationships that we develop in order to continue to challenge the status quo in creating and delivering engaging, thought-provoking content in appropriate ways for our K-12 students and educators.

How can we continue to expand the content and the reach of the project? We will broaden our community of inquiry by deepening relationships with teachers (e.g., build this into our summer teacher professional development workshop) and continue to work with more and more districts and explore evolution beyond junior high and high school levels. There are currently requests from both within higher education and from our K-12 partners to expand our catalog beyond social studies to address other state content and performance standards – such as language arts, and science. These requests are encouraging, yet development of the catalog involves continuation of consultation and partnerships with stakeholders across the state. By building on the foundation laid by the Wallop-TEI partnership, we can bring new members and guests into the conversation which will continue to widen the scope and impact of collaboration and civic engagement in Wyoming education.

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The Public Purposes of Schooling in the Age of Coronavirus and Beyond

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Abstract

Though public education generally receives a great deal of support in the U.S., a gap persists in the public understanding of the contested nature and competing aims of schooling. Some of these have existed since the beginning of the modern system of public education in the United States, but current debates about P-12 schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic have brought forth new tensions. This article presents ten such public purposes of schooling, with specific examples, in order to surface these competing aims of schooling as important decisions are made during and in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Keywords: *educating in a pandemic, purposes of school*

As I write this, many communities around the United States continue to struggle with multiple dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the dilemmas surrounding schools and students are some of the most difficult to resolve. If the only consideration were halting the spread of the disease, closing school facilities and educating every student remotely would undoubtedly be the most reasonable approach. However, from a broader public health perspective that recognizes public schools as the place where many children receive social services, shutting school buildings means that some students do not have their critical needs met. A similar conflict arises in the push to reopen schools, in that the same marginalized students who are least likely to have access to the secure housing, technology, and network access needed for doing school remotely are also at highest risk of having their health, and that of their families, impacted by COVID-19 (Boserup et al., 2020; Gaynor & Wilson, 2020).

These competing aims are in tension right now in school districts all over the country, but the larger point I wish to make here is that there are even more public purposes of schooling to consider, many of which have been in opposition since the creation of public education in the United States over 150 years ago. Though public education generally receives a great deal of support (e.g. Phi Delta Kappan, 2020), a gap persists in the public understanding of the contested nature and competing aims of schooling. The purpose of this article is to clearly enumerate these purposes to better understand how and why they have remained in tension for so long.

I have listed ten such public purposes of education here, though of course there is no definitive list. I have developed these categories over the past eight years teaching a course at Montclair State University in New Jersey titled, “The Public Purposes of Education,” which is based on John Goodlad’s work and the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (Goodlad et al., 2004). Along with this list, I have provided some examples of features of schooling that align with each purpose. I think of these purposes like multiple streams feeding into a larger river, a metaphor proposed by education historian Herbert Kliebard (1995) as an alternative to that of the pendulum swing of curriculum. Over the history of U.S. schools, one can see how some of these streams have changed from trickling rivulets, to rushing currents, and back again to gentle creeks. Pick any school issue that is a source of contemporary debate, and you will find two or more of these goals in tension with one another:

1. Academic: Schools maintain academic traditions of intellectual development

This is what most people think about when the topic of schooling arises. School is not only an important place where knowledge and skills are acquired, but also where students are expected to develop the intellectual capabilities to deploy these hard-won secrets of nature and humanity to current concerns and pressing problems of the future.

Much of the conversation around pivoting to online education during the coronavirus pandemic is dominated by academic goals of schooling, as exemplified by concern about “learning loss,” (Ewing, 2020; Kuhfeld et al., 2020). For those who conceive of learning

simply as knowledge acquisition, moving schooling to a virtual or online format is seen as a way to just change the delivery mechanism.

Examples: literacy and mathematics instruction, standardized testing, textbooks and online resources, focus on college admission

2. Child welfare: Schools ensure children have their physical and emotional needs met, and remain free from abuse and neglect

Schools form part of the largest social safety net in the U.S. and remain a place where many students still get a significant amount of their daily nutrition. They are also a place where (uniformly overworked) counselors, social workers, and psychologists are able to interact with students and address a wide range of needs, including crisis and trauma.

A related aspect of child welfare is adequately meeting educational needs related to student disabilities. In the U.S., the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) helps scaffold the services schools are meant to provide to students that mitigate barriers to learning and prevent the exclusion of students from educational programming.

Examples: crisis counselors, school lunch and breakfast programs, anti-bullying efforts, sports physicals, individual educational plans (IEPs), school nurses, metal detectors, school security officers

3. Academic: Schools maintain academic traditions of intellectual development

Schools support multiple forms of child development, including language, physical health, social engagement, and cognitive development. In addition to what they learn at home, schools are where children learn information about nutrition and physical health that will last a lifetime. Just like schools might be the only place where some students can be sure to get a daily meal, they may also provide the only time for students to engage in sustained physical activity — there is a reason physical education class continues to exist in the digital age. Schools also help to support language development, both for students' first language as well as for those students learning English as an additional language.

Socially, schools are also a place where children can build safe and healthy interactions with adults and peers. Crucially, this involves play, and schools support play by ensuring it occurs in relatively bounded and safe environments.

Examples: provision of a supportive and structured environment, playgrounds and recess, English as a second language support, scoliosis screenings, development of self-regulation skills, restorative justice circles

4. Economic preparation: Schools provide training that leads to productivity in business and industry

Most people seem to understand that schools aim to prepare people to enter the world of work. Some ways to do this align with the academic aims of schooling, but the world of business has been quite clear that they value other specific skills as well, such as creativity, collaboration, and technological proficiency (Larson & Miller, 2011).

Schools also directly support entry into the workforce through technical training, vocational education, and internship programs for upper-level high school students.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the critique of public schools that highlights how schooling replicates the structure of a factory and governs students' bodies (Kliebard, 1995; Popkewitz, 1998; Sleeter, 2015). From this perspective, schooling is a means to prepare students for experiencing the world of work through daily habituation to systems of occupational management.

Examples: keyboarding class, senior internships, career days, vocational education, school bells, permission to use the restroom

5. Workforce support: Schools serve a critical function in the modern economy

As safe places where children can be during the day, schools essentially provide daycare for children, which allows parents and guardians to be more productive members of the workforce. Angus and Mirel (1993) termed this the "custodial" function of schools. Many schools also offer before and after school care for this reason. In a time when many parents are working from home while simultaneously caring for children who attend school remotely, this purpose of schooling is keenly felt.

Additionally, schools help to keep unemployment rates lower by removing teenagers from the full-time workforce for most of the year, except in the summer when they are needed. Further, schools provide jobs for many in the middle-class: the National Center for Education Statistics (2020) estimated that over 3.5 million people are categorized as educators, and this number does not include all of the people who provide services like cooking, cleaning, and maintenance for schools. It also does not include the vast number of workers in other fields such as those who produce educational materials like textbooks and tests, or people like me in higher education whose work centers on schools and learning.

Examples: compulsory schooling; summer vacation; the workforce of Pearson, ETS, and the College Board; public approval of school budgets in elections

6. Sustaining culture: Schools sustain cultural identities and traditions, and aim to transmit them from one generation to the next

Cultural traditions embody aspects of what is considered “normal” and “right” within any social system, and schools are no exception (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Spindler, 1963). For some people, this cultural function of schooling is nearly invisible, while for others it is a dominating feature that must be navigated constantly. Simply *going to school* is a strong cultural tradition in the modern era and is likely one reason some communities have resisted remote schooling so strongly.

In some communities, these cultural traditions involve the celebration of holidays (and the absence of celebration of others), support for team sports, and the nature of the subject matter that constitutes the curriculum. Educators and community members on both sides of a contemporary debate — say, a robust sex education vs. an “abstinence-only” curriculum — can frame the issue as consistent (or not) with local culture. Such cultural traditions are often the source of community support for schools: people want them to happen. This is why there is often such a backlash when commonly accepted elements of schooling are curtailed because another purpose of schooling wins out.

Schools can also work to sustain the culture of their students. For example, some schools and educators choose to make a robust effort

to highlight the contributions of African Americans during Black History Month, knowing that doing so is important for students of color in a society in which racial identity still matters a great deal.

Finally, school itself has given rise to cultural traditions, such as dances and science fairs, which themselves are maintained from year to year and become part of the fabric of culture.

Examples: Spelling bees, the historically problematic yet enduring story of Thanksgiving (Bigelow & Peterson, 1998), school prayer, graduation ceremonies, multicultural education, singing the “Black national anthem,” lights for football fields, bringing in cupcakes on birthdays, Halloween parades, musical selections for school concerts

7. Democracy and citizenship: Schools foster social cohesion by developing students’ identities as U.S. citizens with an understanding of democracy

One of the original purposes of schooling in the United States was to assimilate the large number of immigrants into the fabric of the country, and a key element of this approach was to encourage people to consider themselves Americans.

The most obvious elements of this aim of schooling may be found in outward displays of patriotism, practices such as voting, and the curriculum of U.S. history and civics classes. Organizations adjacent to the school, such as booster clubs and teachers’ unions, may also foster this goal in the wider community.

Recent activism by young people in the wake of school shootings has leaned heavily into this purpose of schooling. These student activists have formed diverse and intersectional coalitions to make a citizenship argument based in human rights and public safety (Bent, 2019, 2020).

Examples: The Pledge of Allegiance, Junior ROTC, national anthem at sporting events, student government, elections for homecoming “royalty,” Parent-Teacher Associations

8. Moral and ethical training: Schools prepare students to make value-based judgments

This aim of schooling is likely far more present and visible in private and religious schools, but public schools are also places where children are expected to learn to distinguish between right and wrong,

and perhaps more importantly, to begin making decisions that reflect such judgments. Even in the youngest grades, teachers can work with students to help them develop a sense of empathy, an essential element of moral reasoning.

In some schools, teachers at every grade level expend a great deal of effort in developing students' sense of internal motivation and locus of control. In others, reward and punishment still drive moral and ethical training, which may serve other goals of schooling well, but likely does little to develop the necessary foundation for decision-making (Kohn, 1993).

Sometimes this moral training is deliberate, particularly when children have the opportunity to decide what is fair in a given situation, or during explicit discussions of bioethics (the scenarios are all too real now). A smashed-up car on the front lawn of many U.S. schools around senior prom week is a none-too-subtle reminder to students of the consequences of poor choices for themselves and others.

Other times, this training is hidden, and perhaps counter to what the adults in a school might suppose. For example, there may be a broad ethical consensus in the school that cheating on tests is bad, and adults can send this message many ways. However, a student may decide through their own moral reasoning that cheating on tests is a reasonable and justified response to the academic pressure they experience (Jensen et al., 2002).

Examples: conflict resolution, dress codes, alcohol education in health classes, character education, peer leadership programs, student of the month awards, in-school suspension

9. Social reproduction: Schools ensure society continues to run by maintaining societal structures such as language, socioeconomic class, and political power

The defining feature of all of the goals on this list is that they have a constituency; that is, they are there because part of the public wants them to be there. When people in a school decide to spend money on a new scoreboard for the football field instead of an additional teacher for the growing population of English language learners, they are making a decision that benefits one group at the expense of another. Standardized testing has its critics, but one of the reasons it

likely persists is that it identifies students who benefit most from the current social arrangement as academically superior. If this seems to be too bold of a claim, consider what the public reaction might be if a “failing” school district figured out an amazing magic formula for education and started producing large numbers of extraordinary graduates who were competitive for limited spots in prestigious colleges. I am realistic enough to recognize such achievement would be more likely to be doubted than lauded.

Academic labeling is probably the clearest observable example of this social reproduction (Oakes, 2005). Some students are “at-risk” from the moment they set foot in a kindergarten class (Rist, 1970), while others are never at risk of being at-risk. Some students are designated as honor students, while others take classes with the label “college prep,” an Orwellian turn of phrase if ever there was one. My work takes me into many educational settings, and I have rarely seen an Advanced Placement class that reflects the racial diversity of the school.

In the U.S., schools are largely funded by local property tax revenue supplemented by state governments, and though some states have made great strides to equalize funding, access to educational opportunities remains a function of where students reside (Baker, 2018). Better funded schools have more varied curricular offerings, better facilities, and can attract more highly qualified teachers with better wages. Book fairs and school pictures are great, but they inevitably put pressure on families who struggle financially when the cost is passed on to them. And (at least in pre-pandemic times) whose classes got to go to Italy over spring break?

Schools unfailingly reproduce the social structure in which they are embedded. If they did not, the substantial and significant differences among various groups in educational outcomes would instead simply be statistical noise.

Examples: gifted and talented programs, fees for participation in sports, access to technology, charges for field trips, external school foundations, student parking lots, school-based police officers

10. Social transformation: Schools prepare students to resist social inequalities and provide them with tools to work toward justice

In a very broad sense, the long fight for educational equality both before and after the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954 that struck down school segregation is an example of this aim. Whenever schools have been a source of social inequality, a constituency has worked to transform the schools themselves (and, let it not be forgotten, a group that resisted the transformation). Students have always been a part of this effort.

These battles for social transformation have included fighting for the rights of students with disabilities to be included in classrooms with their non-disabled classmates, same-sex or “mixed-race” couples to attend prom together, or immigrant students to learn academic subjects in a language other than English. Sometimes this social transformation occurs in the curriculum. It is no longer acceptable for classroom libraries and textbooks to consist of stories for, by, and about only White people. Art, music, science, and history have all had to reckon with the legacy of racism and colonialism in their subject matter with varying degrees of success.

Other times this social transformation happens within the community of the school. Bullying and sexual harassment, behavior that is now largely sanctioned, were once considered to be an inevitable characteristic of schooling. Schools have been under regular pressure over the past decade to provide healthier school lunches, as part of a growing movement to rethink food policy nationwide. Of course, some social transformations are rejected or only find purchase in a small number of places, such as efforts to allow teachers to carry concealed firearms or limit the teaching of evolution.

For many who seek to ensure schools do right by students who are marginalized in society, this purpose is essential because it embraces the critical perspectives needed for sociopolitical change and justice (Paris, 2012). This aim of schooling is one reason I became an educator in the first place. It is also why so many are working hard to ensure schools do not return to normal after the pandemic, because “normal” was not working for many students in the first place (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Examples: gay-straight alliance clubs, climate change education, restorative justice circles, culturally relevant pedagogy, de-tracked schools, participatory action research, gender inclusive restrooms, Black Lives Matter in Schools

In examining the role of education in the lives of girls living at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro, anthropologist Amy Stambach (2000) wrote that schools are “pivotal social institutions around which the configuration of society as a whole is imagined, contested, and transformed” (p. 3). This has been no less true for schools in the United States, as public debates about how our society ought to be organized play out every day in state houses and district offices, locker-lined hallways, principals’ offices, school lunchrooms, and of course, the P-12 classrooms where students, educators, and community members interact with one another daily.

In many ways, the coronavirus is compelling a hard reconsideration of the configuration not just of schools, but of society itself (in a manner that foreshadows the far more momentous changes looming with the climate crisis). Even after the pandemic ebbs, the aims of public education will remain in contention. It is our collective responsibility, as we deliberate courses of action, to keep in mind these competing public purposes of schooling and to be clear-eyed about which goals get privileged, who is impacted by them, and who has a seat at the table when important decisions are made. The reconstruction of our schools in the aftermath of the pandemic must closely attend to the tensions between these aims, if the process is to result in a more democratic, equitable, and just education of our children.

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Educational Renewal Through Professional Learning Communities:

Drawing on Zen Buddhism to Improve Our Collaborative Work

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Abstract

Educational renewal requires “a great deal of inquiry into and conversation about what needs to be changed and why”; such conversation and collaboration can be “very threatening” for some (Goodlad, 1994, pp. 99-100). This essay explores why conversations and collaboration required for educational renewal can be challenging. It contributes to scholarship on educational renewal by framing this work as occurring in professional learning communities (PLCs). It then explores how human frailty and predictable roadblocks can prevent PLCs from promoting the learning and renewal they promise. The article proceeds to offer anecdotes and questions—drawing on Zen Buddhism—to help educators working in primary, secondary, and tertiary education examine their ongoing work with colleagues in professional communities. I propose that professional learning communities can get stuck or plateau. With intentional reflection on predictable PLC challenges, PLCs are more likely to realize their potential as sites of educational renewal.

Keywords: *professional learning communities, human frailty, barriers to renewal*

Educational renewal requires “a great deal of inquiry into and conversation about what needs to be changed and why”; such conversation and collaboration can be “very threatening” for some (Goodlad, 1994, pp. 99-100). Some believe that professional learning communities (PLCs) are a particularly promising path towards renewal. PLCs are groups of educators whose ongoing collaboration aims to improve teaching and learning. Educators participating in PLCs often develop shared routines and norms over time that help them work with data and each other; they collectively

attend to problems, experiment with practice, and inquire into their own and their schools' impact on students (see Achinstein, 2002; DuFour, et al., 2010).

McLaughlin (in DuFour, 1997) declared that “the path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities” (paragraph 9). PLCs hold much promise that “the right kind of continuous, structured teacher collaboration improves the quality of teaching and pays big, often immediate, dividends in student learning and professional morale in virtually any setting” (Schmoker, 2005, p. xii). Viewed optimistically, PLCs have the capacity to produce individual development, changed practice, and collective capacity for more change (Little, 2003).

This article tempers optimism about PLCs with attention to predictable obstacles PLCs face. I write as an educator who has benefitted from the ongoing professional communities I have been a part of as a high school teacher, a doctoral student, a trained and certified Critical Friends Group coach, and now a researcher studying professional communities. I can attest to the powerful learning that professionals can accomplish when we work with colleagues to try out new ideas, push each other's thinking, and create a shared vision for promoting excellence and equity. My own experience, however, and researchers' up-close explorations of professional learning communities reveal challenges that accompany this work (e.g., see Achinstein, 2002; Curry, 2008; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Little, 2003).

In this essay, I foreground the challenges of conversations and collaboration required for educational renewal while framing renewal as occurring in professional learning communities. Subsequently, I explain how human frailty and predictable roadblocks can prevent PLCs from promoting the learning and renewal they promise. Finally, I offer anecdotes and questions—drawing on Zen Buddhism—to help PLCs realize their potential as sites of educational renewal. I hope that educators will engage in individual reflection and joint discussion while responding to the questions in the second half of this article. In sum, this article contributes questions and insights to help K-20 educators maximize the learning we accomplish as we engage in ongoing collaborative work within and across our institutions.

Reconceptualizing Educational Renewal as Occurring in Professional Learning Communities

Educational renewal occurs whenever educators have the chance to identify and improve areas of their work that are not as effective or equitable as they could be. Such renewal may include improving the means (pedagogical practices) and/or ends (purposes, intended outcomes) of educators' work with students.

When writing about renewal, John Goodlad and many educators influenced by the Agenda for Education in a Democracy think in terms of "settings." Individual organizations or units may come together to form a newly created setting when teacher education programs partner with K-12 schools (Goodlad, 1998). Scholarly writing on educational renewal speaks to the challenges and processes that may allow for simultaneous renewal of these organizations and of groups of people within them (Goodlad, 1988; Goodlad, 1994; Goodlad, 1998; Goodlad, et al., 2004). The individual human actor engaged in the process of learning from these conversations is not typically the unit of analysis in this writing, though Goodlad was clear that in schools, "individuals collectively sustain the renewing process or are carried along by the decline" (Goodlad, 1988, p. 10).

Change will not simply be reflected in contractual agreements for partnership, revised courses, or newly shared and improved curricula in partner schools. Renewal only happens when individual educators acquire new knowledge, commitments, and practices that result in their teaching differently when they are alone with their students or acting to change structures and policies in their school. Discussions about settings fail to bring into focus the actual work of the individuals and groups that do things to create change. The construct of PLCs helps us see this work more clearly.

Professional Learning Communities are ongoing arrangements for collaboration that aim to improve the work professionals do for those they serve. PLCs develop norms, collegial relationships, and kinds of collaborative activity that can affect educators' beliefs and the practices they use with students (Johnson & The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; Louis & Marks, 1998; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). Three careful reviews of research have shown that professional learning communities among educators are associated with improved student learning (Bolam, et al., 2005; Vescio, Ross, &

Adams, 2008). In addition to seeing the role of others' research in understanding the importance of PLCs in promoting learning, I look back over my own engagements in an NNER setting—the University of Connecticut's Teacher Education program, and projects that have allowed me to learn with teachers in partner schools as evidence. It is the ongoing collaborative work I have done with educators that has been the most important site of my own learning and change as an educator. PLCs have also contributed to the renewal of my teacher education teacher program and some partner teachers' work (see the latter half of the appendix for examples). In the next section, I explain challenges that PLCs face if they wish to promote learning and renewal. I draw on findings from other scholars and my own observations.

Challenges in PLCs that may Hinder Educational Renewal

Privacy, Autonomy, and Conflict Avoidance

Lortie's (1975) early observations of PLCs suggested that teachers tend to value privacy and autonomy in their work, and complimentary research has shown how teachers often prefer to avoid conflict (Achinstein, 2002). Such norms in teachers' work make it more difficult for them to engage in ongoing collaboration that leads to interdependence, collective responsibility for improving peers' work, and open exploration of potentially generative differences in what teachers believe and do since such exploration will likely surface disagreement. According to Lortie (1975), many teachers only get (and want) limited and distant glimpses of colleagues' work, as would happen through brief vignettes shared over a lunch table.

Fear of Being Vulnerable or Offending Others

Fear of offending or revealing weakness can limit our ability to learn in PLCs. Imagine a PLC that intentionally allows college professors and elementary teachers to work on improving the quality of discussions in their respective classrooms. The kindergarten teacher—afraid of embarrassing the teacher education professor—does not point out the obvious mismatch between grandiose vision and the daily realities of their classroom. While presenting a pedagogy that scholars champion, a teacher education professor—afraid of

losing stature or credibility—may avoid acknowledging that they are out of touch with the realities that impact current classrooms.

The Challenge of Change

Beyond widespread norms of how teachers typically work with colleagues, the desire to preserve a comfortable status quo is another roadblock to PLCs' ability to empower renewal. Teachers working together can sometimes shut down conversations or explorations that could have been generative for everyone's growth (Little, 2003). PLC participants can also act to avoid change and conserve practices that reinforce inequity (see discussion of Rancho High math teachers in McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Change can be hard. Given the chance to talk and work together, teachers may be drawn to act in ways that stop or limit change.

Pride and Ego

When I watch my own work in groups, I see how individuals' pride and ego can get in the way of the vulnerability required to allow participation in PLCs to influence my teaching. I wish I could say that I only make contributions to groups that serve the group's collective ends. My fear of being revealed as an impostor or my desire to project certain qualities to colleagues can lead me to say certain things or avoid saying other things in groups, and in ways that do not serve the collective good or my own growth. I am improving with age, but I still do not always win the fight to focus my own and my colleagues attention on the parts of my own practice most in need of renewal.

Thus, I see both potential for PLCs to improve teaching and learning and potential for PLCs to become stuck or miss their potential due to predictable human frailties. As I reflected on these frailties, I realized that my experiences of Zen Buddhism might speak to some of the challenges, further illuminating why working in PLCs can be difficult and suggesting ways of moving past roadblocks.

To further illuminate predictable challenges of PLCs and possible ways of moving beyond these challenges, in the remainder of this article, I draw on what I have learned and experienced during the past twenty years of participating in the Kuan Um School of Zen. I seek to allow what I have learned about PLC challenges to come together with what I have learned of Zen to articulate questions for those

engaged in PLC work. I encourage existing or newly forming PLCs to discuss these questions together. Journaling individually about them in advance of a conversation might increase their usefulness to re-envisioning methods for working in PLCs.

Questions for Individual and Joint Reflection in PLCs

1. What are we doing here? Do we ever name what we are learning or intend to learn?

Zen Buddhists stories are often brief. They may jolt the listener into insight, the present moment, and/or enlightenment.

Suddenly a horse appeared, galloping at quite a clip down the road. The man on it seemed to be in a hurry to get somewhere. A bystander shouted, "Where are you going?" The rider replied, "I don't know! Ask the horse!" (Valentine, 2017)

In this Zen story, at first, we think the rider is in control. In the story and in life, if we look more carefully, we often see that humans have less control and are less intentional than we think. Some believe that in this story, the horse is the strength and energy of our daily habits (Valentine, 2017). When I am most myself—most awake, not living out of habit and routine—I make moment-to-moment decisions with intention and awareness of what is going on. Too often, I am on auto-pilot, getting things done habitually without thinking about why I am doing what I do or whether I should be doing something different. PLCs can also act based upon habit rather than thoughtful intention.

Professional learning communities should improve what students AND educators learn. I suspect that there are many schools and universities where ongoing groups of colleagues meet, and where these ongoing groups use established routines for analyzing data, talking about students, and getting other things accomplished. Some of these groupings explicitly see themselves as PLCs, especially in K-12 schools that tend to use the term, and others could become PLCs if they more intentionally leveraged their joint work to promote reflection, experimentation, and professional learning. *How might we insure our PLCs keep producing teacher learning rather than slipping into routines that have diminishing returns for our growth?* In part, being intentional about means and ends—about what we want to

accomplish together and how we continue to adapt or improve our means of achieving these ends—can increase the odds that our work together produces new insights and practices.

We educators often promote student learning by explicitly sharing learning objectives. Objectives help students know where to focus and what they should get from our lessons (Echevarria, et al., 2013; Moss, et al., 2011). It is also easier for us, as teachers, to assess learning if we are explicit with ourselves about what we want our students to learn. Can we be as intentional for ourselves? *Can we name the things we intend to get from our work with colleagues in ways that focus us and help us assess progress?* For instance, if a group of us—within K-12 schools, within colleges, or across these settings—agree to do more work to develop an anti-racist stance, we might set goals related to what we will read and what we will do with what we learn. Our group would amplify each other’s individual learning as we benefit from others’ insights and progress while focusing on common goals. Many of us are used to writing objectives for ourselves in the form of yearly professional goals or new year’s resolutions. *Can we use objectives for our PLC work and discussion about these objectives to ensure that we—and not the momentum of our habits—choose our destination?*

Beyond just setting group objectives, educators know how to differentiate learning targets when we have different needs in the same classroom. We can apply that skill to our PLCs. Our groups usually have educators with diverse strengths, needs, and levels of experience. With intentionality, PLCs can promote learning for the 35-year veteran and the novice. Where PLCs include K-12 educators and university-based educators, those of us working in universities could circumvent our habit of playing expert by stating our own personal learning objectives.

2. Are we taking risks and being vulnerable? Are we being explicit and compassionate with ourselves and others about the work of being vulnerable?

My weekdays sometimes feel like a headlong rush to get things done in my professional and family life. On Sundays pre-COVID, when my life allowed, I planted my butt on a zafu—a meditation cushion—and passed two hours performing sitting and walking meditation in a Zen center. The presence of other meditators was a huge help. As I sat silently in half-lotus position, my peers’ presence helped me stay

focused. Afterwards, our conversation helped me make sense of my practice and struggles. Such Sunday sessions usually let me see what I am focused on in my life with new clarity and questions, results that PLCs should provide for teachers.

One Sunday, while travelling, I went to a Zen Center to which I had never been. I sat with ten meditators that were new to me. I wished I could remain still through each 30-minute period of sitting, but my hips started aching. I could have risked some lasting pain the rest of the week and remained sitting, which would have looked virtuous to my peers. Instead, I let myself be the only one of the ten meditators who had to bow and then stand temporarily to give myself a break.

As a Zen Buddhist—someone aiming to loosen my ego’s grip on my life—I am embarrassed by how much I still want others to respect me. I care about the impression I make regardless of whether I am with fellow Buddhists or fellow educators in a PLC. When I am collaborating with other educators, and it is my turn to be on the hot seat—to share my own students’ work, for instance, for peer critique and assistance—I get nerves akin to going to the dentist. I know what will happen will be good for me, but I also know it might hurt. Unlike going to the dentist, where the flaws in my oral hygiene will make themselves apparent, I am the one who has to muster the courage to point my colleagues towards my weaknesses, or to give them fuller access to what my students do so that they can help me see what I cannot. I am a better teacher because I take the risk. Peers in ongoing collaborative group have watched my teaching or looked at my students’ written assignments to help me see aspects of my work that were ineffective. Colleagues have shown me that my questions during class are not as open-ended as I had believed and that my answers to some students’ questions are not clear enough. Peers in another ongoing project helped me see that my students are not fully accomplishing things I could be aiming for as I have them write curriculum units. I am a better teacher each time I make my teaching available for peer support, resisting the urge to protect myself by sharing only the best examples of student work or sharing teaching problems that do not reveal my deepest struggles. I would be lying, however, if I did not acknowledge that it sometimes hurts to let colleagues see what is deeply flawed and needs repair.

In our own team, do we expose our own limits or needs? For those of us who want others to view us positively, we might consciously tell ourselves what we know to be true: True strength is not hiding but revealing weakness, and the act of doing so creates the chance to grow. There is joy and relief in accepting imperfection; doing so does not just help me, but also gives others permission to ask for help and explore their struggles also. More authentic caring and connection are possible when we are real with each other. Teaching—matching pedagogies to specific subjects and specific kids at a specific time—is so complex that we all should be lifelong learners, never expecting to arrive at some fixed state of mastering our craft.

Do we, in our teams, talk explicitly about the risks we want to allow and the vulnerability required to move forward? Do we celebrate and support each other in this risk-taking? When I think more specifically of the kind of work we might do on race within and across our institutions, for instance, I think about the importance of giving people permission to start from where we are—to be where we are, for the moment—as how can we be anywhere else? As we meet together to renew our work in light of the movement for racial justice, we all likely need to be vulnerable enough to look hard at our beliefs, our individual work, and the larger systems we have created to see how such things may all buttress a system that has excluded or underserved teachers and students of color. That acceptance of where we are is not permission to stay where we are, but it can be hard to make progress on our own limited knowledge or our deeply ingrained ideas or feelings if we cannot see and accept that we all are learners. Indeed, this thinking leads me to one more question we might entertain.

3. Can we celebrate and grow comfortable with what we do not know rather than valuing and emphasizing what we do know?

A Zen Buddhist story captures the perils of knowing things—an occupational hazard for teachers and professors, given their roles—and of not staying open to those whose knowledge and perspectives are different from our own.

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in!"

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"
(Valentine, 2007)

In my school of Zen, one half of a common mantra—what you say on every outbreath as you meditate—is “don’t know.” You do not have to be Buddhist to adopt a stance of not knowing, i.e., an acceptance that there is so much that we do not know and an attitude which leaves room to welcome others’ knowledge and perspective. Doing this allows us to show up with colleagues and explore differences rather than feeling the need to quickly, superficially, angrily, or decisively resolve them. If we are going to inquire deeply about what we need to change to improve our work and our organizations, we will need to emphasize questions and what we do not know rather than answers and what we think we know.

4. How do we bring new ideas and people into our work together?

Buddhists may seem insular. Going off for Sunday meditation or a monthlong retreat might seem like a mini-vacation before inevitably coming off some temporary high to confront the real world again. This perception is wrong. Most Buddhists would not accept the dichotomy between practice and “real world”, and they do see the need to stay engaged in the wider world. Everyday life provides a chance to continue practicing what we cultivate during meditation. In my school of Zen, we practice so that we can better serve all living beings.

PLCs also exist to improve their members’ ability to serve others—in this case, students and/or preservice teachers—and PLCs can also be insular. In some PLCs, members rely mostly on each other for new input. Teachers in one school may keep telling each other advice from a “privileged repertoire of oft repeated instructional suggestions” offered as “self-evident pedagogic

strategies” (Curry, 2008, p. 767). Tapping the collective intelligence of peers has value; however, ongoing grade level or subject area teams of teachers that repeatedly tap the same peers risk groupthink. They would benefit from the insights and different knowledge that a different group of educators could bring. *After identifying problems, do solutions come only from the members immediately present in our group? At what point—and how—could new perspectives bring new questions or answers to ensure that all members of a PLC get the help we need to rethink our work?*

New input that helps us move beyond our group’s existing ideas and expertise can come from many sources: reading a new article a month or a book over the summer addressing a shared problem; asking a question we do not have good answers for and seeking data from students as we experiment; skyping with local experts in our district, community, or university. Thinking also about who is and who is not part of our PLCs can suggest new sources of insight. If we do not have a special educator, a math coach, or specialists (in second language learning/ESL, reading, etc.), *how could we tap district-based and university-based experts to bring new insight and questions to our efforts to see and improve what needs renewal in our work?*

5. Can we disagree?

Conflict seems inevitable if groups are being honest with each other. According to Hamilton (2013), conflicts are good news since they are opportunities for achieving insight and for waking up from the taken-for-granted assumptions and routines that make up our lives. Relatedly, some schools of Zen intentionally promote the practice of “dharma combat,” which might be simplified here as kinds of debate and exchange which sharpen understanding and develop individuals. It is not just Zen practitioners who benefit from conflict. Achinstein’s study (2002) of teacher communities has shown that communities which embrace conflict can promote more teacher learning. Scholars have shown, however, that we educators are “excellent at avoiding frank discord with other adults” (Evans, 2012, p. 4; see also Achinstein, 2002; Lortie, 1975). What a waste! When we have differing ideas and allow them to bump up against each other, we can see new options and clarify or expand what we value.

Disagreement can be uncomfortable. Conflicts can threaten egos and relationships. Acknowledging this, a Critical Friends Group coach with whom I am familiar opens meetings of any new teacher

group or school year brainstorming and then agreeing on norms, the shared expectations for how we do things together. Our PLCs could adopt a norm explicitly valuing and encouraging exploration of disagreement. A second norm might focus members on disagreeing with ideas, not people. We might also explicitly create a routine allowing a colleague whose feelings are hurt to say “ouch.” Teachers tend to err on the side of too much tact. The moment when someone risks saying something that is intended to help professionally but might also hurt in the moment should be acknowledged as an accomplishment among groups of educators who are congenial rather than critical.

Renewing PLCs Supports—and is—Educational Renewal

Just as schools are microcosms containing many of the same challenges, forces, and opportunities that a larger society offers (Goodlad, et al., 2004), PLCs can become micro-instantiations of the larger human conversation and democratic participation we want to foster. Without renewal—without intentional care and effort to consider our mission and our practices within our PLCs—these groups can also avoid inquiry and hard conversation, lose sight of their purpose, and fail to help members promote their own and their peers’ learning and growth.

If we want to achieve change and renewal—and if we want to help put preparing young people for participatory democracy and the four-part mission of the AED at the heart of our work as educators—we need the collective intelligence and differing expertise that others bring to the table. There is good research supporting the contention that “the path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities” (McLaughlin, in DuFour, 1997, paragraph 9). That path may be even more challenging but also even more fruitful when we make those communities work across organizational boundaries, as participants in the National Network of Educational Renewal often do. My participation in promising kinds of collaboration convinces me that this path is worth taking, but the challenges of showing up—in my work with fellow educators and my Zen Center—convince me that PLCs are more likely to do good work if members choose each step mindfully.

As those of us in PLCs make a path together, we will benefit from ongoing questioning about where we want to go, why we want to go there, and how we best help each other to get there. To realize our potential for educational renewal through conversation and collaboration, we need the collective intelligence, the shared mission, and the intentionality that reflective PLCs can foster within and across our institutions. Let us ask hard questions that help us be mindful, intentional, and compassionate with ourselves and others. May our questions and dialogue help us liberate ourselves and those we serve from the limits and inequities that all of our schools will otherwise foster. May these communities become the testing and training ground for the very democratic habits, skills, and commitments that undergird the NNER's mission, making preparation for participatory democracy an important part of our own work and our organizations' missions.

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Appendix: Clarifying the Relationship Between Individual Learning, Professional Learning Communities, and Educational Renewal

Individual Learning and Professional Learning Communities as Critical Components of Renewal

This article’s primary purpose is to identify predictable challenges that PLCs face and to draw on Zen Buddhism to further illuminate these challenges, creating images, content, and questions that will help those engaged in PLCs think together about which challenges are relevant to them and how the group might handle the challenge.

For those interested in implications for the scholarship on educational renewal, this appendix builds on the preceding exploration of professional communities and their challenges to propose that individual learning—as well as professional learning communities (PLCs)—is a critical component of educational and simultaneous renewal.

Seeing the Individual and Individual Learning

Reformer John Goodlad’s research and his work as Dean and founder of NNER allowed him to offer a vision of educators siloed within the university and within individual K-12 schools. Goodlad and his colleagues envisioned these educators coming together to meet each other’s needs while renewing the democratic purpose of schools.

As I noted in the body of this article, when writing about renewal, Goodlad and many educators influenced by the AED think in terms of “settings” (individual organizations or units that may come together into a newly created setting when we partner). In individualistic cultures like the USA and Canada, and in academic settings that tend to incentivize individual achievements over program development, we need Goodlad and his colleagues’ ecological vision and their focus on collective work and systemic change. It is also clear that Goodlad and his colleagues foresee and intend that the arrangements that the AED fosters will result in individual learning and change. Still, writing like the following passage—about school-university partnerships as they begin—suggests how discussion of simultaneous renewal can obscure the

individual learning that is required and empowered by simultaneous renewal:

There often is a perceived press to get something up on the scoreboard so that various publics believe something actually is going on...Yet, if it is a serious partnership effort, a lot is going on: structures are being built, lines of communication are being established, working relationships and collaborative processes are being nurtured, and some activities are being explored by pockets of work groups here and there. (Sirotnick, 1991, as quoted in Goodlad, 1994).

The passive voice and the focus on groups makes it hard to see or think about the work and learning individuals must do within groups.

Professional Learning Communities Support Individual Learning

When I think about how the AED has supported and resonated with work in my own teacher education program over my fifteen years as a faculty member, I see a pattern: Individual and collective learning are empowered by discrete groups that form for a time and then morph or give way to new projects:

First, my colleagues Robin Hands and Rene Roselle organized an ongoing group of partner teachers across schools, preservice teachers, and teacher education faculty. We read about, experimented with, and videoed ourselves engaged in facilitating discussion in our respective classrooms. Our progress is described elsewhere (Roselle, Anagnostopoulos, Hands et al, 2017). As a result of participating in the first group, I acquired new language and insight about the components of discussion and a new commitment to have my own preservice teachers practice and attend to these components. This work also impacted my assignments across two courses: I began requiring students to plan discussions, record the discussions they facilitated, and learn from analyzing their discussion facilitation in one course. I had students facilitate Socratic seminar discussions with fellow students and videotape their use of discussion in clinical settings. Students' experiences of and reflection on discussions became important elements of my teaching and assessment in both courses.

Second, our program has had a Schools as Clinics Committee as one site for regular inter-organizational communication. Seven years ago, as a major redesign of the program created a need for even more

mutual understanding and engagement, then-Teacher Education Director Dorothea Anagnostopoulos initiated a yearly summit of teacher education faculty and partner district stakeholders to expand the conversation. I watched the K-12 teachers and administrators at this meeting become increasingly empowered in giving professors frank and informative input about the directions we were charting, teach college faculty more about the changing realities of schools, and learn more about professors' struggles and needs (for more, see Anagnostopoulos, Levine, Roselle, & Lombardi, 2018; Roselle, Anagnostopoulos, Hands et al, 2017).

Resulting changes have impacted my commitment to use clinical experiences in my own work and courses that I teach. I led the creation of a videotaped discussion in clinic assignment (noted above) that occurs in clinical settings and with support from cooperating teachers. I have also restructured a student teaching seminar to allow students to take turns bringing challenges from their work in clinic to seminar as resources for joint learning and problem solving.

Third, Liz Howard and I pulled 19 teacher educators into a faculty learning community to address gaps in our knowledge about preparing teachers for linguistic diversity. Over three years, we engaged in monthly conversation and inquiry that led us to infuse new assignments and experiences into courses and clinic and to document how new practices were showing up in our preservice teachers' work (for more, see Levine, Howard, & Moss, 2014).

Fourth, when designing a grant with a colleague to improve elementary social studies teaching, my colleague Alan Marcus and I intentionally worked with teachers from our partner districts. We saw practices being taken up by partner teachers and, since then, know that our preservice teachers continue to see good models of the best practices we were supporting when working with these teachers. This work—and all I learned from visiting 33 elementary teachers in their classrooms—improved how I teach a methods course and how I talk about elementary classrooms in other courses.

As an individual faculty member, ongoing collaborative work with a smaller group of peers has helped me to rethink and improve multiple aspects of my work. I have learned a great deal about elementary classrooms today, about effective social studies instruction, and about the potential for work among peers to produce visible changes in teaching and learning. For instance, after a career

as a high school teacher, my time in elementary schools has helped me grasp the possibility and increased importance of building on young learners' background knowledge and interests when teaching social studies. I also have acquired an appreciation for the role of children's literature, non-text sources, and literacy supports to help students who are learning to read to engage in inquiry-oriented social studies.

This appendix has argued that PLCs can promote individual learning which, in turn, support educational renewal. Individual learning in PLCs, however, is far from automatic or guaranteed. The preceding article describes how individual human frailties and predictable group challenges can limit individual learning and educational renewal in PLCs. PLCs can be a key driver of educational renewal and individual change; to enhance PLCs' likelihood of achieving renewal, we will need to develop individual and collective capacity to promote learning. I hope the questions at the heart of this article will improve individuals' ability to engage in generative collaboration in PLCs, and thus will help PLCs realize their potential to empower educational renewal.

Belonging and Democracy: How Teachers Can Support Democratic Participation for All

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Abstract

Democratic education can be cruel. For marginalized students, this manifests as disengagement, alienation, and humiliation. In this paper, I argue that the inspiring ideals of democracy can be furthered in schools by addressing the fundamental human need of belonging. I outline how teachers can center questions of belonging by working to ensure students feel valued, respected, and heard. By imagining teaching starting from these questions, we can further a society where democratic participation is truly equitable and open to all.

Keywords: *belonging, democracy, culturally responsive education*

A frequent topic this year in my conversations with teachers after classroom observations has been what to do about students who turn their cameras off during remote learning. It is a difficult question because the camera is an invitation to share one's home life with the class community, but it also requires a great deal of trust that your life will be accepted without judgment. There is an underlying tension between living proudly as our 'selves' and participating fully, and it is one that I want to explore as it exists in education at large. Said another way, without a confidence that our existences matter, full participation in a democratic society is not possible.

We have lived a new reality in the 'classrooms' of this year: voices through headphones, virtual backgrounds, recorded lessons, and of course, tiles on a screen in place of students. But while concerns have risen around the disengagement of countless students, the demands of teaching remotely, and the fears of massive learning loss (Reich et al, 2020; Goodnough, 2020), these are not entirely new trends. The shape of teaching and learning has been deeply distorted, but the soul of modern education remains firmly intact. The theme of this issue is

to “Imagine the Impossible,” and the call is necessary because now is a time to rewrite the questions that have formed education’s soul. One set of questions at the foundation of education centers on building a robust democratic society. These include questions like how do we prepare students for reasoned argument and civil disagreement? How do we foster mutual respect and tolerance? How can we teach students to work together to solve our common problems? These are important, idealistic, and inspiring questions to ask, but they paradoxically carry a hidden potential to cause deep hurt and distrust in our students. The reason is that to participate meaningfully in our shared national community, people who are part of the “other” can feel like they must deny something essential in their personal and cultural identities. Without adopting the language, habits, and customs of dominant cultures, their views and ideas will not be heard or taken seriously. This is a tension that teachers of marginalized students see every day in the form of hurt, alienation, anger, and disengagement - sometimes in the form of turned off cameras – and in this essay I explore what different questions can help us imagine better possibilities. Indeed, I intentionally use the phrase “marginalized” rather than other terms such as minority, low income, students of color, or others to underscore how mainstream institutions have othering forces built into their structures.

Of course, teachers also see deep engagement and joy from their students, and this essay is an attempt to draw on the lessons of strong class cultures to contribute to a reimagination of the work of teachers. My argument is that we can support better engagement and participation from students who are typically marginalized if we first pose questions such as how can we foster environments where students feel valued, respected, and important? How do we ensure their voices will be heard and taken seriously? How do we prevent student doubt about their place in our classrooms? These are questions about students’ sense of belonging in their school communities, and I want to make the case that imagining school spaces where belonging is foregrounded can further the goals of a democratic society. These questions address the moral core of teaching and are central to the mission of NNER (Lucero, 2011).

I begin by showing how certain democratic principles, including Gutmann’s deliberative democracy, can unintentionally foster humiliation and alienation among students at the margins. Next, I

describe how a culturally responsive stance, informed by research in social psychology, show how developing a sense of belonging in students can combat the trends of injustice in education. Lastly, I discuss potential objections to prioritizing belonging. In an education system with a long history of injustice, democratic ideals are not equally accessible and are instead undermined if we ask citizens to relinquish their personal and cultural identities. By bringing a focus on belonging into the work of teachers, we can endeavor to ensure that every student comes to school knowing that their existence is meaningful and important.

The Blind Spot of Democracy

It is a pillar of American political philosophy that a strong democracy relies on an active and well-educated general public. From Dewey onwards, this belief has centered on the argument that a public education in democratic skills can produce citizens who can work together to solve common social issues (Schutz, 2010). But for students who are at the margins of mainstream society, efforts grounded in democratic ideals like tolerance, mutual respect, and civil disagreement can paradoxically result in a sense of humiliation, a distrust of public institutions, and an alienation from the very democratic discourse that education seeks to foster. The reasons are found in the subtle and hidden ways that the dynamics of power work to further social exclusion, centralize cultural capital, and legitimize certain stakeholders at the expense of others, and explore this with a discussion of ideals such as Gutmann's deliberation.

Amy Gutmann's (1999) theory of deliberative democracy is perhaps the most influential recent attempt to provide a vision for how democratic ideals can guide public education. Her theory bridges the competing interests of the state, families, and individuals, to balance the demands of the common good and individual liberty. She does this by advocating for education to be guided by principles of nondiscrimination (everyone should be educated) and non-repression (no one should be excluded from having access to the levers of education). The most important characteristics of a vibrant democracy are mutual respect and civil disagreement. Tolerance, then, becomes the 'civic minimum' for society: "A liberal democracy flourishes only with a tolerant citizenry whose minds are open to respecting reasonable political viewpoints with which they disagree,"

(Gutmann, 1995, p. 578). Such lively discourse can create the necessary perspectives needed to solve our common social problems.

To meet these goals, schools should be responsible for teaching skills of reasoned argument, mutual respect, and tolerance (Michelli, 2005). It is hard to imagine how such democratic ideals, and the concomitant skills, could be harmful, in part because they offer such a hopeful and inspiring vision for our society. One argument questioning this vision has been that policy makers and others merely pay lip service to these ideals while furthering the hidden private interests of profit seeking enterprises (Ford, 2020). However, it is worth considering what would happen even if these ideals were faithfully implemented.

We can begin by noting that while Gutmann's principles are created to further the public good, the very idea of 'public good' is contested terrain (Stone, 1997). When decisions are made to allocate resources, support stability, or ensure economic growth, there are always people who are likely to benefit and others who are likely to be negatively affected. This is an important feature of American society theorized by Lamont and Lareau (1988) who built on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to argue that privileged individuals will use their resources to engage in social exclusion. Sometimes this happens through relatively open mechanisms of cultural reproduction like leveraging social networks or relying on internships and other programs for advancement (Rivera, 2016). But it can also be a product of well-intentioned programs like honors classes, magnet schools and charter networks, or extended school days, as those who have the advantages of resources, access, or information seek to maximize their benefit. Critical Race Theory uses the term "interest convergence" to describe a similar dynamic (Tate, 1997). For these reasons, the impact of schooling on inequality is mixed at best, and potentially troubling (Dumont & Ready, 2020; Raudenbush & Eschmann, 2015). More than marginalizing, social exclusion can be dehumanizing. When structures of authority do not offer recognition or openly reward contributions, individuals can experience deep shame. The experience of social exclusion inherent in democratic education breeds anger, apathy, and alienation (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Sennett, 1980). One might deny such dynamics are at play, but our very positionality can make it difficult to recognize the power we exert (Delpit, 2006). When it comes to the work of

teachers, Gutmann's principles are blind to such forces and contain "a certain inability to hear those voices that fall outside the dominant cultural norm," (Stillwagon, 2011, p. 361).

This is the point that Schutz (2010) sought to make when critiquing what he termed the "discursive democracy" of Dewey. Like Gutmann, Dewey envisioned a pedagogy built on reasoned argument, open debate, and considered judgement that could help society fight for progressive change. However, this vision of democratic engagement was unable to see the way structures in our educational system limit participation. To be taken seriously, one had to be articulate, fluent in the dominant discourse, and confident that one's voice mattered. This idealized discourse is also enchanting because it avoids a pathway feared by many: messy, painful, and open conflict. Yet for many marginalized people, social conflict is often the only way for their voices to garner meaningful attention. This is obviously at odds with the principles of reasoned discourse and civil debate, but the larger point here is that enactors of Dewey's vision "were willing to give up immediate empowerment for the working class and poor in America in favor of the implausible possibility of an imagined collaborative democracy in some distant tomorrow," (p. 88). This vision poses democratic schools as an answer to questions of how people can come to consensus, even if it means that such a consensus excludes certain voices.

The requirement to speak in the more acceptable terms of the "language of power" can itself be humiliating (Delpit 2006; Stillwagon, 2011). Even when given a seat at the table, it can be disorienting to bear the constant weight of being the other and having to modify one's expression. Deliberation is not neutral; it legitimizes the voices of those with cultural capital at the expense of others; it contains barriers to mutual understanding when diverse voices are speaking. It can be alienating to constantly feel dismissed because one's words are misinterpreted, one's "authority of experience" discounted (hooks, 2014, pp. 72-95), or one's voice simply silenced (Levinson, 2003). As Stillwagon (2011) wrote:

...deliberative, empowered language is not [students'] first language; it is instead a form of mental acrobatics they must learn to perform in order to translate their demands into rational discourse that can be heard, but with a minimum loss of its original content so that the goal it seeks does not become meaningless for them as political actors. The translation that occurs can be demeaning and humiliating,

but less so if they, rather than their oppressors, serve as the translators, even if the practical outcome is the same. (p. 361)

This is not an argument minimizing democratic values or suggesting that they should be eliminated from our work. However, we should recognize that for teachers, democratic ideals like mutual respect and civil discourse ignore a reality that their students may be more concerned with feeling recognized, valued, and heard, when participating in a dominant system. As teachers, we can better empower marginalized students by structuring our work around questions of recognition, of what it feels like to be a valued member of a community alongside questions of democratic discourse, and it is to this topic that I now turn.

Why “Belonging” Matters in Schools.

Questions about the public good take place at an abstracted social level, while those of hurt, alienation, and anger operate at the level of human interaction. This is where teachers work. We cannot ignore the students who seem uninterested in our lessons, who are defiant in class, or who quietly disengage from school altogether. By bringing such matters to the forefront, we prioritize goals of recognition, worth, and student voice, even if it challenges our assumptions about the way school should be. The literature on culturally responsive pedagogy has given us a vocabulary to describe the realities of school for marginalized students, and an exploration of the concept of belonging emerges to help us embrace the cultural nature of schools.

By “embrace the cultural nature of schools,” I mean that schools are at their core cultural entities. Before we can consider schools as critical nodes in the creation of a democratic society, it is helpful to view them as fully human organizations guided less by ideals and more by the norms, rituals, and beliefs of dominant groups. Phrased another way, schools are institutions shaped by power that encode biases beneath the surface and work to reinforce long standing interests (Delpit, 2006; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Nieto & Bode, 2018). And, while there are many examples of excellent teachers who work to connect with and empower their students (Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009), a rich body of literature has chronicled the ways the cultural dynamics in schools consistently marginalize students of color (Carter, 2005; Ferguson, 2000; Hammond, 2015; Nolan, 2011).

For these researchers, educators, and theorists, school ceases to be a unified place shared by all citizens, but rather a contingent and shifting landscape. The realities of school will be vastly different for different students (and teachers) by virtue of their diverse lived experiences. A given curriculum, a disciplinary interaction, engagement with a lesson - these are understood in complexly variable ways (Levinson, 2003; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Thornhill, 2016). From this perspective, what might previously have been framed as student failure or disinterest - why don't minority students do well in school? - can be seen as a direct reaction to the institutional stigma emerging from the alienating structures and even teacher indifference in schools. Hammond (2015) suggested that "what looks like lack of motivation is in reality the student losing hope that anything can ever change because the academic hurdles seem insurmountable," (pp. 90-91). While it is tempting to think of schools as places where students learn skills, develop arguments, and experience civic engagement, considering belonging foregrounds the very need to be a part of something meaningful, to feel valued, and to be heard.

These are characteristics of what psychologists have called a "sense of belonging," a fundamental source of human motivation that is "almost as compelling a need as food," (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). The ways humans readily form social bonds, think about and organize the world, and develop strong emotional associations with groups of people, all point to the consequences of our deep desire to connect with others. Studies have shown how everything from mortality rates, disease, mental health, and success in schools are all positively affected by strong social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Walton and Brady (2017) described it as a:

...general inference, drawn from cues, events, experiences, and relationships, about the quality of fit or potential fit between oneself and a setting. It is experienced as a feeling of being accepted, included, respected in, and contributing to a setting, or anticipating the likelihood of developing this feeling. (p. 272)

The cues that help someone answer these questions can seem minor, even invisible to someone else, but the implications for engagement and investment are large. Feeling like part of a community can influence achievement, behavior, stress, and feelings of acceptance in

school. Children who experience a sense of relatedness are more likely to draw on inner resources to maintain motivation in the face of challenges, take risks in the service of learning, have positive associations with school, and be engaged and participate in school activities (Osterman, 2000). Those who do not have such an experience can perceive “stereotype threats” (Steele, 1997) or “belonging uncertainty,” impressions that are formed as the result of broad based fears about the social environment that can impact performance and engagement in school:

When Black Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans look at schools and workplaces in the United States, they see places in which members of their group are numerically under-represented, [and] encounter overt and subtle forms of prejudice,...Given this context, it is understandable and even adaptive for minority group members to be sensitive to the real and potential quality of their social relationships. This state of belonging uncertainty can prove especially pernicious, because it can manifest neither as perceived bias nor as a fear of being stereotyped...Rather, belonging uncertainty may take the form of a broad-based hypothesis that “people like me do not belong here.” (Walton & Cohen, 2007, 82-83)

As students enter a classroom or school space, they are confronted with a host of questions about their place in that setting. A sense of belonging develops through our close and meaningful interactions with people around us, but is also inferred through the perceptions of subtle signals in the environment. Based on the sum of these cues, events, experiences, and relationships, people ask questions like “Do I have anything in common with the people here?”, “Are people like me valued here?” and “Can I be myself here?”

There are several implications for the work of teachers. First, it is important to acknowledge the power differences in classrooms. Acting with transparency about the value-laden structures of our schools can actually empower students to participate and make their voices heard (Delpit, 2006). This might encourage administrators and teachers to revisit grading policies, tracking programs, and assessment practices that are designed to sort and track students. Secondly, it can foster empathy. As schools are structured now, the tacit assumption is that in order to succeed, students need to assimilate dominant expectations of written expression, behavior, and the demonstration

of knowledge (Ferguson, 2000; Gay, 2018; Tate, 1997). But we can empower educators to lead with empathy in their interactions with students and to approach “failures” not with judgment but with efforts at understanding. Empathy is a critical teacher disposition, and models like perspective taking or empathic discipline can encourage teachers to first seek to understand (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Warren, 2018). A third implication is the need to build learning alliances with students; this is a way to combat the hopelessness students might display through disengagement and misbehavior through building trust and empowering students to drive their own learning (Hammond, 2015, pp. 89-96).

The social-psychological literature also has provided some broad approaches for increasing belonging based on several empirical studies of which I share three. One is to provide students with possible narratives that can help understand common challenges. Simply knowing that challenges and failures are a normal part of being a student can reduce imposter syndrome and can allow students to put forth effort without fearing they do not belong. Another is to provide “wise” academic feedback that sends messages of belief in a students’ ability without lowering expectations. Lastly, common in calls for reform, is to increase the representation of who belongs through revising curriculum materials, committing to hiring diverse teachers who reflect the communities they serve, and even working for desegregation. These efforts can reduce the pressure to “represent” one’s group (Walton & Brady, 2017).

Whereas the ‘public good’ is a critical justification for the way schooling is structured, thinking about teaching through the lens of belonging brings our focus to the concerns of real students in real settings. In this respect, they could be considered socio-emotional or cultural concerns rather than political ones. Of course, in a society that is deeply segregated and demonstrably unjust towards students of color, prioritizing the well-being of marginalized groups *is* a political focus, and thus becomes a moral decision. The point missed by principles like those of deliberative democracy is that our public good, grounded in justice, civic participation, and the citizen action, is only possible when our citizens, all of our citizens, feel as if they are part of our community.

Objections to Foregrounding Belonging

As an educator, I have not always thought this way, and before concluding I discuss some potential objections to promoting belonging over democratic ideals. At times, I have viewed a focus on personal identity as a potentially essentializing and limiting social commitment imposed by cultural norms (hooks, 2014, pp. 77-92). Shouldn't we treat everyone the same? Aren't goals like tolerance and mutual respect truly the hallmarks of a functioning, diverse, multicultural society? After all, belonging can have a dark side; the need to belong can serve as motivation to form strong bonds, but also taps into core tribalist urges to easily shun others. In consideration of this, I outline four objections here. The common thread in my responses will be to acknowledge the very real truths in the objection while offering a reminder that such a focus would be unnecessary were it not for the history of injustice and inequity in our education system.

First, "belonging" necessarily exists alongside exclusion. With very little prompting, people have been shown to develop in-group favoritism and to stigmatize those on the outside (Appiah, 2010, Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Rather than seeking to build a community with a shared language and values, a focus on sense of belonging could be divisive and seek to group us along lines of identity such as race, ethnicity, or immigrant status. It is true that tribalism is the source of much strife in the American political landscape today; however, building a common identity with other marginalized groups builds solidarity and is often the only way to get mainstream powers to recognize the needs of disenfranchised communities (Schutz, 2010). Class action in solidarity at first lumps people together with the hopes of a future where individuals can be recognized for themselves.

A second objection concerns the conflict that could result when a group realizes its collective power. This is perhaps the consequence that is most feared by those who believe in maintaining an ordered state. The peaceful protests this past year over the brutal killings of unarmed Black Americans as well as over issues like the naming of buildings with former slaveholders and the presence of confederate statues on public lands are examples of what concern some people. However, such conflict need not be feared and indeed can be welcomed as a necessary route towards meaningful change; they are

attempts to be heard and recognized in a system that does not value marginalized groups when they engage in democratic discourse on the terms of those in power. Varied cultural expressions can challenge a democratic society to imagine new possibilities, new institutions, new norms, and new ways of being. Indeed, Levinson (2003) advocated for an “adversarial democracy” and Schutz (2010) called for an education in collective organizing. Gutmann (1987) acknowledged as much when she wrote, “a participatory approach gives priority to cultivating self-esteem and social commitment over humility and order, a priority presumed by the democratic goal of educating citizens willing and able to participate in politics,” (p. 90).

A third objection might be that an education designed around belonging will lack rigor and lower standards, and is nothing more than an awarding of participation trophies in a world where the stakes of competition are high. In fact, the reverse is often the case: lowering rigor and expectations sends messages to students that they are not worth being academically challenged. This is why theories of culturally responsive pedagogy place academic success and student driven goals at the center of their frameworks (Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Nieto & Bode, 2018). Rugani and Grijalva (2020) suggested that rigorous instruction sends a clear message that:

I see the work you're doing, and it matters. You contribute to our classroom culture when you take ownership of your learning and succeed. When you're engaged in the work of learning, we are connected because I notice and value your work— and just maybe find happiness in it. (pp. 37-38)

Learning is not merely an afterthought; it is the cement that builds strong relationships and invests students in school. Yet, it should not be surprising that for students who may harbor deep distrust of schools and teachers, it requires extra effort to build their investment and convince them that they are welcome. To assume that feeling valued and worthwhile should be a given displays an ignorance of the historical injustices in our school system; it is dismissive and unempathetic.

Lastly, the priorities of belonging seem at odds with the inspiring vision of deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy represents hopeful collective ideals; it champions rationality and reasoned debate, values group consensus and common understanding over a system

that creates winners and losers (Levinson, 2003). This vision appeals to our desire for justice, equality, and collective prosperity. Meanwhile, prioritizing belonging feels selfish, anti-liberal, and undemocratic by putting individual needs first and advocating differential treatment. This is also a point that Gutmann (1999) addressed:

That an ideal democratic school is not as democratic as an ideal democratic society should not disenchant us either with schooling or democracy, since democracies depend on schools to prepare students for citizenship. Were students ready for citizenship, compulsory schooling - along with many other educational practices that deny students the same rights as citizens - would be unjustifiable. It would, on the other hand, be remarkable if the best way to prepare students for citizenship were to deny them both individual and collective influence in shaping their own education. (p. 94)

But the reason belonging can be important for teachers is that democratic ideals are rarely equitably realized. In practice, individual needs *are* overvalued, but it is only the needs of members of dominant society. As I argued above, it can be difficult for marginalized voices to be heard, and if they are heard it is difficult to be understood and taken seriously. A focus on belonging is a corrective, perhaps unfortunate, necessity but no less urgent. Encouraging teachers to focus on their students' sense of belonging is about designing educational experiences so students truly believe they have a place in civil debates, even when dominant institutions seek to silent their voices.

Walking the Line: Belonging in Education for a Democratic Society

I have explored tensions in the work of teachers between fulfilling the goals of the public good and working to recognize, value, and empower their students, a tension that arises when some students feel they must either deny their authentic selves to participate in public discourse or be true to themselves and remain excluded. To resolve this tension classroom instruction for marginalized students must be qualitatively different (and thus, their teachers need to be trained differently). This might be unpalatable to acknowledge - shouldn't schools offer a common experience and serve as a unifying force? - but it follows from an acknowledgement that currently the public good is furthered at the expense of marginalized students. I began by

arguing that the current foundations of our education system were meant to work towards goals of a deliberative democracy that value open discussion and mutual respect, but these efforts are undermined by the exclusion of marginalized voices. For groups that are oppressed, it is difficult and demeaning to translate their views and ideas into forms that are acceptable to the mainstream, and the results can be alienation and disengagement. That is, democratic ideals like deliberation can be humiliating. Next, I outlined how the concept of belonging in teaching can support a culturally responsive and empowering pedagogy that celebrates the development and validation of personal identity. The belonging literature in particular helps center questions such as “do people like me belong here?” and “does my voice matter?” Lastly, I offered some responses to possible objections, the common theme being that while a focus on belonging can seem inequitable, prioritizing the needs of marginalized students is a response to a history of injustice that has silenced these voices.

This piece has been an argument to foreground belonging, but it has not been an argument against democratic ideals. Rather, the former is *necessary* to bring these ideals to all students. When we consider belonging, we are imagining how students ask a series of reflexive questions in an effort to confirm their place in an environment. Feelings of disconnection, alienation, disengagement, and even humiliation are part of the evidence that they do not belong. These are real concerns for teachers. It is difficult to reconcile students’ desires to discover and create their identities while submitting to the needs of the larger community, but this is the important task of teachers. It is what Levinson (2003) described as the “fine line [educators] walk between fostering civic egalitarianism and promoting an identity politics of recognition,” (p. 51). This paper has argued that as we walk that line, whenever we feel ourselves teetering we should lean in the direction of bolstering our students’ sense of worth and belonging in society.

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