



# Education

## *in a Democracy*

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**Co-Editors:**

René S. Roselle  
*University of Connecticut*

Dorothea Anagnostopoulos  
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*A Journal of the NNER*

*National Network for Education  
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*Co-Editors*

René Roselle, University of Connecticut  
Dorothea Anagnostopoulos, University of Connecticut  
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# Direct Democracy's Threat to Democratic Schools: Ron Unz and the Case of Bilingual Education

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## Abstract

*The ballot initiative has transformed from an opportunity for direct democracy to a mechanism for policy entrepreneurs to push personal agendas. Today, ballot initiatives are an industry where money exerts great influence over a misinformed public. These policies disproportionately and negatively affect underrepresented groups. This paper presents a case study of Massachusetts' 2002 ballot initiative, Question 2. The case is analyzed using Goodlad's (2004) *Agenda for Education in Democracy (AED)* to argue that creating education policy via ballot initiative is unjust. These initiatives impact the social institution centrally implicated in cultivating democracy and democratic citizens and bring up questions about the possibility of creating thriving, democratic schools. For schools to implement the AED effectively, it is imperative that education policy is created in a way that reflects these goals.*

## Introduction

Between 2012 and 2016, fifty-one education-related ballot initiatives were introduced in twenty-seven states. Such initiatives continue to proliferate with six more already slated for 2017 and 2018. These ballot initiatives often concern education policies focused on issues of race, civil rights, and equality of educational opportunity. The direct democratic nature of ballot initiatives therefore puts these civil rights policies up to a popular vote and thus lead to important questions regarding the intersection between minority and majority interests, ethics, and social justice. Indeed, some argue that such ballot initiatives may do more to support the tyranny of the majority than promote true democratic freedoms (Guinier, 1994).

These questions, including ballot initiatives' role in promoting democracy, seem particularly important in the context of public schools which are not only essential in the development, health, and well-being of our nation's young, but also act as a key institution in rigorously promoting and sustaining our social and political democracy. The environment in which schools are embedded and the systems used to dictate how schools operate affect how students are educated and schooled<sup>1</sup>. Thus, ballot initiatives on education policy ought to be examined in detail. This article takes up this issue directly by analyzing Massachusetts' 2002 Question 2 ballot initiative focused on bilingual education to better understand the potential impact of ballot initiatives on equitable and quality public education in a democratic system.

In Massachusetts, Question 2 was an initiative designed to eliminate bilingual education, brought to referendum by Ron Unz and his organization, "English for the Children" (EftC). While Question 2 policies were not supported by research on best practices (see, e.g. Baker, 2006; Crawford, 1999; Cummins, 1996; Collier & Thomas, 2007; Faltis, 2000; Krashen, 1996; Krashen, Tse & McQuillan, 1998), Massachusetts voters passed it 68% to 32%, dismantling the state's 25-year-old bilingual education laws. In this case study, we explain the differences between past and current policies in Massachusetts and how Question 2 passed due to Unz's effective campaign. We argue that creating education policy via ballot initiative threatens the moral imperative of total inclusion in a democracy and perpetuates stratification that maintains an unjust dominant social order. We use Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley and Goodlad's (2004) Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) framework to discuss how the 2002 passage of Question 2 in Massachusetts exemplifies the ballot initiative's threat to education in a democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Education here is understood as a ubiquitous process of intentional and unintentional teachings individuals encounter via their experiences. Whereas schooling is defined as an enterprise of the formal political structure.

## Theoretical Framework

### Goodlad: Agenda for Education in a Democracy

The AED is a vision of education which identifies the public purposes of schooling in our democratic society. The AED attempts to address the central question: What are schools for? Schools do not exist in vacuums, they are embedded in, and continuously interact with, complex social, political, and economic environments (Goodlad et al., 2004). Schools and their cultural context reciprocally affect each other. It is not possible to have quality, healthy, democratic schools in an environment that is hostile to such features (Goodlad et al., 2004). Schools are often analyzed and held accountable for: being safe for society; protecting our citizens; advocating “the right” values; and employing adequate discipline to establish cooperation and orderliness, etc. (Goodlad et al., 2004). Less often, however, is society analyzed and held accountable for: being a safe environment for our schools; demonstrating by example the qualities we hope schools will foster within students; reflecting the values we want our schools to promote in our social, political, and economic policies; and practicing in the adult world the levels of cooperation and orderliness that many feel are so vital to foster in students (Goodlad et al., 2004). The social, political, and economic contexts in which schools are embedded invariably shape the educational process.

The AED defines education as the teaching – deliberate and otherwise – that surrounds all individuals via their families, peer groups, media, the workplace, and beyond. In contrast, the framework describes schooling as an organization of the formal political structure. Those in power determine the equity and quality of schooling available under particular rules of inclusion and exclusion (Goodlad et al., 2004). Stratification via such rules in institutions shape stratification in the broader social order. The well-being of a society requires education for all, without discriminatory exclusivity. Therefore, according to Goodlad et al. (2004), schools must prepare all children for democratic citizenship not only by what and how information is taught but also by the way in which schools are organized and operated.

To achieve this goal, the AED articulates the moral grounding of school organization and management and teacher preparation in a

democratic society. The four-part mission of the AED consists of: (1) enculturating students into a social and political democracy; (2) providing equal access to quality learning for all students; (3) improving teaching and learning through pedagogy that nurtures and challenges all learners; and (4) promoting responsible stewardship of our schools and universities (Goodlad et al., 2004). From this framework, we focus on parts (1) and (2) to analyze the 2002 passage of Question 2 in Massachusetts. We argue that creating education policy via ballot initiative threatens the moral imperative of total inclusion in a democracy and perpetuates stratification that maintains an unjust dominant social order. However, before doing so, we introduce the history of ballot initiatives to support a deeper understanding of their context and evolution over time.

### **Evolution of the Ballot Initiative**

The initiative process as it currently exists was neither an original component of American politics nor is it a necessary part of democracy. In fact, apart from a limited system in Switzerland, the initiative process is uniquely American (Paterson, 1998 as cited in Moses & Farley, 2011). Some scholars argue that the concept of direct democracy manifested in the ballot initiative is the antithesis to the representative form of government the founding fathers guaranteed in the federal Constitution (Conlin, 2004).

The ballot initiative began as a radical left-wing movement in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Proponents desired a government in which the people took an active part in making laws and governing themselves (Conlin, 2004). However, the ballot initiative industry has become increasingly sophisticated in the years since its creation. Today, ballot initiatives are a big business, accounting for hundreds of millions of dollars in nationwide spending every election year. Spending is concentrated in two areas: gathering enough signatures to qualify a proposal for the ballot, and running an advanced media campaign to successfully persuade the public to vote the proposal into law (Conlin, 2004).

State requirements for the number of signatures needed to qualify a proposal for the ballot vary widely, but are usually based on population or number of voters in the previous gubernatorial election (Conlin, 2004). Early proponents of the ballot initiative envisioned brigades of committed volunteers taking to the streets to collect the necessary signatures. Now,

however, professional signature gatherers dominate this arena, increasing the costs to such initiatives and likelihood that money will play a major role in determining their outcome.

Indeed, corporations have provided millions of dollars to finance ballot campaigns each election year. In recent years, wealthy individuals too have also significantly financed ballot measures to successfully advance their personal agendas and change laws in several states (Conlin, 2004). Spending generally supports “political consultants and media campaigns selling an initiative as a product” (Conlin, 2004, p.1100).

At the same time, private interests seem to drive ballot initiatives, the wording of the initiatives themselves can be deceptive and misleading. Initiative campaigns attempt to simplify complex issues into slogans that capture public interest and support. Whether intentional or unintentional, deceptive marketing can result in voters thinking they are voting for one thing, when they are actually voting for something quite different (See e.g., Moses & Farley, 2011).

In effecting statutory change nationwide, ballot initiatives have a success rate of about 40% while the success rate of bills passing through the legislative process is but a fraction of that rate (Conlin, 2004). Policies end up on the legislative agenda in various ways but, the idea is that these policies are determined by “experts” assumed to have deep knowledge of the issue. Proponents of the ballot initiative may argue that there is no guarantee that experts, policymakers, or legislators would make better or more equitable decisions than voters. However, the crucial idea behind representative democracy is that legislators are accountable to the people. In contrast, via the direct democratic ballot initiatives, voters are not accountable to anyone (Moses & Saenz, 2012).

## **Study Methods**

To gain a deep understanding of the factors that led to the passage of Massachusetts Question 2 ballot initiative (i.e., The Unz Initiative), we take an instrumental case study approach (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Data for this study was collected from primary and secondary source documents that were released or published between 1996 and 2002. These documents included a variety of public records; mass communication materials;

newspapers; interview transcripts. Furthermore, data on bilingual education and ballot initiatives was collected from peer reviewed articles. Ultimately, 41 sources were read and coded.

We took a thematic deductive approach for our analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). For the deductive codes, we used Goodlad's et al. (2004) framework to guide the codebook development and schema. Specifically, we looked for information related to: (a) if the ballot initiative reflected a quality democracy; (b) the ways in which the Question 2 campaign informed voters; (c) how Question 2 policies affected different populations and how those populations voted; (d) how Question 2 affected equitable access to quality education. During the coding process we produced analytic memos regarding other factors that impacted how the initiative was promoted, implemented and inevitably was passed.

## Findings

### **From Transitional Bilingual Education to Structured English Immersion**

On November 5, 2002, Massachusetts voters passed Question 2, 68% to 32% (Chandrasekhar, 2003), eliminating transitional bilingual education. Under the new policy, English language learning students (ELLs) would be educated through “sheltered English immersion” for a temporary transition period not intended to exceed one year (Johnson, 2008). “Sheltered English immersion”, is a term invented by EftC, the campaign founded by Unz (Johnson, 2008). The policy defines sheltered English immersion as, “an English language acquisition process for young children in which nearly all classroom instruction is in English but with the curriculum and presentations designed for children who are learning the language” (Unz & Tuchman, 1997). The evidence that is often cited in support of short-term, monolingual English immersion programs is largely drawn from research on multiyear, bilingual English immersion programs, which differ dramatically from English immersion in their student populations, goals, curricula, teacher qualifications, and years of duration, among other factors (Rolstad, 2008).

English immersion as implemented by EftC exemplifies these dramatic differences. Students are expected to learn English within one year and

then exit the program. Additionally, EftC structured English immersion policies enacted through Question 2 eliminated minimal requirements for immersion programs defined by Baker and de Kanter (1981), viewed as a definitive resource in this area. Yet, advocates at EftC still cited the success of Baker and de Kanter's research on 6-year, bilingual immersion programs as evidence. Conflating these two very dissimilar programs led to significant confusion over the education of ELLs (Rolstad, 2008).

A generation of research and practice shows that developing academic skills and knowledge in students' native language supports acquisition of English (Ramírez et al., 1991 in Crawford, 2007; See, e.g. Baker, 2006; Crawford, 1999; Cummins, 1996; Collier & Thomas, 2007; Faltis, 2000; Krashen, 1996; Krashen, Tse & McQuillan, 1998). At first impression, laypersons tend to find these conclusions counterintuitive because explanations for how bilingual education works are seldom available (Crawford, 2007). Few voters have any direct contact with programs for English learners; they rely on information that is second-hand, superficial, and often inaccurate (Crawford, 2007). It is typically the loudest voice with the simplest message that can garner public support. Which can be understood as part of how Unz and EftC successfully pushed Question 2.

### **Ron Unz**

Ron Unz is a theoretical physicist and founder of a successful software company in the Silicon Valley (Citron, Kiley & Pearson, 2003). After a failed gubernatorial campaign in 1994, Unz established and became chairman of the EftC movement in California in 1996. His highly successful software company afforded him the time and money necessary to organize and fund the movement (Haver, 2013). "English for the Children" became the official sponsor of the ballot initiatives to eliminate bilingual education programs in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts. In all three campaigns, Unz drafted the ballot measure, provided most of the money for the signature collection and campaign, and acted as the principal spokesperson (Citron, Kiley & Pearson, 2003). The EftC movement attempted to promote themselves as objectively concerned about education policy but had ties to overtly biased English-only organizations such as "U.S. English", an English-only group part of the xenophobic shift toward "Americanization" language restriction policies (Moore, 2008). Unz describes himself as a supporter of immigration and the traditional model of assimilation (Unz, personal interview, 2003

in Citron, Kiley & Pearson, 2003). An emphasis on assimilation was a core element of the EftC campaign, which capitalized on the increasing hostility of public opinion on bilingual education during the mid-1990s to early 2000s. Thus, in December, 1997, EftC succeeded in getting their initiative – a contemporary English-only movement – on the California June ballot as Proposition 227.

Unz has no strong personal connection to bilingual education but is ardent in his positions. Despite arguing that he was driven by pure conviction that bilingual education was ineffective he also confessed that he was excited by the prospect of waging an ideological battle (Bruni, 1998). Thus, Unz emerged in California as a new kind of figure part of a new force in politics, the political entrepreneur (Bruni, 1998). Political entrepreneurship is a growing phenomenon in initiative politics, where a political outsider identifies a problem government is unable or unwilling to address and mounts an initiative campaign to impose significant reforms (Citron, Kiley & Pearson, 2003). Unz used a voter referendum to circumvent “the telegraphic requirements and messy compromises of a traditional candidacy” (Bruni, 1998). He was able to promote his ideas, unmitigated by the compromises and consensus building that occur in a legislative body, to a largely uninformed public. Unz said himself, “For a politician, you spend a lot of time and a lot of money and you probably lose. With the initiative process...if you can get your thing on the ballot, there’s a good chance you’ll win” (Bruni, 1998). Political observers noted that Unz, more than any previous architect of a successful initiative, demonstrated the huge potential impact that a single individual can have by tapping a sensitive nerve among voters (Bruni, 1998). This was very clear when Proposition 227 passed in 1998 with 61% of the vote.

### **Laying the Groundwork in Massachusetts**

Bilingual education programs in Massachusetts served roughly 30,000 to 40,000 (about 3-4.5% of the entire student population) students each year throughout the 1990s and into the early part of 2000 (Lee, 2004). Over that period of time, however, policies on bilingual education had come under increased scrutiny.

Following successes of similar initiatives in Arizona, Unz wanted to take his movement East (Haver, 2013). Unz was particularly intrigued by

Massachusetts, the “most liberal state in the country.” If “we could win Massachusetts,” he stated, “we could win everywhere” (Unz, personal communication, 2003 in Citron, Kiley & Pearson). Public figures had already begun to lay the groundwork for his movement, evidenced in local news articles such as “California Law Fuels Massachusetts Debate on Fate of Bilingual Education” (McDonald, 1998). There Massachusetts State representative, Guy Glodis, voiced his contempt for bilingual education: “We need to abolish bilingual education as soon as possible. California has taken the lead...” (McDonald, 1998). Glodis was elected to state senate, and in January of 2000, with Unz by his side, announced his filing of a bill similar to California’s Proposition 227 (Haver, 2013). The bill would eliminate bilingual education and allow for a sheltered English immersion approach for up to one year. Glodis said he would prefer to go through the legislature but would not rule out a ballot question if the legislative process failed (Finucane, 2000). At this time Unz made no specific commitment but said he would help, “...and I certainly would try to find other people who would get involved in such an effort” (Finucane, 2000).

The bill was strongly opposed by other state senators and representatives. Opposition arguments utilized research based evidence, stating that gradual transition is necessary to ensure that students do not fall behind academically while they learn English but bilingual education had not received the proper resources, support, and funding (Collier & Thomas, 2007; Krashen, 1997; Haver, 2013). Another argument was that the proposed one-year immersion plan had no focus on accountability or results (Duran, 2000). One representative called the bill a “front for anti-immigrant propaganda” (Duran, 2000). State representative Jarrett Barrios put together a protest group made up of members of the Massachusetts Coalition for Bilingual Education, the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, Latino Parents Association, Massachusetts English Plus Coalition, and the National Coalition of Advocates for Students, many of the forces that would become the anti-Unz campaign. Due to opposition efforts, the bill failed in the legislature in 2000, as did a similar second bill in 2001. It was clear the bill would not make it through the legislature. If proponents wanted to succeed, they needed a ballot measure.

All the while, the Massachusetts debate was heating up in the context of a wider national debate. In January 2000, Stanford University published a comprehensive study that concluded English basic communication skills

take 3 to 5 years to develop, and academic English proficiency can take 4 to 7 years (Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000). However, in contrast, and more widely read, reports in the national media were praising the increase in achievement of ELLs in California and crediting California Proposition 227 (Haver, 2013). The atmosphere was now opportune for Unz to bring his movement to Massachusetts.

## **The Unz Campaign in Massachusetts**

Unz personally and strategically identified three important figures to act as co-chairs in leading the EftC of Massachusetts movement: Lincoln Tamayo a Cuban-born, Harvard Law School graduate, and former principal of Chelsea High School in Chelsea, Massachusetts; Christine Rossell, a Boston University professor and researcher; and Rosalie Pedalino Porter, a former Massachusetts educator and nationally recognized anti-bilingual education figure. The co-chairs all had close ties to the Massachusetts education system, impressive credentials, and were bilingual. These strategic appointments brought legitimacy and helped mobilize the Massachusetts campaign. The campaign needed 57,100 signatures to make Question 2 a ballot initiative. Unz hired professional signature gatherers to help volunteers and on December 4, 2001, they turned in petitions with more than one hundred thousand signatures (Haver, 2013). The secretary of state certified the initiative and it officially became Question 2.

Leading up to the vote, Unz unified a coalition of educators, academics, and politicians under EftC. The campaign leveraged the power of the negative perceptions regarding bilingual education that many American voters had and focused heavily on comparisons between bilingual education and English immersion (Capetillo-Ponce, 2003). They also leveraged a national mood of anti-immigrant sentiment, “English-Only” nationalistic and “Americanization” ideals but, used the title “English for the Children” to frame it in an acceptable way (Capetillo-Ponce, 2003). Specifically, in Massachusetts, the campaign used economic reasoning and historical stereotypes of bilingual education to communicate the idea that you can have democratic or liberal values and still vote against a program that has failed to carry out its intentions (Capetillo-Ponce, 2003). The campaign presented bilingual education as a poor return on investment; it burdened the public education system with undue costs and languishing ELL students, whose remedial education would only

further increase costs (Citron, Kiley, & Pearson, 2003). Unz knew that such arguments and ideology would only reach so many voters, and so, to reach a broader audience, the campaign's arguments had to stress notions of "logic" and "common sense." This echoed his California argument that "[s]ome issues are liberal versus conservative. This is sanity versus insanity!" (Billingsley, 1997).

Unz used his financial resources to mobilize the public and the media. The press reflects the dominant society's views, but it also helps to shape them (Wright, 2005). Media coverage of the policy issue shaped societal views of the issue in favor of Unz (Wright, 2005). Nationally, the media did not describe effective bilingual programs. The voices of bilingual educators, bilingual students, and parents of students in bilingual programs were rarely heard (Wright, 2005). In Massachusetts, for example, Capetillo-Ponce and Kramer (2004) found that voters had a lack of general knowledge of the goals and implementation strategies of Massachusetts' bilingual education programs. Reliable information for voters was scarce. Overall, their study showed that most people were motivated to vote based on emotions and prior ideology rather than facts (Capetillo-Ponce & Kramer, 2004). The EftC campaign had successfully passed their initiatives in two other states, were savvy to voter motivations, and strategically used media to control the narrative to facilitate their support.

Local and national politics also advanced Unz's efforts. Mitt Romney, then- Republican candidate for governor, supported Question 2 as a platform point (Haver, 2013). On the national level, George W. Bush took office in 2001 and in 2002 he proposed, and Congress passed, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NCLB Act repealed the Bilingual Education Act and expunged all references to bilingualism as a pedagogical goal (Crawford, 2007).

### **The Anti-Unz Campaign in Massachusetts**

Unz unified his campaign under one simple, message "English for the Children". The anti-Unz campaign was supported by many organizations, including the state's Democratic party but its supporters had diverse interests and were not unified (Capetillo-Ponce, 2003). Research on public awareness of bilingual education and Question 2 revealed that those outside

the Latino community found the anti-Unz campaign confusing (Capetillo-Ponce & Kramer, 2004). There were multiple “Vote NO on Question 2” and “anti-UNZ” messages being propagated but no one message was clear enough to garner widespread appeal. This was especially problematic in the context of a ballot initiative where “campaigns are often not about who has the facts, but about who has the most effective message” (Pimentel, 2002 in Crawford, 2007, p.156).

## **Discussion: Agenda for Education in a Democracy**

We use parts (1) and (2) from the AED to examine how the 2002 passage of the Unz Initiative demonstrates the ballot initiative’s threat to education in a democracy and how a focus on these components can make the education policy process more just. This includes a focus on the porous, reciprocal relationship between schools and their societal context. We argue that creating education policy via ballot initiative threatens the moral imperative of total inclusion in a democracy and perpetuates stratification maintaining an unjust dominant social order.

The first component of the AED is enculturating students into a social and political democracy. In this context, enculturating refers to the process whereby individuals learn their group’s culture through experiences, observations, and instruction (National Network for Educational Renewal, 2010). Across our nation, little attention is given to educating for citizenship in a social and political democracy. Yet, such citizenship requires the development of particular dispositions, competencies, and skills. As Goodlad et al. (2004) asserted, “[d]emocracies never just happen” (p.36), they must be established, cultivated, nurtured, stimulated, and protected, or they will dissolve. It is important to reemphasize that schools do not exist in vacuums; they are situated in complex social, political, and economic environments (Goodlad et al., 2004). Schools and their environmental contexts reciprocally affect each other. Therefore, if our goal is to enculturate students into a social and political democracy we must ensure that the context in which they are embedded also uphold democratic ideals.

Ballot initiatives regarding education policy disproportionately affect minority populations but are decided by a democratic process based in majority rule (Moses & Saenz, 2012). Among other reasons, the framers of the Constitution advocated for a representative democracy rather than

direct democracy because they believed problems would arise where majorities trump minorities on controversial issues (Sabato et al., 2001 as cited in Moses & Saenz, 2012). A primary point of disagreement on ballot initiatives is the question of whose interests are being served (Matsuasaka, 2004 as cited in Moses & Saenz, 2012).

A breakdown of the vote on Question 2 demonstrates that minority concerns were neglected. An exit poll of Latinos – the largest group using bilingual educational services provided by Massachusetts – in Boston, Worcester, Lawrence, Holyoke, Chelsea, Salem, and Springfield showed that around 93% of Latinos voted to reject the Unz Initiative and keep bilingual education. However, the initiative passed with 68% of the total vote (Capetillo-Ponce, 2003). This represents what Guinier (1994) termed the “tyranny of the majority” and is perhaps the top reason to be distrustful of using ballot initiatives to create education policy. According to Guinier (1994), “in a racially divided society, majority<sup>2</sup> rule may be perceived as majority tyranny” (p.3). The problem of the tyranny of the majority is endemic in the use of ballot initiatives to create education policies that impact equality and quality of educational opportunity. The initiative process does not contain the filtering mechanisms of a representative democratic system, and, thus, is more susceptible to acts of oppression (Gamble, 1997). In a study on state and local ballots from across the United States, Gamble (1997) found robust evidence that majority populations have exercised direct democratic powers to dispossess political minorities of their civil rights. Injustices resulting from the tyranny of the majority demonstrate that the sociopolitical environment in which schools are situated does not always uphold true democratic ideals, and thus can impede schools’ ability to enculturate students into a healthy social and political democracy.

Enculturation occurs through experiences, observations, and instruction (Goodlad et al., 2004). Question 2 provides a clear example of how minority children and their communities are taught through their experiences and observations that their voices and their needs do not matter. The use of ballot initiatives to create education policy reifies these experiences and observations in schools’ implementation of policy. In the

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<sup>2</sup> Education here is understood as a ubiquitous process of intentional and unintentional teachings individuals encounter via their experiences. Whereas schooling is defined as an enterprise of the formal political structure.

case of Question 2 policy implementation directly affected instruction – what and how minority students were taught. In a society that permits such action schools will continue to fail in enculturating students into a social and political democracy.

Unfortunately, the failure to enculturate students into a social and political democracy is a self-propagating phenomenon. The success of American democracy depends on the development of an educated citizenry who would vote wisely (Goodlad et al., 2004). Voting wisely requires the ability to distinguish between legitimate, substantive argument and media-savvy linguistic deception. This skill is not innate; it must be learned. Schools must equip students with these skills. In failing to do so they are threatening the future of a successful democracy. This issue is directly reflected in the ballot initiative process. Education policies are traditionally determined by “experts” assumed to have deep knowledge of the issues – policymakers and political representatives. With ballot initiatives, the citizens hold the responsibility and power. This shift in responsibility means that, to advance equitable policy decisions, voters must have access to meaningful information about the policy (Moses & Saenz, 2012). By examining the evolution of the Unz initiative, we come to realize this meaningful information is not always available as people with the means and power set the agenda for voters.

For example, Capetillo-Ponce and Kramer (2004) designed a study to identify why native English speaking “mainstream voters” voted for the Unz Initiative. They found these decisions had little to do with first-hand knowledge of bilingual education or an in-depth study of bilingual education curricula and educational philosophy. Many said that reading the information available left them just as confused and unsure as before they had read it (Capetillo-Ponce & Kramer, 2004). People were unable to vote wisely because they were misinformed through deceptive messaging or did not have the skills to critically question and seek out valid information.

The second component of the AED is providing equal access to quality learning for all students. Goodlad et al. (2004) assert that “for those who are not, by virtue of wealth and status, born into the good life, education is our best hope for providing opportunities for them that otherwise might not exist” (p. 46). In eliminating bilingual education and mandating “English

only” policies, the passage of Question 2 inherently denies equitable access to quality learning for all students. That includes both denial to quality content learning and equal access to the human conversation. “English only” policies are referred to as subtractive because they fail to build on student’s cultural and linguistic assets, and instead, seek to erase them altogether (Valenzuela, 2007). Subtractive schooling practices drive a wedge between immigrant ELL students and United States born, native English speaking students as school-based resources and orientations are unable to develop constructively across groups. Pressures to assimilate translate into pressures to choose between friend groups who are more of the native culture or more “Americanized” (Valenzuela, 2007). If a school represents a society within a society policies created this way will only serve to perpetuate a stratified, hegemonic society.

Our society is diverse. Therefore, it is practicable that schools charged with preparing us to participate meaningfully in such a society should reflect a similar diversity. A school that prepares students for democracy must be one that welcomes, respects and thrives on the diversity on which a healthy democracy also thrives (Goodlad et al., 2004). Creating education policy using ballot initiatives which disproportionately affect minority populations directly conflicts with this paradigm (Moses & Saenz, 2012). In continuing the use of ballot initiatives, we put the goal of providing all students equitable access to quality learning at risk.

## **Implications**

The National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) was established to put into action the belief that school improvement and the renewal of teacher education must progress simultaneously. This case reinforces the need for such efforts, particularly the role of teacher education and teachers in democratic processes. The efforts of the anti-Unz campaign were unable to unify behind an effective message and teachers’ voices were lost amongst the din of governmental and non-governmental organizations (Capetillo-Ponce, 2003). It is imperative that both teacher educators and teachers place a greater emphasis on both advocating for democratic education in the public sphere and capacity building for such advocacy. The success of this approach must involve coordinated efforts among teacher education programs, education researchers, and in-service teachers.

This case points out the need for teacher advocacy in that teachers' voices – the voices of experts working with students learning English – were largely excluded from the policy process and subsequent decision-making. However, teachers cannot serve as effective advocates if they are not adequately prepared. Thus, teacher educators must educate teachers through the AED and empower them with the knowledge and skills to perpetuate the AED in their specific contexts. For example, this might include helping pre-service teachers develop the character, competence and skills necessary for citizenship in a social and political democracy. The AED asserts that citizens of a democratic nation must be concerned with the responsibility of educating future citizens to live in a social and political democracy (National Network for Educational Renewal, 2010). It cannot be assumed that individuals are entering teacher preparation programs with the same understandings of the relationship between schooling and democracy. These programs should afford future teachers the space to prepare themselves as democratic citizens with the appropriate knowledge, skills and dispositions. This is a necessary step if they are expected to create the space for their future students to do the same.

Politics is an inescapable reality of educational practice, teacher neglect these realities at the risk of equitable and democratic education. A foundational goal of teacher education must be to foster teachers' recognition of the profession as inherently political. Furthermore, this recognition should serve as an overarching framework for how teachers are educated. To ground this learning, courses on education policy and politics should become a systematic part of teacher preparation programs. Beyond these courses, the understanding of teaching as inherently political should frame how pre-service teachers develop instructional expertise. Once in practicum, this understanding should frame how pre-service teachers interact with and act in their placements. This approach builds teacher capacity to advocate for democratic education in the public sphere.

Teacher educators must also carefully consider how implications of using ballot initiatives to create education policy define the parameters of the type of advocacy which will be necessary to protect equitable and democratic education. The democratic ideal demands that the requisite information about political issues is available to citizens (Moses & Saenz, 2012). Teacher educators sitting at the intersection of education research and practice have a “unique place in the political landscape; they have

access to complex sources of information and a nuanced understanding of issues about which citizens may be interested but are not necessarily knowledgeable” (Moses & Saenz, 2012, p.128). With this unique place and opportunity comes the responsibility to make their knowledge and understandings public, particularly when such information is in the service of educational policies directed at vulnerable populations.

For example, one specific way to share this knowledge is through the grassroots approach of community dialogues. These dialogues can be organized in various ways, but all manifest true democratic participation by affording citizens the space and opportunity to collectively engage in pertinent social and political issues (Moses & Saenz, 2012). While teacher educators may find a wide array of ways to engage with the larger public on such issues (e.g., Op-eds, blogs, statements at public meetings, or even running for an elected position) community dialogues are particularly useful in that they provide a realistic approach of how teacher educators can use their expertise to inform voters in an inclusive and participatory way, which then builds community capacity to ensure the improvement of their schools.

Teachers serving in K-12 schools can also play an important role in speaking up and out about potentially harmful policies and should be encouraged to do so. Indeed, teacher voice is an important element of effective community dialogues. Teachers are professional representatives of the public education system as well as often members of the communities in which they teach. Current teachers must understand the responsibilities their dual role brings with it. They are the frontlines of the public education system's complex bureaucracy and must view themselves as advocates for students and their communities. To support such efforts university and school partnerships can serve as a mechanism to build capacity among in-service teachers regardless of their pre-service training experiences. Meaningful professional development on policy and advocacy via these partnerships can empower teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, and morals of the AED. Building in-service teachers' capacity to advocate for democratic education also helps improve teacher education programs by providing contexts in which their pre-service teachers can learn and apply similar skills.

Successful advocacy relies on collaboration amongst the resources of universities and schools, which is reflected in the fourth component of the AED – promoting responsible stewardship of our schools and universities

(Goodlad et al., 2004). According to the AED, schools must be places of renewal and the teachers in them must purposefully engage in the renewal process. Advocating for democratic education is a foundational part of responsible stewardship of our schools and building capacity is a necessary component of the renewal process. Suggestions for putting these objectives into action, presented in this section, only begin to scratch the surface of what is possible with coordinated efforts among teacher education programs, education researchers, and in-service teachers.

## Conclusion

The ballot initiative was created in a progressive vision of grassroots democracy but has since transformed into an opportunity for resourced policy entrepreneurs to push their personal agendas, often to a misinformed voting public (Conlin, 2004). Question 2 demonstrates the ways in which education policy via ballot initiative threatens the moral imperative of total inclusion in a democracy and perpetuates stratification that maintains an unjust dominant social order. Analyzing the elements that led to the successful passage of Question 2 via the AED demonstrates how this system of policy creation impedes schools' ability to fulfill their role as the institution primarily implicated in fostering democracy and creating citizens.

Education, pedagogy, and the practices of teaching are inherently political (Herrera & Murry, 1999). Power and politics are unavoidable realities of education which, mobilized properly, can be used to support and advance student learning, instead of being a hindrance to it (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). The politicization of language and cultural issues are a manifestation of a generalized neoconservative backlash against ethnic diversity, the fervor behind which has historically been a swinging pendulum, influenced by the relevant socioeconomic and sociopolitical forces (Crawford, 1997 in Herrera & Murry, 1999). Education is not simply a matter of presenting facts, it is important to recognize the ideological context in which facts are situated. The definition and categorization of a problem defines its political chances. Pedagogical concerns are inherently ideological and steeped in sociocultural and sociopolitical influences. It is the power of these influences that makes initiatives effective, even though they are often based in misinformation and the misinterpretation

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of policies and practices they are designed to eliminate (Herrera & Murry, 1999). Considering the current political climate, it is imperative that we continue to focus on the relationship between schools and their broader context and how this influences the education of all students. For schools to successfully implement the AED, it is imperative the policies which guide them are created in a just and democratic way.

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# Participation in the Global Village as a Metaphor for the Classroom Experience

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## **Abstract**

*Acquisition and participation are prevalent metaphors for learning (Sfard 1998). This paper argues that a different metaphor for learning, that of participation in a Global Village, provides a more valuable framework for teaching and learning in a democracy. Analysis of a widely publicized suicide cluster in the Palo Alto School District provides a critique of learning that is defined by acquisition. Drawing on socio-cultural learning theory, care ethics, and the concept of Ubuntu, this work proposes that the interdependence of the Global Village provides a framework for students to focus on more meaningful learning.*

*Keywords: acquisition, participation, socio-cultural learning*

## **Introduction**

The role of metaphor in education is well documented. Lakoff (2014), Sfard (1998), and Penuel and Wertsch (1998) have written about the way metaphors structure our conceptual systems. My contribution to this ongoing conversation is to suggest that educators can, and should, harness the power of metaphor to change the dominant narratives of society. Rather than simply reacting to negative discourses, education should actively shape the dialogue around what it means to be a citizen of the United States. To this end, schools should be places that emphasize the positive interconnectedness of individuals in our society.

One way schools can do that is to support the work of authoring, that is, building narratives that connect who we are to what we want to become as a global community. The aim of this paper is to address three questions: how do we, as a nation, author ourselves? How is that authoring taken

up in the classroom, and what will it take to write a different story? I address these questions by making three arguments. First, using Sfard's (1998) interpretation of the participation and acquisition metaphors for learning, I argue that acquisition is more than a metaphor for learning, it is a value that Western society holds near and dear. Acquisition is a part of the metanarrative regarding what it means to be an American, and it is represented in rhetoric regarding individualism and meritocracy. These principles are taken up in the classroom with sometimes detrimental results. Next, in the vein of Penuel's and Wetsch's (1998) and Solórzano's and Yosso's (2002) call to critique single, dominant stories, I advocate for a counter-narrative to acquisition. Participation and interconnectedness should replace acquisition as the primary driver in schooling, thereby helping to redefine the role of citizenship. Third, I outline a potential framework for achieving an alternative metanarrative in society through the enactment of a different metaphor for learning. I believe that the metaphor of a Global Village provides us with the structure needed to positively influence the dominant story of the United States. I draw on sociocultural learning theories, critical feminist ethicists, as well as the concept of Ubuntu, the African philosophy of human interconnectedness, to lay the groundwork for this perspective.

## **How we author ourselves: Narratives and values in society and schooling**

### ***The Role of Cultural Narrative in Shaping Society***

The stories we tell reinforce and sustain our imagined communities. These narratives form our nation's core values, and these core values reveal themselves in the metaphors used to describe our institutions. Anderson's (2006) work on imagined communities lays out the ways in which nation-states cloak themselves in symbols and myths in order to form a community where there once was none. Through flags, sports, and storytelling, nations define who they are and define conceptual borders of "us" versus "them". Anderson (2006) pointed out the particularly important role of popular media in shaping the community. Today, perhaps more than ever, media continues to be an important means of influencing a national narrative, even if media encompass a wider range of forms of communication today.

Sociolinguists have pointed out the importance of thinking critically about narrative. Labov (1969), for example, exposed the detrimental impact of racism in language use and instruction. Penueel and Wertsch (1998), write about the tendency of historical narratives to impose a particular interpretation on the past:

For this reason, it is important to know what narratives have been available by the forces of production (Wertsch and Rozin, Chapter 4 in this volume) and which particular narratives are invoked in the generation of a specific utterance or text [emphasis added]. (p. 36)

This passage indicates how individual words, the “specific utterances”, draw upon frames, images, and types of actors from larger stories, and these stories can set in motion prescribed ways of thinking and interacting with one another that are difficult, if not impossible to interrupt. Sfard (1998) states that “metaphorical projection is a mechanism through which the given culture perpetuates and reproduces itself in a steadily growing system of concepts” (p. 5). This system of reproduction serves to maintain a sense of cohesion and concretize culture. Althusser (1970) refers to the means of this reproduction as the ideological state apparatus. He argues that institutions work on behalf of the state to transmit cultural values, serving to reify the status quo. At the same time, giving voice to these narratives does not just reproduce culture; through being uttered in a new time and by new actors, narratives become acts of authoring, that is, of new ways of telling stories about the self in relation to the world.

#### *Acquisition as a Cultural Narrative.*

While Sfard (1998) argues that acquisition is a metaphor for learning; I suggest that acquisition is indeed something more, it reflects a predominant value for society. In the acquisition metaphor, learning is a process of putting knowledge into the head, whereby information and skills become an individual’s private property. From the perspective of the participation metaphor, learning is accomplished through action, the construction of meaning, and participation in a community. As Ladson-Billings and Tate (2004) observed, U.S. society is based on property rights, rather than human rights. They argued that our institutions and laws are designed to protect the most exclusive property, Whiteness. Therefore, acquisition is inherently unequal, and participation is not a principle that can “trickle” down as a cultural value. More than just a categorization of

learning theories, acquisition and participation represent different ways of being in the world. Education is a primary means of reproducing this cultural artifact, that is, of acquiring and learning how to acquire new things, whether they be knowledge or goods.

In this connection, Bourdieu (1977) and Althusser (1970) both argued that schools reproduce capitalist social formations. For Bourdieu (1977), the reproducing mechanisms were habitus and social capital. Through institutionalizing the taken for granted ways of being of the ruling class, or their habitus, schools work to inculcate students into a system that reproduce social norms. Althusser (1977) emphasized ideology as the means that schools use to teach students the values and social norms of capitalism. Capitalism thrives on consumption, and schooling can function to teach students how to be adequate competitors and consumers. Shrinking safety nets and income inequality encourage fierce competition for scarce goods, including opportunities at school. The result is what Livingstone and Sefton-Green (2016) term competitive individualism. These anti-cooperative responses to scarcity benefit those who are already in power, these “behaviors are precisely the response that the state desires” (Introduction, Section 2, para. 6).

Acquisition as a cultural value is also revealed in discourse about meritocracy and scarcity. Each American is granted the freedom to pursue happiness, and that freedom comes with the unshared burden of creating one’s own path. This discourse insists on imagining a level playing field in which every member of society is free to manifest their own destiny. In this construction, failure to achieve is a personal, not systemic issue (Augoustinos & Every, 2005). Therefore, the pursuit of happiness and meritocracy are two sides of the same coin. Further, the idea that merit is a scarce resources means that it is not possible to have a free society in which everyone is encouraged to do what they will to make themselves happy, without an accompanying sorting and ranking system to allocate resources and determine who will win when one person’s idea of happiness conflicts with another’s. Unfortunately, the drive for acquisition and the accompanying meritocracy can have catastrophic consequences for schooling.

## How is this authoring being taken up in schooling?

The pressure of acquisition and meritocracy came to a head in two high schools in the Palo Alto School district, where a series of cluster suicides shook the community. Using the qualitative approach of examining extreme cases (Maxwell, 1996), I will analyze the connections among acquisition, meritocracy, and competition for scarce rewards of achievement in one setting, as represented by popular media.

The burden to excel in multiple subjects and extracurricular activities has been cited as a leading cause of student anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation in the Palo Alto school district (Kimmel, 2017). According to the nationally representative Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 17.7 percent of young people have seriously considered attempting suicide in the last twelve months (Centers for Disease Control, 2015). Palo Alto High and Gunn High School, have a suicide rate that is four to five times higher than the national average (Lynch, 2016). Residents of the area are wealthy and well educated. While the national median household was \$53,889 in 2015, it was \$136,519 in Palo Alto, and the percentage of residents with high school diploma or higher was 97.4, compared to the national average of 86.7 percent (US Census, 2015). The Atlantic described the district as, “an extreme distillation of what parents in the meritocratic elite expect from a school. The opportunities are limitless and the competition is tough and the pleasant chatter among the parents concerns chances for enrichment” (Rosin, 2016, p. 9). The school often produces graduates who go on to Ivy League schools. Students in the district typically win, or place near the top in many of the nation’s largest competitions. Students have the opportunity to do internships with Stanford professors, and have the material means to study abroad during the summers to get ahead in world language courses.

By many external measures, these young adults are doing quite well. However, the students themselves sometimes tell a different story. They are tired and frustrated with their learning experience, with one student stating:

We are not teenagers. We are lifeless bodies in a system that breeds competition, hatred, and discourages teamwork and genuine learning. We lack sincere passion. We are sick... Why is that not getting through to this community? Why does this insanity that is our school district continue? (Rosin, 2016, p. 18).

This student's life of achievement left her feeling listless and hopeless. In these schools, some students felt powerless to do anything more than win awards. The Atlantic reported that by March of the 2009 school year, forty-two Gunn students had been hospitalized due to significant suicide ideation. One student claimed, "In our communities it's complete stress" (Lynch, 2016, p. 1). This is not the picture of achievement and success I imagine most educators want for our students.

It is possible that students' individual achievement came at the expense of other goals. The district's superintendent, Dr. Max McGee expressed ambivalence about the benefit of taking several Advanced Placement (AP) courses simply to pad transcripts, rather than to learn. He wondered, "What could that student have been doing instead of taking more APs? Could they have been doing something with community engagement? With a job? Independent research project?" (Lynch, 2016, p. 1). Dr. McGee's suggestion that students' time may be better spent elsewhere is troubling. Rather than "doing something with community engagement," young people exhaust their energy amassing private achievements. The emphasis is on individual success, rather than a publicly beneficial activity such as community engagement. As Sfard (1998) writes about the competitive academic climate, "the need to prove one's 'potential' sometimes overgrows his or her desire to be useful" (p. 8). The need to distinguish oneself from so many other high achieving students can overcome the desire to learn because of interest and can lead to "transcript driven" decision making (Pope, 2003).

The district has not arrived at any easy answers. Changing the system for weighting grades was one potential solution put forth, "However, McGee said he didn't think getting rid of weighted grades would prevent the next suicide cluster" (Lynch, 2016, p. 1). The ominous use of the phrase "the next suicide cluster" makes it sound as though no matter what changes the district makes, teen stress and suicidal ideation are a persistent by-product of this system. The indication is, it is only a matter of time before the next set of young people succumb to the side-effects of getting an education. This suggests that small scale solutions such as changing weighted grades will not be enough to assist these students; perhaps a more radical reimagining of schooling is needed.

This school district is not the only example of how meritocracy, competition, and acquisition can manifest in schools. Pope's (2003) ethnographic study of five high achieving secondary students in an affluent suburb underlined the struggles young adults can face in an effort to excel at everything. On the surface, the students in her study were the ideal picture of success, however, in interviews they admitted to being highly stressed and anxious. They sometimes felt the need to cheat and cut corners in order to achieve the grades that they desired, and one student confessed to sleeping only two or three hours each night in order to maintain her high academic standing. Some research suggests that this drive to succeed is not always the result of a student's internal motivation. Lareau's (2011) work on concerted cultivation showed that adults' expectations and parenting methods have an influence on the types of activities their children engaged in. She argued that middle-class parents spend a great deal of time ensuring that their young children had access to social and cultural institutions. They deliberately sought to develop their children's talents and taught them how to make institutions work for them. The pressure to succeed can extend to out of school activities, as Friedman (2013) noted. Parents, anxious about their children's prospects of future success enrolled them in numerous enrichment activities, with the expectation that these competitions and activities would help their students stand out when it was time to apply for college admissions.

Schooling aligned with acquisition values can place a premium on reaching the highest level of achievement possible, in order to attend the best university obtainable, and to land in the most prestigious and financially beneficial career accessible. One student in Pope's (2003) study relayed this sentiment, stating, "People don't go to school to learn. They go to get good grades which brings them to college, which brings them the high-paying job, which brings them happiness, so they think. But basically, grades is where it's at" (p. 4). The high premium on continual acquisition and merit-based competition can come at the expense of contemplating a more fulfilling life; as there are only goals to reach, pressure to obtain them and no time to consider an alternative. This case demonstrates how the pursuit of more, situated within a meritocratic society, can lead to a vicious cycle in which students feel unhappy and work harder to try to obtain things they hope will make them happy. A school psychologist in Palo Alto noted, "Because a certain kind of success seems well within reach, they feel they have to attain it at all costs", she described the feeling

students have as “I can, therefore I must” (Rosin 2015, p. 13). Students have been coopted by what the school psychologist termed, the “mass delusion”, that successive achievement is the only path in life. In the sense of the word used by McDermott (1993), these students seem to have been “acquired” by the acquisition based, meritocratic value system. Certainly, not all students in high achieving districts are faced with these issues. This description of schooling is not typical of all settings, however, it is clear that when schooling is constructed with acquisition as a core value, learning can become transaction based at best, traumatic at its worst.

Schools play a large role in communicating to students how they should participate in society. Mehan (1980) asserts that the objective of the typical classroom interaction is not to educate, but to socialize students into their acceptable, appropriate roles. He argues that students are primed in school to be independently, rather inter-dependently minded. In the process, they compete with, rather than cooperate with, one another. The strict enforcement of these acquisition oriented goals are useful for exerting social control over students. It is a rather effective method. One of the psychologists in the Palo Alto school district lamented that the students had “internalized their parents’ priorities and didn’t know how to break free” (Rosin, 2016, p. 25). The psychologist was disturbed by the student’s inability to stand up for themselves against the pressures of cultural and thus parental norms. Taylor Chiu, a student who attempted suicide in high school, went on to compare her experiences in school to living under Foucault’s (1977) notion of the panopticon, the all-seeing watchtower used to monitor and control the behavior of prisoners. She noted, “you don’t even need walls or fences or physical restraints. You just restrain them by creating a social norm” (Rosin, 2016, p. 26). This depiction of students as prisoners of ideology highlights the urgent necessity of a counter-narrative. There has to be another way. Rather than exerting social control through the promotion of acquisition based values such as achievement, competition, and meritocracy, might it be possible to emancipate children to live more fulfilling lives?

### **How can we write a different story: Toward a different set of values**

The way to influence the values of society, to change the nature of the imagined community, is to tell a different story about what it means to be an American. However, this is no easy task. Penuel and Wertsch (1998) outlined the ways in which people from marginalized

communities have fought to have their voices heard in order to change the traditional historical narrative. The ability of minorities, women, and the disabled to author themselves is a right that has largely been denied. Critical theorists urge us to consider the role that race, class, gender, and ability play in education. The power differential between those who have a voice, and those who do not, requires that educators make an explicit effort to rewrite racist, sexist, and ableist narratives.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) echoed this message in their advocacy for counter-storytelling to the “master” narrative in order to liberate and empower students to counter the prevailing deficit based discourse. Critical media scholars such as Sherell McArthur (2016) are bringing this work to the classroom through projects to help students “counter the stereotypes that haunt society’s collective consciousness” (McArthur, 2016, p. 365). The goal of McArthur’s work is to equip students to work for social activism. Through critiquing the familiar story and disrupting the status quo, these students are moving towards participation in a democratic society. Similarly, the 30th anniversary of Freire’s (2015) groundbreaking work encourages education for the purposes of liberation. In his view, schooling should be emancipatory. It is essential that students create a counter narrative, rather than simply adapt to the dominant one.

Based on socio-cultural theories of learning theory, I believe that there are three necessary components to enacting a different metaphor for learning in the classroom: helping students develop personal identities that reflect their highest aspirations, assisting students in acknowledging and understanding the other and fostering a collective sense of action and responsibility. These three ideals, understanding “I”, “You” and “We”, move students from individualism toward interdependence; it is an idea encompassed in the metaphor of the classroom as a Global Village.

### *I: Personal Identity*

Learning theories that highlight the socio-cultural aspects of instruction speak to many of the most important factors in individual identity development. As stated by Nasir and Cooks, drawing on theorists including Wenger, “because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming—to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person” (Nasir & Cooks, 2009,

p.43). Learning is a process that transforms an individual's identity little by little. It is also a process of becoming a member in a community. Jean Lave (1991) describes this induction through apprenticeship and relationship. Joining in a learning community can be a process of trying on many hats to discover which ones "fit". Gee (2000) highlights the potential playful nature of this discovery; classrooms can be fun and whimsical places. This process can be emancipatory, for example, a student with dyslexia might find that doing "hands on minds on" science in the classroom reveals her superior analytical reasoning skills. This student can share her knowledge with her classmates as they work through a project. Rather than being positioned in the class as a poor reader, this student now has the opportunity to contribute to the community and display competence. Participation should not be a process of simply sorting students. Children and young adults should be provided with the opportunity to discover ideas and identities that they may not have been previously aware of. Skilled instructors are able to draw out and build on students' developing understandings and identities. In this way teachers and students both can have an expanded view of what is possible. Through involvement in many learning communities, students can uncover their distinctive talents and the ways that they are uniquely able to contribute to the world.

### *You and We: Relationship Building*

In addition to fostering individual development in a way that affirms students' value in community, students must also understand how their place and actions in community impacts others. Ubuntu is a useful concept for developing this value in young adults. Ubuntu is a communal logic, exemplified by the phrase, "your child is also my child" (Murove, 2012, p. 40). This Bantu idea stands in sharp contrast to the dehumanizing practices of colonialism. It pre-supposes humanity, while many other value systems, such as acquisition, pre-condition full humanity on obtaining the proper status. This full humanity is unobtainable by many people, due to their race, class, gender, or ability. In contrast, ***Ubuntu:***

is based on a worldview of relationality... that as human beings we depend on other human beings to attain ultimate well-being...that it is the reality of our dependence and interdependence with each other that we attain the fullest of our humanness (Murove, 2012, p. 37).

This focus on relationship details how personal identity is intricately related to community. Well-being is fully realized only in relationship with others. Interdependence as an underlying philosophy asserts the “key values of group solidarity, compassion, respect and human dignity” (Letseka, 2012, p.48). Ubuntu recognizes the need to cooperate as we depend on one another. Indeed, psychologists Johnson and Johnson (2009) state that positive interdependence increases productivity and achievement for everyone in the classroom.

Feminist ethicists have also conceptualized care as a radical act of self-knowledge and the liberation of the other. Mayeroff (1965) for example, writes about identity-in-difference, which allows for the, “experience the other person as other, as apart from us, and at the same time as also one with us” (p. 463). Identity-in-difference does not refer to losing one’s personal identity in favor of another’s, but instead fosters a better understanding of both the self and the other. According to Noddings (1988), an orientation toward care in teaching requires that caring for the other is not be done out of a sense of duty, but out of “love and natural inclination” (p. 219). Caring out of love and inclination implies a deep relationship. This relationship can only be accomplished in situations that do not foster extreme competition and individual achievement.

Conceptualizing the classroom as a Global Village combines the principles of socio-cultural learning theory, Ubuntu, and feminist ethics into an ideal balance of individuality within solidarity. A village is a town that is small enough to promote a sense of community. People know, and are known by, their neighbors. A Global Village takes that same sense of belonging and interconnectedness and applies it to the larger world. It is not possible to be in relationship with everyone on the planet. Instead, the Global Village is the notion that our fates are interrelated. Participation and cooperation in the classroom are traits that students can take with them out into the world. These are values that students will have with them as they leave the classroom and influence society.

In reimagining our communities, we can utilize the same tools, for example storytelling, mythologizing, and the use of metaphor, to enact a value system that encourages more than simple acquisition. Care, justice, and a fulfilling personal identity call forth a more important pursuit than happiness; they beckon a quest for meaning. By meaning, I refer to what

is intended to be. Freeing students to live their lives as they are intended to be is a noble aspiration for schools. Helping students live lives that feel significant, expressive, and recognize their intrinsic value is a worthy goal of education.

Some schools are already succeeding in enacting the Global Village metaphor. It is not an accident that so many cultural movements start in classrooms. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), anti-Vietnam war movements, and the women's rights movement were all born on college campuses. This is because the classroom can provide a space where values can be challenged, and just as importantly, reimagined. For example, The Schools of Opportunity network (<http://schoolsofopportunity.org/>) identified eight high schools to receive its highest level of recognition for creating a path for all students to excel. The distinction goes to schools that are not comprised of mostly affluent students but are still managing to achieve excellent academic and social outcomes. The Opportunity Schools are a tangible example of what everyday schools can achieve with vision, leadership, and support. Perhaps a more radical example of a different vision for schooling is Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center in Colorado, which prides itself on its emphasis on community, restorative justice, and the development of an individual moral and ethical compass. While it may not be easy to replicate the Eagle Rock model due to the demands of running a year-round residential program it is worth noting their ability to develop a rationale for learning that centers on identity-in-difference.

## **Conclusion**

Cultural values are reflected through various discourse practices, in particular, through the use of metaphor, which in turn shape schooling experiences of youth. Acquisition, competition, and meritocracy centered metaphors for learning contrast to participation, relationship, and Global Village based representations of schooling. Though the metaphor of a Global Village is far from perfect, it is an attempt to put into words an ideal for learning that embraces the other. Educators work hard on behalf of their students, policy makers act in good faith to alleviate inequality, reformers and researchers work tirelessly to improve education for all. However, taking a step back to examine the purposes of education is a

necessary foundational step in improving any system. Is the purpose of education to prepare students to thrive in a society that values acquisition above all else? Should our education system accept, uncritically, larger cultural values of gain? Are students who leave our schools equipped to contribute to society in ways other than economic? If so, is there an expectation that they will, or that they should? The way that we talk about learning and school is not inconsequential to answering these questions.

The democratic nature of education is not evident in society's fascination with acquiring more. However, thinkers such as John Goodlad and John Dewey envisioned schooling as a democratic process. Work in the classroom can support this democratic purpose, and it is necessary in order to support participatory values in culture. Ultimately, preparing students to pursue a life of meaning will likely result in acquiring happiness as well. Giving students the tools that they need to map out a fulfilling personal identity, serve others, and participate in community can give meaning to life in a way that completing more Advanced Placement courses, or buying more items might not be able to. One could argue that the Founding Fathers did not intend that everyone would participate in our democracy.. Political and media institutions as they currently exist, cannot be trusted to foster a value of participation in everyday citizens. Participation must be cultivated in the classroom. Participation, reflected in the ideal of a Global Village, is a potential foundation for educating students not to enter existing systems, but to reform and build new ones.

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# Teacher Preparation for Justice through Democratic Pedagogy

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## Abstract

*The concept of social justice has emerged as an influential topic in teacher preparation as teacher educators have struggled to address deep systemic inequalities. However, without adequate attention to pedagogy, the current literature fails to fully address practical teacher actions or issues of power in the classroom. In this paper I argue that a democratic pedagogy is essential to bridge the theory-practice gap and help teachers confront their role as authority figures. Drawing on Amy Gutmann and Richard Rorty, I suggest teacher preparation emphasize the process of education – teaching democratically, justly, and equitably - to further the goals of social justice.*

## Introduction

In their book for new teachers, Kroll, Donahue, and Galguera (2004) invite us to consider a common occurrence. A student arrives to class two minutes late. The teacher has several options. If the school has a strict tardy policy that requires late students to be sent to the office, the teacher must decide whether to uphold the rule. Doing so will take instructional time away from other students in the class as well as from the tardy student. The teacher might decide to begin class and talk with the student later about the importance of being punctual. If this is the student's first offense, the teacher might simply let the tardy go. However, if the school has collectively decided to grapple with student tardies as a team, this decision effectively puts the teacher in the position of undermining his or her colleagues. If the student is new to the school, this adds yet another wrinkle to the situation, of which there are infinitely more.

This example is about student lateness, but decisions ranging from assessment design to facilitating inquiry to seating arrangements are the domain of pedagogy and they can quickly accumulate to influence a

student's future. In schools serving low-income communities, how well are new teachers prepared to make these judgment calls? Given deep systemic challenges, many have turned to a social justice approach to support new teachers in making judgments that promote educational equity.

In the context of education, “social justice” has evolved into a broad idea about how teachers can enact progressive change. At its core is the idea that to further a just society, educators must acknowledge and confront existing power differentials while working to create an environment where student agency is developed and oppressive systems are challenged (Hackman, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2010). This is a powerful statement about our role as educators. Yet training new teachers to convert the spirit of a social justice education into meaningful practice has proved a deeply contested process. Common critiques are aimed at vague and diluted definitions of social justice (Zeichner, 2006, Cochran-Smith, 2010), a missing focus on praxis and evaluation (Grant & Agosto, 2008), and the challenges of developing teacher identities that support social justice (Sleeter, 2001).

To strengthen our commitment to lasting social justice the preparation of new teachers can benefit by embracing pedagogy – that is, the practices of teaching. The literature on social justice in education has left this space largely unexplored and to address this gap I will argue that in prioritizing democratic pedagogy, teacher educators will embrace concrete teacher practices and demands that new teachers confront in their role as authority figures in the classroom. Grounding my argument in the philosophies of Amy Gutmann and Richard Rorty, I suggest that a shift in the core of teacher preparation is essential to developing the skills and mindsets necessary for participation in a democracy. This is a not a new concept; the writings of John Goodlad (1994) and organizations like the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER, 2007) have authored a powerful vision of teacher education that furthers democratic values. My argument is that in the face of persistent inequality in our schools, democratic pedagogy provides increased clarity for teacher educators that can further the goals of social justice.

This is an issue of great urgency for teacher educators, especially for those who prepare teachers to work in low-income schools. In the following section I outline why contemporary ideas of social justice in teacher preparation, while setting an ambitious and necessary vision of

a just education, have not confronted central pedagogical challenges of teaching for equity. Then, I will argue for a focus on pedagogy by suggesting that concrete teacher practices impact the learning and civil rights of students. By focusing on classroom practice, we can support new teachers in confronting important questions of their role as agents of power in the classroom. Drawing on Gutmann and Rorty, I next make the case that teachers who understand their power in classroom spaces can teach with a commitment to justice and the valuing of multiple perspectives. This is the foundation of a pedagogy that is democratic and serves social justice. I'll conclude by suggesting that rather than diminishing considerations of theory, a practical focus on pedagogy can inform and invigorate our theoretical ideals.

## **Teacher Educators and the Process of Social Justice**

Teachers preparing to work in low-income communities enter an education system marked by deep inequities. Years of tracking students (Ford, 1998), denying access to challenging curricula (Oakes, 2011), rewarding those with reserves of social capital (Lareau, 2003; Wells & Serna, 1996), and cementing segregation trends borne out of racist housing policies (Owens, Reardon, & Jencks 2016; Goldsmith 2010) have resulted in stubborn biases and unjust educational outcomes. Theories of education for social justice have actively sought to contest this material reality by advocating a range of ideas, including the need to fight oppression, contest existing systems of power, work for the equitable distribution of resources, and encourage active community participation (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011; Hackman, 2005; Bell, 2016; Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015; Cochran Smith, 2010). Schools have been a focus for this work because they are central to the long history of the disempowerment of minorities and the concentration of poverty. As the “center of the maelstrom of constant crises of low income communities,” schools are places where activists can challenge political and economic practices from the federal to the local scale (Anyon, 2005, p. 177). Indeed, many teacher candidates deliberately choose to start their careers out of a commitment to budding conceptions of social justice (Olson, 2008, 33; Agrawal et al., 2010).

Yet, for new teachers – many who are white and/or must work across a demographic divide (Lee, 2011; Sleeter, 2001) – the act of teaching for

social justice is challenging. A central reason is the lack of clarity around what it means to “teach for social justice.” Social justice has thus been widely criticized for being ambiguous and vaguely defined (Cochran-Smith, 2010, p. 445); is it an idea, a philosophy, an orientation? Social justice theories span a wide terrain including ideas regarding “critical pedagogy,” power relations, community collaboration, and the exploration of identity (Grant & Agosto, 2008, pp. 186-194; Hytten & Bettez, 2011). Multiple frameworks seek to organize the concept (Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012) creating a seemingly malleable definition that can be adopted without being tied to a common set of beliefs (Zeichner, 2006). The ensuing muddle has meant that “teacher educators’ and teacher candidates’ actions in the name of social justice are often superficial, ineffective and uniformed,” (Grant & Agosto, 2008, 195).

The ambiguity stems in part from evolving ideas about social justice which have expanded from traditional concerns with repression and economic inequality to ones of representation and discrimination (Grant & Agosto, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2011, p. 183; North, 2006, p. 509). North (2006) describes how as the term social justice has appeared in education discourse, three spheres of ‘friction’ emerged. One is the tension between equality as an idea of sameness and an idea of difference. Another is the division of attention between macro-level processes and the deep complexity of everyday individual interactions, and a third is the issue of redistributive justice versus recognition of identities. These frictions come alive for educators when considering examples like the demands of individual student needs for attention and caring against ideals of fairness, or how to respond to a misbehaving student who is also the resident of a derelict foster system. The micro/macro level distinctions and the sameness/difference ideas of equality create tensions that are hard to resolve (p. 516).

Some educators, in their approach to social justice, have demonstrated a danger in attempting to resolve this tension by broadening the scope of teachers’ work. For example, new teachers are urged to challenge administrative structures (Picower, 2012; Hackman 2005), connect with larger movements for justice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Picower, 2012) and access local community knowledge (Zeichner, et al., 2015). Such a broad conception of social justice has expanded the mandate of teacher preparation to include macro-level calls to activism. Consider this example:

Teacher preparation for social justice challenges the testing regime and the inequities it reinforces.... This does not mean that teacher education for justice simply sits outside the accountability system, however. Rather the point is to construct a different kind of accountability by working simultaneously within and against the system. (Cochran-Smith, 2010, pp. 458-459)

Both challenging the ‘testing regime’ and working within the accountability system are complex, difficult endeavors, and there is an underlying sentiment that for teachers to make a meaningful difference they must be connected to a larger national discourse. Giroux’s (1994) urging of teachers to be ‘public intellectuals’ and Bell’s (2016) call for coalition building and solidarity are in a similar vein. In the critical period of a teacher’s development, such examples ask teachers to challenge the status quo, transform institutions, work against standardized tests, and teach their students to succeed by more traditional measures.

Left unresolved is the question of what exactly constitutes teaching for social justice. Hytten and Bettez (2011) identified five different (and overlapping) strands of social justice that emerge in the literature: philosophical, ethnographic, theoretical, democratic, and practical. Teacher educators can and must wrestle with these complex strands of social justice, but our work must be firmly rooted in the practical. New teachers struggle for a variety of reasons. One of these is the challenge of meeting the ideals of non-oppressive education and equality while also finding their voice as authority figures (Agrawal et al., 2010). Learning to instruct and manage a classroom while fostering an inquiry culture is complex, daunting, and replete with early failure (Lew & Nelson, 2016).

My own perspective is that there exists a large social justice umbrella covering many related but different worldviews and sharing a commitment to building a society that ceaselessly fights oppression, fearlessly recognizes built-in systemic inequities, and tirelessly works to create an equality of voice and opportunity for all students. I share this commitment. Bell (2016, pp. 3-4) has written that social justice is both a goal and a process, and the specific processes she promotes are those that are democratic and participatory. The literature on training new teachers for social justice has inadequately addressed these important processes. John Goodlad (1999,

pp. 334-335) fully acknowledged that teacher preparation programs should have an explicit humanitarian mission, and that furthermore long term change required a “changing of the delivery system.” His resolution centered on the formation of Centers of Pedagogy. In the next section, I argue that a commitment to teacher pedagogy will add detail and nuance to the process of furthering a commitment to social justice.

## Why Pedagogy Supports Social Justice

The example at the beginning of this piece was about student lateness and perhaps that seems minor in the vast scope of a teacher’s job. Rather than suggesting social justice is found in classroom management, it was intended to represent the complexity of every aspect of a teacher’s work: if lateness raises this many questions, consider grading, or feedback to students, or designing inquiry experiences. More importantly, the example highlights that whatever the issue, new teachers need practical and tangible solutions that can be implemented in the classroom.

I’m arguing for democratic pedagogy in teacher preparation, but I’ll begin with a focus on the importance of pedagogy as a source of practical solutions. Following Goodlad (1999, p. 327), I define pedagogy comprehensively as the art and science of teaching. “Teaching” is a deceptively difficult term to unpack as it covers a variety of practices in a range of settings. A good further definition is the process of considering student needs to create intentional experiences that can lead to learning (Hirst, 1997; Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 499). This definition is not perfect and leaves ‘pedagogy’ open to contention, but it pushes us to identify the common actions that every teacher can demonstrate. It is incredibly challenging work. The actual words, actions, and decisions of a teacher matter, and there is a considerable body of literature arguing for a “Common Core for Learning to Teach,” (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Forzani, 2014; Schulman, 2013; Saphier, Haley-Speca, and Gower, 2008; Haberman, 1991). My argument goes beyond suggesting the need for teacher educators to embrace a shared knowledge base to suggest that a focus on pedagogy in particular can further social justice. By doing so, teachers can empower student voices to be heard, frame responses to failure, manage disagreement, and help transform the authoritarian structure of institutional schools into centers of learning where teachers enact the ‘democratic and participatory’ practices called for by Bell.

Some writers dismiss the value of pedagogical practice. Zeichner (2006) decries the attention given to classroom-based activity and Cochran-Smith (2010, 447) emphatically states that social justice education is not about methods. Discussing pedagogy is characterized as turning teaching into a technical activity through which teachers uncritically deliver biased curricula to passive students while devaluing theory (Giroux, 1994; Villegas, 2007, p. 378; Zeichner et al., 2015, p. 123). This is a real tension and one that social justice advocates are correct in raising. Why, then, should pedagogy as defined here be prominent in teacher education alongside discussing systemic inequality, community action, educational theory, or teacher dispositions? I offer three compelling reasons. First, a focus on pedagogy offers the potential for tangible impact in a way not readily explicit in social justice teacher education theory. Second, pedagogy fosters student achievement, an essential dimension of equity and the civil rights of all children to learn. Finally, pedagogy is the bridge between education as a socializing and actualizing force.

A significant shortcoming of the literature on social justice education has been the failure to provide any reasonable means of evaluating its impact (Grant & Agosto, 2008, pp. 185-186; Cochran-Smith, 2010; Zeichner, 2006). Without any clear framework, it is hard to make inferences about how teachers influence social justice. By contrast, pedagogy is concerned with the observable actions of a teacher that allow professional considerations of their practice. A number of high quality frameworks exist to support teacher development and evaluations of practice (Danielson, 2007; Saphier et al., 2008; Marzano, 2007), and the edTPA performance assessment, while not without shortcomings (Greenblatt, 2015), represents an attempt at holistic measurement (Paufler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2014, p. 257).

A common recommendation has been to focus on identifying and developing specific teacher dispositions that will further social justice. Such dispositions include an awareness of dominating cultural practices, a commitment to being an agent of change, a desire to learn about students' backgrounds, a tolerance for working in chaotic environments, and a valuing of effort over perceived ability (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, pp. 22-36; Haberman & Post, 1998, pp. 98-99). A similar suggestion is building a thorough and nuanced appreciation of the multiple facets of oppression in order to support reflective practice (Bell, 2016). While essential, teacher dispositions are notoriously difficult to evaluate and stubbornly resistant to

change (Lee, 2011; Sleeter, 2001, pp. 101-102). Perhaps this is why, in her argument to foreground dispositions, Villegas (2007) correctly notes that they are contingent on actions and teacher educators must thus ‘examine patterns of action’ in their trainings. While not stated explicitly, she writes that dispositions are evaluated through pedagogy, for example asking new teachers to modify a lesson plan for an English Language Learner, observing classroom interactions, and verifying all students in a teacher’s class are learning (p. 375). Pedagogical practices, then, are observable and the ‘ultimate test of value’ for professional knowledge (Shulman, 1998, 518).

My second claim is that a pedagogical focus is necessary to further equity and civil rights because it allows society to evaluate the education of all students. The issue of measuring outcomes in education is no doubt controversial, but if we follow Gutmann (1987) in concluding that “no educable child may be excluded from an education adequate to participating in the processes that structure choice among good lives,” (p. 128), then it’s apparent that a degree of evaluation is necessary to uphold a standard of justice. Her argument is that while disagreements about policy, curriculum, and structures are inevitable in education, a common commitment to non-repression and non-discrimination are the foundation of producing a just society. If it is claimed that denying children the right to attain an appropriate level of education is equivalent to denying their civil right to education (Michelli, 2005, 5-6), student learning must be measured against some standard of “appropriate.” For this reason, student academic achievement is at the center of the literature on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 160; Ware, 2006). Pedagogy committed to justice must consider all students, and we cannot meaningfully speak of valuing the achievement of all students without looking at their learning. While the methods of assessment and high-stakes testing culture are both valid areas of critique, this doesn’t lead to the conclusion that there should be no assessments of teaching. This means valuing and promoting measurable learning by students, including in subjects like math and science and especially for students who may be lacking basic skills (Tate, 2001; Schoenfeld, 2002).

The final reason is grounded in the liberal ideals of our culture: pedagogy in the classroom is what creates democracy through the act of education. The literature on social justice, and teacher preparation research in general (Cochran-Smith et al, 2014, 117), has little to say about the actual practice of preparing democratic citizens; this means there is an opportunity for

teacher educators to fully problematize the question of “how.” Perhaps one reason why there is little written about this topic is that it requires an acknowledgement of the fundamental authoritarian dynamic of schools.

As educators, it may be unpalatable to confront our role as agents of power and the dominant norms. Writing about community organizing in the twentieth century, Schutz (2011, 2008) addresses this discomfort by arguing that progressive beliefs regarding collaboration, participation, and shared interests are actually grounded in narrow and specific middle-class values developed over years of cultivation in protected private spaces of trust – like affluent classrooms. This was Dewey’s vision of democratic education, where individuals valued each other and nurtured unique perspectives; however even Dewey realized that such dynamics broke down in the absence of trust. According to Schutz (2011), however, public spaces where individuals tend to operate by shared (rather than self) interest follow a starkly different logic:

The idea that one could act in public in the trusting, open manner that Dewey recommended is a dangerous fantasy. And it is a fantasy most often clung to by the relatively privileged, by those who have never really experienced the iron fist of power. (p. 497).

In Schutz’s piece, classrooms are described as a private realm where trust can be fostered, in contrast with the public world of labor negotiations and school administering. However, educators who work in disadvantaged schools are quick to realize that they are subject to the dynamics of public spaces where actors – both students and educators - don’t have the luxury of developing a unique identity and instead must “appear in roles and wear masks” (p. 501); that is, they must make decisions according to a calculus of perception. Students in such schools are often navigating complex fields of earning respect, saving face, and downplaying effort (Haberman, 1997). In private spaces of trust, the currency of exchange is discourse, negotiation, and individualized interaction; it is the type of relationship with educators that is cultivated by middle-class parents and has been described in depth by Lareau (2003).

Instead, as the product of the deep systemic inequality and injustices, schools are places of public distrust. Inequitable funding, unjust disciplinary practices, teacher turnover, administrative negligence - these

all combine to create spaces where the currency of exchange is power and respect. To counter this, new teachers must actively create private spaces of trust out of public spaces of distrust, and this demands an assertion of authority through pedagogy. Teachers are responsible for guiding students in learning how to follow rules, act in public fora, and respond to social norms - all critical parts of living with others. Even the most student-centered progressive educator would have to acknowledge that students need to take turns in a discussion and can't fight over learning materials; in this way modern schools fulfill the critical function of socialization (Rorty, 1999). Dewey also argued cogently that not only was some form of control inevitable in all education, it was necessary for the development of freedom. Freedom as an end in itself can be destructive and negative; it needs a measure of restriction to guide short-term impulses and frame larger purposes (Dewey, 1997, pp. 51-67). Indeed, studies of teachers who enact Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with minority students are rife with disciplinary techniques we might view as harsh and domineering – like yelling or assertively demanding effort - but which actually serve to create orderly, respectful learning environments that value students (Delpit 2006; Howard 2001, 139-140; Brown, 2004, 270; Ware 2006, 452).

The point isn't that teachers should yell; it's that foregrounding pedagogy makes teachers confront the choices that organize power in the class, and thus clears the way for teachers to be intentional about its use. Recognizing power structures is an essential step in teaching marginalized students how to operate in a dominant culture (Haberman, 1997; Delpit, 2006, 23-28). Rorty (1999) argues that socialization of students must happen before they can embark on a process of individualization – which he alternately describes as “self-creation” - and while his distinction is likely too rigid (Reich, 1996) his point that there is a measure of control inherent in education is worth acknowledging. Though perhaps initially distasteful, this should not be surprising; Gutmann (1987) writes, “That an ideal democratic school is not as democratic as an ideal democratic society should not disenchant us; indeed, if students were naturally democratic than we couldn't justify compulsory schooling,” (p. 94).

Nurturing a democratic spirit in students, through intentional design and within a structure of power, is the realm of pedagogy and the charge of teacher preparation programs. I've argued here it also puts civil rights and equity at the center. Strong teaching alone is not enough; there must be some way of determining which pedagogy will serve the needs of both

the individual and a democratic society, that will aide in a conscious social reproduction (Gutmann, 1987, pp. 41-44). I now turn to that question.

## Why a *Democratic Pedagogy*?

My purpose is to make the case that teacher preparation can best further justice by developing a democratic pedagogy. Why must pedagogy specifically be democratic, and what would be the criteria? Within the sphere of teaching, democratic processes support intentionally creating space for multiple voices, values to be challenged, and for standards of critical reasoning to be upheld. As Gutmann (p. 14) has argued, education will succeed in creating such spaces when it meets the standard of being non-repressive and non-discriminatory. Defined in this way, democratic pedagogy implies a shift in teacher education that embraces how to teach rather than what to teach.

Much has been written about the “what” of teaching – curricula, community action, textbooks or literature used in class – stemming from a contention that there is no such thing as apolitical teaching and that all teaching furthers certain values and biases. In such a worldview, an educator must make decisions about what is taught by determining what is most just (Picower, 2012 Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2011; Anyon, 2005). From such a view, valuing all ideas equally in the classroom – for example, creationism and evolution or advocating meritocratic values over egalitarian ones – denies a certain history of oppression and injustice and perhaps promotes ignorance.

My argument here is that choosing democratic pedagogy, rather than being neutral, is a bold political statement in and of itself requiring intellectual courage. The seeds of promoting critical reason, debate, argumentation, evaluation, and competing ideas, can be found in Rorty’s (1989) vision of an ideal liberal society. Since at least Plato, religious doctrine, positivism, or teleology had served to provide moral order and cohesion to society. But in attempts at uncovering an absolute truth, post-enlightenment artists, scientists, and philosophers highlighted intrinsic hypocrisies in individuals and institutions resulting in human cruelty and injustice. Instead, they proposed contingent truths about the world, with the consequence that multiple vocabularies and world descriptions became valid. It is this embracing of diverse views – some of them deplorable, to

be sure – which educators who believe in social justice decry as blindly apolitical and perhaps oppressive (Cochran-Smith, 2010, 447; Hackman, 2005, 103-105).

In such a society where it seems anything goes, what is to prevent indifference, ignorance, tyranny – what Rorty (1997) terms ‘vulgar relativism’? For Rorty, the answer is a liberal education united against human suffering and committed to creating the opportunity for all to engage in ‘self-creation.’ An education that promotes a certain search for truth – even if like the narrative of social justice it is one that resonates with progressive educators - has historically solidified into dogma or orthodoxy. However, a robust and equitable education that values inquiry, skepticism, problem solving, and is united against human suffering, can provide the cohesion and growth necessary to strengthen society (Rorty, 1997; 1989, p. 66). Humans have different needs and histories leading to inevitable disagreement about the nature of reality; thus adopting a certain viewpoint is less important than an education that fosters the ability to critically consider multiple viewpoints and arguing persuasively for those ideas. Education should foster varied vocabularies and constantly re-describe our realities, our histories, our societies, so that we can solve the unique problems of our time (1997, pp. 525-527). This idealized process can happen through deliberative democratic processes. Rather than being neutral, Gutmann (1987, pp. 41-45) makes clear that an education system with room for a variety of opinions takes a firm political stance in favor of democratic decision making.

There has been considerable work in theorizing standards for a democratic education that could fulfill this ideal. A democratic pedagogy would meet the threshold required to ensure that all students can participate effectively in the democratic process (Gutmann, 1987, pp. 136-138). Goodlad’s (1994) postulates and the mission of the NNER (2007) are further examples outlining criteria against which pedagogy can be measured. The Agenda for Education in a Democracy, which guides the NNER, created a four-part mission related to teacher education that includes fostering skills necessary for participation in a democratic society, ensuring all students access to knowledge and skills necessary for full and productive lives, providing teachers who can nurture students’ development, and ensuring educator stewardship of schools. Similar to Rorty’s arguments for education in a liberal utopia, such criteria suggest a pedagogical emphasis not on content but on process, and furthermore on access. That is, it is not

sufficient to teach about oppression or multiculturalism. We must use our pedagogy to ensure that all students are learning.

A just, equitable, and democratic society requires teachers who can enact and foster justice, equity, and democracy. This is perhaps self-evident, but instead of addressing the specific teacher practices required to make this happen social justice advocates often prioritize curricular suggestions (Picower, 2012; Cammarota, 2007; Fellman-Fattal, 2017; Bell & Desai, 2011). Without denying the importance of content, teacher preparation must prioritize democratic processes over specific curriculum – indeed, that is the curriculum. Said another way, the emphasis should change from what is taught to how anything is taught.

Gutmann (1987, pp. 106-107) uses the example of teaching civics to argue that increasing historical knowledge should not be the most relevant result of such courses; instead, for a democracy the most important value is the ability to reason critically. A counter-argument is that such a pedagogical approach embraces neutrality and denies any inherent politicization. Teaching ahistorically or without an awareness of patterns of privilege and differential social capital will only reproduce existing inequalities (Larueau, 2003; Valenzuela, 2002). However, it's not that anything can be taught; as Gutmann points out, professional standards and strong content knowledge are important defenses against baseless instruction. Teaching creationism or the American Civil War as an 'economic' issue thus doesn't fulfill standards of non-repression because they don't meet professional standards. However, there are different descriptions of controversial issues ranging from climate change to workers' rights, and a democratic pedagogy would position students to explore these complex issues. For this reason choosing to practice and teach democratic processes is a deeply moral and political decision (Kroll et al., 2004, pp. 123-127; Haberman, 1991).

Democratic societies are subject to the "dictatorship of the majority" and capitalist ones are in danger of folding under over-consumption and greed; education is a vital area of generating multiple counter-narratives that challenge systems of injustice (Gause et al., 2009). As both Gutmann (1987, p. 137) and Rorty (1989, p. 63) point out, there is a strong element of trust in our institutions to make a meaningful difference, one that teacher educators implicitly support through their vocation. Democratic pedagogy that focuses on process can prepare students to answer critical questions faced by citizens; teachers must be prepared to make the case

over and over that respect, justice and equality are core values. As one possible pathway for this work, Michelli (2005) advocates building individual responsibility into democratic education by having all teachers take up the following questions about what it means to be “civil”

How does one deal with disagreements and resolve them? How might we treat other persons we encounter, especially when their beliefs and views are different from our own? What are the implications for flexibility and empathy in dealing with other perspectives? (p. 5).

A democratic pedagogy that prepares students, all students, with the skills and thinking habits necessary to answer questions like these will only strengthen our society because it demands actions from our students. It can support the process of social justice by pushing all students to value cultural differences and detect patterns of inequality. Like the Pragmatic philosophies of Dewey that emphasized the role of experience in shaping understanding, Thayer-Bacon (1999) has written that the very act of engaging creates unique and individual understandings of concepts, or knowledge. Such an education supports the thinking of Rorty regarding the valuing of varied attempts to describe and solve human problems in unity against human suffering.

## **Conclusion: Pedagogy that Bridges Theory & Practice**

A criticism of calls for pedagogy is that they are a veiled move to control the work of teachers. The primacy of teacher practice can be difficult to accept because it is feared that, without proper theoretical grounding, teachers will be transformed into technicians (Villegas, 2007; Giroux, 1994) and solidify unjust institutional structures. I’d like to close by contending a focus on pedagogy grounded in democratic principles can bridge the theory-practice divide by creating reflective practitioners who exercise professional judgement.

Goodlad (1999) insisted that teaching was not a mechanical act, yet he also emphasized the urgent need for skilled teachers. His solution was to embed inquiry into pedagogical practice to allow growth, experimentation, and reflection. Such an approach could address the limitations of theory that is often necessarily generalized or simplified. Drawing on Dewey, Shulman (1998) makes the case that it is an engagement with practice that

allows theory to be useful in cultivating moral educators. Rather than being separated, Shulman describes a “curriculum of theory-in-practice dedicated to the understanding of theory-for-practice,” (p. 523); practice offers a chance to measure the infinite specificity of teaching against the backdrop of generalized theory and to develop sound professional judgment.

Advocating for pedagogy is not a demand to ignore theoretical considerations or deep reflection. Alongside teacher practice in the classroom, the exercising of sound judgment is a critical element of pedagogy and skilled facilitation can help new teachers mine the spaces between the abstract and concrete (Pollock et al., 2010). Two ideas that support such training are teacher rehearsals (Kazemi et al., 2016) and Shulman’s (2013) call for the development of strategic pedagogical knowledge through investigating the contradictions in teacher practice.

I’ve argued in this paper that equity is furthered when new teachers are skillfully prepared to make real pedagogical choices in their classrooms. The principles of democratic pedagogy ask teacher educators to consider power in the classroom, critical reflection, student learning, and the teacher skills needed to foster student inquiry and participation. Such an approach is grounded in concrete actions and attention to the learning of all students; thus, it can further the aims of social justice by attending to material inequalities and highlighting traditionally marginalized students.

Consider the example at the beginning of this paper. A democratic pedagogy might suggest teacher decisions in the moment that help the student access the learning, or subtle actions that both communicate the student is welcome and that important learning was missed. They might consider long-term incentives, reflection activities, make-up work, or perhaps find time for a skillful counseling session to identify the root causes of lateness. The many possible interactions are all complex, difficult, and founded on principles of belief in the student and expectations for success, and they are included in the collection of democratic pedagogy. Even if none of these ideas work, the teacher still has encountered a rich learning opportunity to frame future decisions.

Anticipating solutions contained in the current social justice literature shows why they don’t fully serve students. There might be the argument that regimented school schedules are unjust, that late policies tracking students are preparing them for low-skilled service under harsh corporate surveillance, or perhaps that enacting a consequence is criminalizing

minor misbehavior in preparation for prison. Certainly these are all examples of critical reflection on systemic oppression, but they also do not serve the student in the moment. Without a concrete teacher action, there is little around which theorizing or ideals can coalesce.

There is a strong collection of quality research on effective pedagogy ranging from how to foster the consideration of alternate viewpoints (Gelbach, 2011) or design authentic assessments (Wiggins, 1998). There is inspiring research on how to create cultures of high expectations (Saphier et al., 2008, 261-298) and how to build student responses to injustice (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). Teacher education programs, and networks like NNER, have an opportunity to become leaders in training teachers for equity by compiling and utilizing this body of knowledge that prepare teachers for democratic pedagogy.

If we are to work towards the goals of social justice - fighting oppression, valuing all humans equally, committing to a just distribution of resources – then our classroom spaces should reflect the process of social justice. That is, beyond being trained to teach about democracy, justice, and equity, our new teachers should be trained to teach democratically, justly, and equitably. This concrete pedagogical work is compelling, fulfilling, and vital because it is not one of spectatorship but of agency (Rorty, 1998). It is in this space that teacher educators can embrace the fight for justice.

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# Renewing the People for the Agenda for Education in a Democracy: Examining Teachers' Needs and Challenges Through Stories of Their Professional Lives \*

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## Abstract

*How might teachers' stories (e.g., retellings, accounts) of their professional lives inside and outside the classroom provide insight into the needs and challenges of teachers? Analysis of the written story data from five focus teachers, the last five authors of this manuscript, suggests that teachers perceive mandates from the state as a stress upon their time and well-being. The data also suggests that time is perceived to be a key factor in the relationships teachers build with their students. The data imply that teachers, in addition to their PK-12 students, need people to support them with nurturing pedagogy, a trait of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (Goodlad, 1994).*

*Keywords: teacher needs, story, nurturing pedagogy, National Network for Educational Renewal, Agenda for Education in a Democracy*

## Introduction

Teachers are overworked and overwhelmed. This is no surprise. Yet, the demands placed upon teachers now, as opposed to decades or even a few years ago, have humanism increased considerably. Teacher candidates seeking initial teacher licensure often require reassurance that education is an excellent career choice, as sometimes their own cooperating teachers tell them differently. Veteran as well as new teachers leave the classroom, burnt out, to begin degrees outside the field. The problem is often not the teaching itself, nor the students, despite the increasing challenges students bring to school. It is the peripheral demands on teachers that make the career less desirable. We often hear that if they could “just teach,” their careers would be less stressful and their students would receive more of their time and energy.

## Context

Hearing story after story of teachers’ increasing stress, tasks, and challenges, Angie opted to make the support of teachers the work of her sabbatical. She particularly wanted to support her former students, secondary English language arts preservice teachers, through a new group called the Advocacy Community for Teachers. The acronym “ACT” implied that the group would “act” in ways to effect positive change for themselves, their students, and potentially their schools, state, and profession. Social media announcements were posted to invite all who were interested in supporting teachers. Cooperating teachers who hosted graduate student teachers in year-long placements were invited, as were faculty in colleges of education and liberal arts. Angie also invited recently retired English language arts teachers and professors as well as experienced teachers to attend advocacy gatherings. Rather than another task to check off, the advocacy community was, and continues to be, flexible and low-pressure, with teachers attending when they are able. Teachers were welcome to share stories of their experiences or exchange ideas, but the monthly gatherings were spaces for the teachers to “be fed,” rather than to “prepare the meal.” They came to learn, socialize with other teachers, problem solve, empathize, reconnect with members of their graduate cohort, and take a breather from the stresses of data, report writing, and their own assessment. Gatherings included a meeting with a state representative to voice concerns about education and teacher

licensure policies, a presentation by a veteran teacher who coordinates her district's summative assessment that all resident educators in Ohio must pass by the end of their fifth year of teaching, and a work group session for writing proposals to present at the state language arts conference.

One group's presentation at the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts conference (OCTELA) focused on the importance of sharing the stories of our professional experiences for our social, emotional, and psychological well-being. Silencing our stories can result in isolation, shame, guilt, and perfectionism (Brown, 2007). Understanding that we are not alone in the challenges of teaching can make a difference in our well-being. Therefore, our research question unfolded as, "How might teachers' stories (e.g., retellings, accounts) of their professional lives inside and outside the classroom provide insight into the needs and challenges of teachers?"

## Review of Literature

John I. Goodlad's ideas for the National Network for Educational Renewal's (NNER) mission for education in a democracy (1994) offers one way of considering teachers' needs. While one typically thinks of PK-12 students and preservice teachers as the key recipients of the benefits of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED), inservice teachers, too, require access to knowledge, encouragement to participate in a democracy, nurturing pedagogy, and stewardship of their roles in schooling (Goodlad, 1994). Goodlad's *A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future* (1983) suggests decentralizing power from states to districts and schools. As we hear teachers' stories, it seems the state wields a great deal of power over teachers, often negatively affecting their professional lives and personal well-being. Uitto, Kaunisto, Syrjälä, and Estola (2015) explain that challenges upon teachers' time can cause "a conflict between teachers' moral commitment to take care of their students' needs and the increasing external demands or administrative tasks" (p. 171). Such conflict can be incredibly stressful for teachers.

Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) acknowledge the very human conditions of teachers in schools, advocating for professional educators to share their stories. They note, "Democracy demands that we strip away the masks of the faceless so they may be counted among

the living, that we give names to the nameless, and that the voices to whom those names belong have a chance not just to be heard, but to be listened to” (Goodlad, et al., 2004, p. 93). Story can be an instrument of empowerment, a way to be “listened to.” Narrative, or story, can begin conversations about issues facing educators, students, and education as a whole. Uitto, et al. (2015) explain, “Through storytelling, teachers can raise issues that might otherwise be difficult to discuss. Since teacher identity is told and retold in everyday situations, it is important that teachers have time and room to share experiences related to their work” (p. 174).

Further, direct, personal communication may be particularly important. Paulus and Scherff (2008) state that in technology-mediated, online support communities for teachers, it can be “difficult to establish trust or a sense of community” (p. 116). With highly taxing workloads, and social, psychological, and emotional challenges, technology-mediated support can certainly be worthwhile, but it may not be sufficient as a sole tool for support (Tsai, 2012). While many benefit from mediated or large-group communication, sharing styles vary, and others may desire more direct or personal communication. Considering the highly sensitive nature of some teachers’ stories, preference for large-group or individual communication may depend on the context of the story. Paulus and Scherff (2008) found a lack of studies on “how future teachers engage with each other, if at all, to provide emotional support to their peers” (p. 116, emphasis original). We strongly advocate for times of direct, interpersonal communication as well as mediated interactions. However, using the term “mediate” differently, Kozulin and Presseisen (1995) remind us of Vygotsky’s call for people—namely peers—to “mediate” learning for one another. Paulus and Scherff (2008) remind us of the non-academic needs of teachers, including “emotional support, positive regard, empathetic listening, confidence building, stress management, and increasing efficacy and self-reliance” (p. 115). Interpersonal communication, especially face-to-face interaction, can support not only teachers’ professional needs, but just as importantly their social, emotional, and overall wellness needs.

## Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis

In addition to the OCTELA conference presentation mentioned above, teachers Rikki, Elise, David, Deidra, and Leslie chose to share their stories with a broader audience. As co-authors of this article, they prepared written accounts of their experiences as teachers or of their paths to becoming teachers. Some of the teacher-authors discussed, emailed, or texted ideas to Angie about their stories, but ultimately chose their own topics. Angie read initial drafts and provided general guiding questions (e.g., “Can you provide an example here?”) through the Track Changes function in Word, and discussed via phone, email, or text with individuals to clarify comments. Stories appear as provided, with the exception of minor editing for consistency. As co-authors, the teachers participated not only as subjects to be studied, but also as writers to experience the process of academic publishing. It is hoped that this experience will encourage them to write for publication again. Furthermore, as a model of democracy in action, the teacher-authors witnessed sharing their stories to potentially effect positive change in the realm of education in our democracy. The following table provides demographic information on the teacher-authors.

Table 1: Teacher and School Context

Teacher	Middle or High School	School Context	Years Teaching
Rikki	high school	mid-sized, suburban, private, parochial	3
Elise	middle school	small, suburban, private, parochial	1
David	high school	small school in a large district, urban, public, credit recovery	1
Deidra	middle school	mid-sized, urban, public	5
Leslie	middle school and high school	mid-sized school in a large district, urban, public, arts magnet	3

Angie and Richele read the teachers’ stories and coded them as data with the categories of the NNER’s AED in mind (Goodlad, 1994).

After compiling and organizing the data as case studies, a cross-case analysis was performed in which Angie and Richele looked for emerging patterns and themes across all cases. The teacher-authors had the opportunity for a member check to express any discrepancies they found with the depiction of their stories or disagreement with the analysis. Table 2 outlines the coding categories used to analyze the data.

Table 2: Coding Categories

\*Not all categories are addressed in this article

Category	Description	Example
Access to Knowledge	Data indicating that teachers acknowledge the need for equity and excellence in education for all children	“It is unjust that our students do not have the same opportunities to be treated equally and to be held to high standards at any school.” --Leslie
Nurturing Pedagogy	Data pertaining to teaching characterized by concern for the well-being, growth and development of all children	“Building trusting, meaningful relationships has become the most crucial aspect for helping students succeed.” --David
Enculturation into Democratic Principles	Data relating to involving student participation in the democratic process and the pursuit of exemplary citizenship	“I want to teach my students Language Arts, but I also want to teach them about crucial social justice issues in the world so when they are faced with them they can make their own informed decisions.” --Elise
Stewardship	Data reflecting the teachers’ commitment to the profession, or ability and willingness to serve as leaders in the profession	“I’m happier than I’ve been in a long time and I’ve been going to a support group for teachers which has influenced me to start writing again by creating a blog.” --Rikki
State Mandates	Data expressing the teachers’ experiences with tasks required by the state (e.g., licensure, data collection, teacher evaluation)	“I was ashamed when I failed a [Resident Educator Summative Assessment] task. It made me question who I was as a teacher and if I was any good at my profession.” --Deidra
Relationships and Community	Data relating to the teachers’ experiences of interpersonal communication in the context of the classroom	“One last crucial step a teacher can take to build strong relationships within a learning community is through home visits.” --David

## Discussion of Findings

Considering the tenets of the AED in the analysis of the teachers' stories, nurturing pedagogy emerged as a factor in relation to state mandates as well as relationships and community building. The data from the teacher-authors' stories suggest that teachers perceive mandates from the state as a stress upon their time, resulting in negative emotions and thoughts about themselves as teachers and the teaching profession. The data also suggest that state mandates can be a barrier to teachers' personal and professional well-being due to a lack of time to care for oneself and one's students.

### The Impact of State Mandates and Time for Enacting Nurturing Pedagogy

The teacher-authors' stories suggest frustration with a lack of time to devote to their students due to the workload imposed by state mandates. Third-year teacher Leslie writes,

The RESA [Resident Educator Summative Assessment, required to obtain a professional teaching license] process has been extremely frustrating. In addition to regular duties as a classroom teacher—planning meaningful lessons for students, the copious amounts of paper work, teacher based team meetings, staff meetings, after school clubs/activities, ongoing professional development, and completing two rounds of observation for the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System [OTES]—RESA is an additional four tasks that are extremely time consuming.

According to the story data, Leslie's time outside the classroom is packed to the breaking point. She writes, "I constantly feel as if I am failing my students." Although Leslie states that she loves the part of her job that is actually teaching students, she feels "the assessments and extensive duties are unnecessarily exhausting." Further, she must manage the (perhaps unintentional) social pressure of teachers who "work around the clock," and her own self-doubt, a "constant nagging to just quit because I feel ineffective." She fears "that with the pressures from the school, district,

state, etc., my best isn't good enough. I just want to be there with and for my students. Mentally and physically." It seems that negative emotions from the work she finds "unnecessarily exhausting" are also negatively affecting her students, limiting her ability to provide nurturing pedagogy as recommended by the NNER's mission for the AED (Goodlad, 1994).

Leslie continues, "There is a key factor missing in the education system of today, humanism. My ultimate goal as an educator is to guide my students through the process of becoming self-learners and critical thinkers, yet the expectations of early-career teachers provide unnecessary obstacles." Leslie notes, "To be an effective educator, I must know my students; to know my students is to be aware of the burdens they come to school with every day." She writes that the student population is "beautifully diverse," "with students who come to us thirsty for guidance and a quality education. The challenges they face, which our staff need to be in tune to, are large pieces of who these children are as human beings." She perceives that students "want to be seen not as who they once were or who they might be, but as a human." Looking through the lens of the NNER's mission of the AED, Leslie seems committed to nurturing pedagogy (Goodlad, 1994). Yet, she seems to perceive that she is unable to teach the way she believes is necessary due to extensive obligations not directly related to teaching students.

Leslie continues reflecting on the hardships of her students. She writes,

One of our most talented eighth grade writers writes from a place of intense pain and darkness in her heart. Her mother passed away from a heroin overdose about two years ago. . . . Last semester a junior broke down in uncontrollable tears while reading an open letter she wrote to her father who left when she was a small child. A seventh-grade student with an ADHD diagnosis has trouble sitting still long enough to complete a short writing assignment, but yearns so badly to do right by his teachers. Teachers are right there with the students every day, expected to produce outcomes without the proper support and resources.

Time may be one of the resources Leslie needs most in order to reach her students through the NNER's mission of nurturing pedagogy (Goodlad, 1994). Leslie also reflects upon the teacher preparation that is now revealed in her practice. She recalls, "I remember learning in college that we would encounter many students who had other things to worry about besides school: eating, where they were going to sleep that night, working enough hours to support a family. Education comes as a concern only after those basic needs are met." Not surprisingly, she continues, "Many students are not mentally present in the classroom, and neither are teachers."

Leslie seems to believe that her time could be better spent addressing her students' needs. Regarding her time spent repeatedly demonstrating her abilities as a teacher for the RESA, she writes,

The process of planning, collecting evidence and data, filming, and writing and revising my reflections takes several hours of time I could be using to plan for, assess, and get to know my own students. In addition, the state requires two formal and four informal evaluations a year by my principal according to the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) standards. My accountability is also based off of student learning objectives, a task overseen by the district with unclear and ever changing expectations.

Knowing that she will not obtain a professional teaching license if she does not pass all four parts of RESA, Leslie voices the threat that underlies the high stakes of the assessment. She writes, "[W]e better do it right, or else." Leslie explains that she wants "to bring to light the overabundance of assessment and pressures on teachers, when clearly, students so badly need their teachers to be mentally and emotionally present in the classroom" (emphasis original). She continues, "Sadly, our time is being siphoned away from what's most important—the humans in our classrooms who deserve the best education available."

Leslie's comments are reminiscent of the nurturing pedagogy outlined in the mission of the NNER (Goodlad 1994). Negative emotions result from her frustration at feeling unable to provide nurturing pedagogy. She continues, "In a world in which our students are becoming increasingly unique and in need of guidance, sensitivity, and acceptance, their teachers

become too distracted with their own assessment work....” Leslie’s story suggests that with multi-faceted state-mandated tasks taking time away from students to enact nurturing pedagogy, not only are her students’ needs left unmet, but also her own. Teachers typically want to teach the best they are able. A lack of preparation time and teachers “too distracted with their own assessment work” hurts both teachers and students.

Leslie writes, “I am constantly working to develop the perfect lesson(s) that will adhere to all of the criteria in the multiple rubrics of the RESA assessment.” While perfection is an illusion, it seems the stress to pass the RESA and OTES make the illusion seem as if it should be a reality. Leslie’s story continues to reflect the emotional strain that stems from demands upon her time. She writes, “People do not cease to be human upon becoming a teacher. Educators should not be made to feel ashamed or guilty because of the unnecessarily demanding culture of teaching in this present moment. We are educational guides, students, coaches, counselors, mentors, learners, readers, writers, mothers, daughters, fathers, sons, husbands, and wives.” Feeling ashamed and guilty for time away from professional tasks and the pressure to be perfect are not at all the way the AED suggests that education with nurturing pedagogy should be, and yet these are the emotions this third-year teacher faces. She continues,

After nearly burning myself out in my first year of teaching by taking extra college classes to work towards a reading endorsement and taking up a second job, I made the decision to take time for myself and my family when I need it. Yet, I still become riddled with guilt at the work that never seems to get finished. I love teaching so much, that I want to be in the field for several years to come.

The data here suggest an attempt at self-care, in order to continue to serve her students. Yet still, Leslie seems to believe she is not able to put as much time into her teaching as she would like. She explains, “I find myself eager for the year when I can actually teach, when I can plan a lesson that I know will guide my students to think critically about the world around them and to become life-long learners and lovers of the art of writing instead of worrying if I have met all of the bullet points on a rubric” (emphasis original). Concern about one’s career hinging on objective measures is also noted in Rikki’s story.

The inability to move forward on her path to become an English teacher immediately after completing her bachelor's degree is Rikki's story. After producing a stellar content-area pedagogy portfolio for her undergraduate Integrated Language Arts capstone course, Rikki, now a third-year high school teacher, repeatedly found herself just short of a passing score on the Praxis II English Language Arts: Content Knowledge<sup>ii</sup> exam to enter the graduate licensure program. Her undergraduate lesson plans and field experience teaching earned high ratings, and she had solid grades in her English and education content courses. This high-stakes state-mandated test with a very high cut score<sup>iii</sup> seemed an ineffective way to predict Rikki's success as a teacher and served as a gatekeeper for entrance into the graduate licensure program<sup>iv</sup>. Her story depicts the challenges she faced attempting to pass the Praxis II exam for content in English. While Rikki's story data does not reference her ethnicity, she gave permission to disclose this information. The story data also does not link her ethnicity, Black, to her difficulty passing Praxis II. Others, however, have suggested bias in the Praxis exams (Graham, 2013). Rikki did not experience a stereotype threat (Graham, 2013), as she writes that initially "...I had confidence I could pass it [Praxis II]." The data suggests that the experience of taking the test multiple times, however, did have an impact. She writes,

I was out of school for a year and a half and was in the process of wanting to give up when I took my Praxis and passed after six tries. At that point, I was feeling some self-doubt. I thought that since it took me so long to pass the test, maybe teaching wasn't for me. I had been out of school for so long that I was terrified to go back and begin graduate school.

Rikki's story shows a dramatic change in her emotions. At first "confident," she later felt "self-doubt," and ultimately "terrified." The ramifications of the cut score for Ohio's Praxis II English content exam became the basis for significant stress and negative emotions. Fortunately Rikki persevered until she passed the exam. She writes, "I ended up doing very well in graduate school, and when I graduated, I had a lot of interviews and ended up getting a job offer from a private school in a large city." While Rikki's story ends positively, one wonders how many others, of any ethnicity, have given up in similar situations.

The state's mandate of a very high Praxis II cut score left Rikki unable to join the graduate cohort with other students she knew from her undergraduate coursework, those who earned their bachelor's degrees at the time she did. Without the initial social support of a cohort whom she knew, Rikki began the program with fewer advantages than her peers. As mentioned in her story, the time away from school spent attempting to pass Praxis II led to self-doubt, leaving her with another hurdle to overcome. Data indicates that due to the state's mandated cut score, Rikki's initiation into the graduate licensure program lacked the trait of nurturing pedagogy. Furthermore, as a teacher who is Black, the profession could have lost not only an excellent educator, but also a much-needed role model of diversity in teaching. Deidra also discusses the impact of a high-stakes, state-mandated teacher assessment, the RESA.

Deidra's story demonstrates similar frustration in her last chance to pass all sections of the RESA. Referring to the RESA rubrics, Leslie writes, "How do we do our jobs of effectively reaching such a diverse group of students when we, as teachers, are shoved into a one-size-fits-all mold?" The story of Deidra, a fifth-year middle school teacher who "was awarded teacher of the year by [her] large, urban district," shows deep levels of hurt and frustration with RESA. Ironically the very program that sought to support new teachers through a residency program (RESA) threatened to overshadow not only Deidra's ability to continue teaching, but also her perception of herself as a teacher, which is particularly disheartening with an award-winning teacher. Deidra writes,

I was ashamed when I failed a task<sup>v</sup>. It made me question who I was as a teacher and if I was any good at my profession. The shame grew when I failed a task a second time. I was so embarrassed that I did not want people to know, so it silenced me. If I did talk about it, I was extremely emotional from embarrassment and the uneasiness of not knowing my future in my profession. I was suddenly faced with the fact that maybe I wouldn't be a teacher anymore. Never did I imagine being put into this position. Even though so many people in my life told me to stop worrying, I couldn't.

Deidra's story demonstrates very high levels of negative emotions. As with Leslie's and Rikki's stories, her story suggests that early-career teachers have a need for people to offer them nurturing pedagogy and to be proponents of their own political action to speak out against the injustices that they believe they are experiencing (Goodlad, 1994).

Deidra's story continues, with the data suggesting a lack of nurturing pedagogy. She writes,

What has been most difficult is the wait time for feedback and the fact that the feedback [for RESA] is scarce and not helpful. Furthermore, when teachers fail a RESA task, we get a generic list of strengths and weaknesses that are the broad topics of each section of the rubric. We do not get to see how we scored in each section of the rubric.... It is interesting how timely and meaningful feedback are indicators of a great teacher, yet Ohio's RESA does not demonstrate that within its own assessment.

Deidra sought feedback for her RESA responses, but she was not afforded nurturing pedagogy to help her improve. Again, this is particularly troubling since Deidra's teaching had been lauded throughout her district.

Deidra's story suggests the problem of teachers' careers hinging on one assessment. She writes that RESA "causes unneeded stress and anxiety on an already demanding profession." Her frustration is expressed in bold type as she continues, "**RESA tells teachers that their degrees do not matter**" and "**that their professional experience does not matter**" (emphasis original). She recounts all the ways she has already demonstrated her knowledge and abilities when she states, "I hold a bachelor's degree, and I passed an English content exam and a general pedagogical knowledge exam to obtain an Ohio [Resident Educator] license." She also has a "master's in education from a nationally-accredited university." Again, the data suggests that the NNER's mission of the AED is lacking in the context of this teacher's own learning. Deidra continues,

Although I am evaluated by my principal twice a year, and those observations are combined with measurement of students' test scores that result in an overall rating of

effectiveness of my teaching [OTES], the RESA score supersedes all of those assessments. **RESA tells teachers that they must jump through multiple hoops to prove their competence.** Otherwise, find a new career” (emphasis original).

That last sentence implies that those in authority to set teacher licensure requirements are not concerned if teachers are forced out of the profession. The sentence implies that Deidra may believe there is no sympathy or attempt to aid teachers.

Leslie seems to agree, as she sums up a key concern that has emerged from the story data. She writes, “Ultimately, I need to be treated like a human instead of a number so I can do the same for my students.” If teachers do not believe they are respected as the professional human beings they are, and if they continue to feel a great deal of stress and negative emotions due to early-career high-stakes assessment, and if teachers do not believe their work offers them enough time to teach in ways that they believe are nurturing and best for students, what may be the effect on students and on the state of teaching itself? The data suggest that teachers, too, need the benefits nurturing pedagogy just as their students do.

Rikki’s story reinforces the idea of time-strapped teachers who are incredibly overwhelmed. During her first year of teaching she writes,

In addition to state-required observations and paperwork [RESA], I had nine preps, seeing each class every other day, and around 185 students, with no support for students who were struggling....I was more stressed than I ever had been, and I was beginning to think of other professions to pursue. It was hard for me to understand how someone could go through five years of education and not love their job one bit.

The inability to enact the NNER’s mission (Goodlad, 1994) seems to leave Rikki stressed, overworked, and sad.

The story data for Rikki also indicate connections among time, work demands, and well-being. She continues, “I’ve been going to a support group for teachers [the Advocacy Community for Teachers] which has

influenced me to start writing again by creating a blog.” Rikki’s story points toward the importance of support from the people in her life, such as those in the advocacy group. Furthermore, she is serving as a role model of lifelong literacy for her students through her blog. At one point Rikki texted Angie letting her know about the blog with the message, “You always tell me to do something for myself, so I’m going to do this!” After working through her extremely difficult first two years, Rikki chose to nurture herself and to be the recipient of nurturing pedagogy with the advocacy group.

## The Impact of Classroom Context and Time for Enacting Nurturing Pedagogy

The previous section discusses findings of teachers’ frustrations with a lack of time to enact nurturing pedagogy due to state mandates. The next pattern that emerged from the data focuses on the impact of classroom context and time for enacting nurturing pedagogy. Analysis of the teacher-authors’ stories that depict direct, personal communication shows positive experiences ensued, or were pathways toward solutions. Goodlad (1983) encouraged human conversation as a means to understand one another and the challenges facing educators. Human, direct communication could be a key point in nurturing all teachers, but particularly early-career teachers. As noted above, this type of communication is not always widely available to time-strapped teachers.

Elise’s classroom story provides insight into her perception of time to build relationships not only with her students, but also with other teachers. Elise writes, “Classroom management had always been a difficult thing for me.” Yet, she notes, “[W]hen I was student teaching, I handled the room well. The students seemed to enjoy my class, and I loved teaching.” However, the data suggest that when there was insufficient time to build nurturing relationships with the students (Goodlad, 1994), classroom management became a challenge. With student teaching completed by the end of April, Elise continued to substitute teach at the school. Her story explains her concern about classroom management. Elise notes,

After several embarrassing subbing situations, I did a lot of professional reading on the topic [of classroom

management], I observed seasoned teachers' discipline policies in their classrooms, and I even took an academic summer camp job to get more practice managing a classroom on my own. However, it seemed whenever I was teaching by myself, I could not get a grip on the classroom. . . . I could not tell what the difference was between my student teaching, and the subbing and summer camp classrooms until I reached out for help from another teacher.

Elise was unable to see that perhaps time was a factor in the three teaching contexts of student teaching, substitute teaching, and teaching a weeklong summer course. When she had time to build relationships with students during student teaching, she and her students had positive experiences. The opposite was the case for short-term teaching scenarios when she was not afforded the time to build relationships.

The data also demonstrate a significant sense of stewardship for the institution of schooling (Goodlad, 1994), with Elise's attempts to solve her problem through reading professional literature, studying other teachers' discipline policies, and seeking opportunities for extended practice. Yet, even after attempts to learn more, Elise needed the human interaction of an outside observer and friend to help her understand the connections between time to build relationships and classroom management. Elise's story paraphrases her friend's comments after several observations of the summer class. She writes that her friend said,

“Elise, this [classroom management problem] has nothing to do with you! The administration is NOT supportive here [at the summer camps]. . . . You are not being treated like the professional you are. Besides that, it is impossible to build rapport in this situation. You have the kids for a week per class. That is no time frame to build a true relationship with students.”

While the story data is reliant on the memory of Elise to retell the scenario, the data suggests a connection between time to build relationships and classroom management. Elise's story shows strong emotions, as also seen in previous excerpts of others' story data. She uses all capital letters and an exclamation point to reinforce the strength of emotion that accompanied

the moment when her friend helped her understand the limits of the summer course. She had very little time to build relationships with the students as well as the administrators. Even if perhaps the administrators had been somewhat supportive, that was not the perception of Elise or her teacher friend. In addition, while it is likely an overgeneralization to say that classroom management has nothing to do with the teacher, at that moment it seems as if Elise needed to hear that the problem was not completely attributable to her.

As a recipient of nurturing pedagogy, Elise reacts powerfully to her friend's suggestions. She writes, "I cried .... [W]e both agreed to keep in contact and solve problems together. Teaching can be a very isolating career, and we believe the best ideas come from teachers working together and forming their own healthy community." She suggests that teachers "accept that things will go wrong, but you will find solutions if you find or create a supportive community that encourages problem-solving and growth. You don't have to do anything alone, and that is one of the most beautiful parts of working in a human services position."

The data suggests that Elise has had a tremendous shift in her view of herself as a teacher. Initially rife with self-doubt, her face-to-face interactions with her teacher friend helped her reconsider the emotionally-laden image she held of her teacher self and her classroom management skills. She was understandably focused on solving the problem of her difficulty with classroom management in contexts that afforded limited time to build relationships. However, she seems to have forgotten the success she attributes to her student teaching, when she had time to enact nurturing pedagogy. While perhaps some of the descriptions in the data seem idealistic in terms of the power of personal communication, the teacher friend's insights after witnessing the classes still seemed more helpful than Elise's other attempts at solutions. The empathy she receives seems much needed, with an emotional outlet of tears following. In Elise's case, it seems access to knowledge about classroom management was not the key problem. Nurturing pedagogy in the form of personal communication seems to be what helped her learn and buoy her efforts the most (Goodlad, 1994).

As with Elise's student teaching experience, analysis of the final teacher story demonstrates the benefits that can come with the time to build relationships with students. In addition to a benefit for the students,

Kosnik and Beck (2009) state that a sense of classroom community “is crucial for the well-being of the teacher” (p. 79), and that teachers should spend a good deal of class time building a positive sense of community. They remind us that in the tradition of Dewey and Vygotsky, “community in the classroom is not just a frill: it is fundamental to effective learning” (Kosnik and Beck, 2009, p. 78). David, a first-year high school teacher in a large urban district with the majority of his students involved with the juvenile justice system, explains why creating a positive classroom community is one of his priorities. Teaching in a computer-based credit recovery program, David has time to work one-on-one with his students as others work independently on course modules. David also has the benefit of teaching a small number of students (approximately 10-15 in a morning block class, and 10-15 in an afternoon block class). Furthermore, as he is in the first year of teaching, he has no tasks to complete for the RESA, but benefits from mentorship from a RESA coordinator in the district. David’s teacher story exhibits his beliefs regarding the significance of building classroom community through nurturing pedagogy (Goodlad, 1994). The data suggest that time and classroom context may be key factors to forging strong relationships with students.

David’s story data suggests that classroom relationships and community are a priority for him. He describes his classroom as “a community comprised of individuals,” particularly important for his school, for “youth expelled from other schools, behind on credits, or transitioning from incarceration into public school.” He notes, “Building trusting, meaningful relationships has become the most crucial aspect for helping students succeed.” David’s story reiterates the importance of nurturing pedagogy (Goodlad, 1994) when he writes that learners “are much more than mere students in a classroom, just as teachers are much more than teachers.” Here, the humanity of the individuals is key “to nurture a healthy learning environment [and] to look beyond the roles of teacher and student.” He also notes, “[W]hen we establish strong personal relationships..., it opens doors for stronger and more effective lesson plans.” David’s teaching seems to testify to the power of nurturing pedagogy that considers all aspects of the student (Goodlad, 1994).

David’s story reinforces that he takes action to show his individual traits in the classroom. He incorporates his interests in sports, singing, and playing guitar into his lessons. He writes that he shares these interests

in order to “build a truly meaningful learning community fueled by compassion” and not “allow expectations of one another’s roles to dictate and limit our relationships in the classroom.” David’s story suggests his attention to nurturing pedagogy in order to care for the individual’s emotional well-being as well as academic learning (Goodlad, 1994). He clarifies that “these relationships must have professional boundaries, but [teachers] need to understand students as individuals.” He continues, “Though students respect me as a teacher, they also know that if they are having a bad day at home, I will grant them the space they need.” As Leslie’s story described earlier, the “bad day at home” could be very serious problems relating to basic needs or safety. Reaching beyond a stereotypical view of the teacher’s role as academician only, he sometimes “drops the conventional expectation of a classroom and favors the personal well-being of the individual.”

Considering David’s school context, he makes use of the time he is afforded and the benefits of small class sizes. While these elements allow for the necessary time to build solid relationships, David has chosen to make relationships a priority, unlike some teachers in similar contexts who opt not to focus on classroom community or students as individuals. Thus, time alone will not guarantee a focus on classroom community, nor will a lack of time mean that teachers cannot form relationships with students at all. There are simply more or fewer challenges that seem to be influenced by the factor of time. David further considers his perception of the impact of time on relationship-building. In particular, he values informal interactions with students. He writes,

... those couple minutes when students enter the classroom, the break between classes in the hallway, a few minutes after or before school, or the extra minute when a lesson has concluded and the period is not quite finished.... It is in these moments that we are more likely to drop the security of the titles we portray and allow one another to have informal, personal moments in which we discover one another’s personalities.... powerful moments we can engage in to begin building a strong sense of community. These moments are treasures that help students and teachers see the individuality of one another.

David's story suggests that direct, personal communication is also significant in building relationships with students and fostering classroom community. While technology-mediated communication can benefit connections, particularly when communicating on a personal basis through an individual email, text, or even phone call, the value of face-to-face interaction cannot be ignored.

David's story also suggests that because he has strong relationships with his students, he can "explore a wider range of meaningful subjects." He continues,

With strong trusting environments, my class has explored significant themes of racism, politics, police relations, sexuality and gender. Perhaps most importantly, it breeds confidence in both the teacher and the students in the learning process to have these conversations.... [W]e do not judge one another with hostility, but speak without judgment towards increasing our perspectives.... The good days are great, and we have our bad days when it does not go as planned, but because of our relationships that have reached beyond the titles of teacher and student to the individual, we are able to build each other back up.

David's story acknowledges the difficulty inherent in enculturating students to consider significant issues in our society. In the current socio-political moment, now more than ever, students need safe spaces to learn aspects of civil discourse. It is critical that students witness adults who offer nurturing pedagogy and respect one another's differences as they participate in democratic discourse.

David also describes his use of time outside of the classroom to build relationships through home visits. He writes,

As educators, we ask students to enter our schools and adapt to the cultural norms of the building. Our buildings have a culture that may not be congruent with students' cultures in their homes and communities. We can help bridge this gap and extend our hands as allies through home visits with the students' families. Furthermore,

it helps us to know students as the individuals they are and the strengths and roles they play within their communities. Families have been happy to invite me into their homes, and we have become allies for their child's education...The more positive relationships we can form, the more positive results we can expect from the learning process and culture we create in our classrooms...In the long term, the trust established in acts like these [home visits] creates more productivity in the future and fewer classroom disruptions.

David's story data suggest that in a context of students who have had significant trouble with the school and the law, families are open to supporting teachers and their students. The story serves also as a reminder of the crucial role of communities, families, and communication in schooling (Goodlad, et al., 2004).

Examining the stories of teachers' professional lives has been helpful to understand some of their needs and challenges. The data suggests that teachers perceive mandates from the state as a stress upon their time and well-being, resulting in negative emotions and doubt about themselves as teachers and about the teaching profession. Data also suggests that time and classroom context are key factors for enacting nurturing pedagogy and building relationships and classroom community.

## **Implications and Questions for Further Research**

The call for manuscripts for this issue invites consideration of renewing the NNER as an organization as well as its place in furthering the role of education for democracy. The NNER and centers of pedagogy (Patterson, Michelli, & Pacheco, 1999) could address areas of need for teachers as recipients of the tenets of the AED. Centers of pedagogy, as spaces physical or not, urge educators in PK-12 schools, communities, and university colleges of education, arts, and sciences to develop a shared vision and explore changes to effect positive change (Patterson, et al., 1999). Using the clichéd but appropriate airplane oxygen mask analogy, teachers must be able to take care of their own needs in order to take care of their students' needs. Centers of pedagogy could offer colleagues

outside of the PK-12 setting to address these needs while simultaneously offering a setting for teachers to nurture one another. In its initial year, our Advocacy Community for Teachers provides support for secondary English language arts teachers, yet a more formalized center of pedagogy as well as a focus on the NNER's AED (Goodlad, 1994) would seem a logical extension of this work.

The findings from this study imply that teachers, in addition to their PK-12 students, need people to support their lifelong learning in light of the NNER's Agenda for Education in a Democracy (Goodlad, 1994). We offer the following recommendations, 1) Teachers need people to offer them nurturing pedagogy with attention to their social and emotional well-being. Centers of pedagogy could be spaces to share teacher stories to problem solve and empathize with the emotional challenges of teaching. 2) Teachers need people to support their own participation in a democracy. Centers of pedagogy could be spaces to organize advocacy days to speak with representatives or inform teachers of proposed legislation. 3) Teachers need people to advocate for them and with them in order to be good stewards of education. Centers of pedagogy could be spaces to encourage voicing opinions about licensure requirements, for example, to retain and recruit excellent educators from all backgrounds. 4) Teachers need people to help them access knowledge not only for the academic challenges of teaching but also for the social and emotional challenges of teaching. Centers of pedagogy could be spaces to provide information on wellness issues to all teachers, perhaps especially important to those whose cultures are not well represented in the profession.

Further research might explore the needs of teachers beyond nurturing pedagogy, such as the other facets of the NNER's AED (Goodlad, 1994), which did not emerge as frequently from the data. Inquiry might include the role of shared stories with community members and government representatives. The impact of various ways of sharing stories, perhaps via podcasts or performance of monologues, could also be a consideration for further research. Sharing our stories with one another and the broader community can help us inform others, build empathy, advocate for education, and effect positive change while simultaneously offering models of nurturing pedagogy, political participation, stewardship, and access to knowledge for teachers and students.

Fighting her feelings of shame (Brown, 2007) and sharing her story with a supportive community, Deidra has reclaimed her self-worth as a teacher. She writes,

As educators, we are not given enough opportunities to tell our stories. Our voices are too often drowned out by others who think they already know what we do inside our classrooms each day.... I was ashamed to tell my story.... With the support of many amazing educators, professors, and administrators, I have overcome the shame.

Goodlad, et al. (2004) state, “Too often we ignore the real substance of democracy—the people—and focus on the idea and its institutional structures” (p. 81). We still live in a moment when the “who”—human beings in education—are taking a back seat to the “what”—the mandates, curriculum, standards, data, assessment. A balance must exist among these factors. To bring attention to the very people, the “demos” of the democracy and education, we turn to the NNER to help us focus on our humanity, on the many needs of students and teachers. Sharing our stories might be a good place to begin to offer all aspects of the AED to teachers as learners in need of support. We proclaim lifelong learning, but we often fail to acknowledge that teachers are lifelong students, too. We must attend to the human needs of all involved in the work of education in a democracy. There are many more stories to tell and to hear.

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<sup>i</sup> Leslie uses the broad dictionary.com definition here: “any system or mode of thought or action in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate.”

<sup>ii</sup> At that time, Praxis II English Language Arts: Content Knowledge was the required content exam for secondary English teachers in the state. Ohio had one of the highest cut scores in the country for passing Praxis II. Rikki could have become a licensed teacher in most other states without spending the time, money, and emotional energy taking the test multiple times.

<sup>iii</sup> The accrediting body at the time, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), also required a standardized content-area exam as a key assessment for preservice teachers, if states required such an exam.

<sup>iv</sup> After a few students completed the graduate program but were still unable to pass the Praxis content exam, faculty made the exam a prerequisite for entrance into the graduate program. It seemed unethical to graduate students who would not be eligible for a teaching license.

<sup>v</sup> RESA consists of four tasks, with multiple parts per task. The RESA instrument consists of a 65-page document with nine rubrics, two of which are broken down into two additional parts. <http://www.educopia.com/resa/>

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# Taking Co-Teaching to a Different Level

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## Abstract

*In an effort to deepen its connection with partnership schools, two middle level teacher educators at Illinois State University have entered into unique co-teaching relationships with cooperating teachers and teacher candidates. This article describes one piece of a much larger research project that examined the benefits and challenges of these varied co-teaching connections – what happens when a university supervisor co-teaches with four of his student teachers. The findings reveal several positive growth experiences for both student teachers and the university supervisor that are related to Goodlad’s vision of teacher preparation and renewal.*

*Key Words: co-teaching, collaborative teacher education, PDS, middle grades education*

## Introduction

During the past seven years, the middle level education program at Illinois State University has encouraged the cooperating teachers and interns who are part of our Professional Development Schools Program to use various forms of co-teaching (St. Cloud State University, 2012) throughout the school year. For the purposes of this study we defined co-teaching as a situation in which:

. . . two or more people [share] responsibility for teaching some or all of the students assigned to a classroom. It involves the distribution of responsibility among people for planning, instruction, and evaluation for a classroom of students (Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2013, p. 4).

The majority of cooperating teachers within our program have embraced co-teaching. A previous account of a research study related to co-teaching within our program found professional growth for both teacher candidates and cooperating teachers as well as benefits to the public school students within the co-taught classrooms (Weilbacher & Tilford, 2015).

As a result of these encouraging findings, we made a conscious decision to engage in co-teaching ourselves. In part, this decision was intended to deepen our relationships with the cooperating teachers, but we also saw it as one way to stem an increasing feeling of depersonalization and corporate-driven accountability that had entered our program (Pauffer & Amrein-Beardsley, 2016). The recently enacted state mandate that required students to pass the edTPA in order to both graduate and become certified had reduced the importance of the voices of cooperating teachers and university supervisors. We felt that by increasing our presence in public school classrooms we could renew our commitment to our students, cooperating teachers, and the partnerships that we had created.

This paper describes a smaller piece of a larger research project that involved an effort to gain more insight into how co-teaching was functioning within our program. More importantly, it is an account of what we did to strengthen our relationships within our teacher education program while moving beyond the traditional structures of clinical experiences (Zeichner, 2002). Our specific research question was: what are the professional educational benefits and challenges for teacher candidates and university faculty who engage in co-teaching? My colleague used co-teaching with cooperating teachers to model instructional strategies for his junior middle school teacher candidates and this work is described elsewhere (Hurd & Weilbacher, 2017). I co-taught with second-semester seniors who were completing their student teaching experiences in our year-long PDS program. What follows is our account of what we learned while co-teaching with four student teachers. [Note to readers: while this article was co-authored, whenever personal pronouns are used, they are referencing the first author's direct experiences.]

## Relevant Literature

Historically speaking, most literature tied to co-teaching describes collaboration between regular classroom teachers and special education teachers (Conderman, 2011; Friend & Bursuck, 2011; Heck, Bacharach, & Mann, 2010; Miller, 2008; Hildenbrand, 2009; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008). As valuable as this research is, it is not directly relevant to the recent trend of using co-teaching to help prepare teacher candidates for the classroom (Denmon, personal communication, December 12, 2016). For instance, a review of over 400 articles related to student teaching, mentioned one form of co-teaching that involved two teacher candidates co-teaching with each other under the guidance of one cooperating teacher (Clarke, Triggs, & Neilson, 2013). One of our previous studies examined the perceptions of teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers regarding co-teaching in a year-long PDS middle grades program (Weilbacher & Tilford, 2015). The findings indicated that co-teaching deepened the mentoring relationship between cooperating teachers and teacher candidates, was considered to be a strong form of teacher preparation, and was seen as beneficial for middle grades students.

In another study unrelated to co-teaching with regular educators and special education faculty, Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman, and Stevens (2009) placed pairs of pre-service teachers with single cooperating teachers for a 12 week clinical experience. The strengths of this model included mutual learning, professional support, benefits for the K-12 students involved, and noticeable gains in pre-service teacher confidence with ample feedback regarding the teaching process. The authors found that a problem with this model was related to competition between pre-service teachers. In addition, both the cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers were concerned about becoming co-dependent, losing their individuality, and confusion regarding classroom management. Given the relatively sparse attention given to co-teaching as teacher preparation, and in an effort to more fully understand if co-teaching provides tangible benefits in clinical settings, we decided to ask how teacher candidates perceived the value and challenges of co-teaching.

## Background

My initial reasons for wanting to co-teach with the student teachers were partly selfish. While observing teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers co-teach over the years, I had been asked occasionally to “jump in” and join them. Typically, jump in meant helping small groups or individuals to understand concepts, lead a station during a stations lesson, or offer my perspective while an issue was being discussed. I enjoyed these opportunities immensely as they made me feel like a “real” teacher again. Interacting with young adolescents stirred an excitement in me that was missing in my professorial work. I saw co-teaching with teacher candidates as an opportunity to extend these jump in episodes.

On a more egalitarian level, it was becoming important for me to do the same kind of work that I was asking the cooperating teachers and teacher candidates to do. Primarily as a result of standards-based reform, it seemed to me that teaching today appeared to be more difficult than it was 15 years ago. Showing my students and their cooperating teachers that I was willing to co-teach in this current climate could confirm our program’s goal to becoming more equal partners (Brandt, 1991). Just as important, my co-teaching with student teachers could free up cooperating teachers to visit other student teachers – providing those student teachers with authentic feedback from a practicing teacher. Finally, choosing to co-teach with my students could help me reduce the “distance” between the academy and the public schools by immersing me into what teaching is like today.

Along the lines of reducing distance, I realized that if we were going to do this right, co-teaching meant we had to also co-plan together. Co-planning with student teachers would allow me to more fully understand how my students thought about the contents of their lessons, the instructional strategies they choose, and the resources they find, and to assess how they determine if their students grasp the material. I would be privy to how our students were thinking about their lessons from start to finish. Such insights are often absent because in my role of supervisor, I was only expected to critique their performance of a lesson – the end product rather than the full creative process that led to the teaching event.

Furthermore, because we were going to co-teach, it ultimately meant that we had to become colleagues. The institutionally-created separation inherent within our roles of student teacher and university supervisor would need to disappear. By becoming partners in the planning and teaching processes, we would be sharing our ideas, selecting and creating resources, negotiating and preparing our instructional strategies, and performing together in a public classroom space in a way that would allow the middle school students to see us as a team. In other words, at least in front of the students, the power dynamics of our prior relationship would need to be transformed from one of superiority to one of equality.

## Methodology

### *Conceptual Framework*

As middle level advocates we operate from the premise that middle level educational frameworks have historically used collaborative forms of teaching (Hurd & Weilbacher, 2017). Exemplary middle schools use interdisciplinary teaming which often involves co-planning and co-teaching with two or more teachers coming from different subject areas (Bean, 1997; Hurd, 2013; Stevenson & Carr, 1993; Vars, 1993). From a more pragmatic standpoint, we recognize that the need to support all students has led to frequent co-teaching between special educators, bilingual specialists, and regular classroom teachers. Given that middle level educational frameworks, current inclusion practices, and demands for differentiation are all dependent upon teachers working together, increasing the presence of co-teaching within our middle level teacher education program is connected to both the demands of current educational practices as well as foundational theories of middle level education.

A qualitative research design was used to fully investigate the nuances and activities that occurred during the co-taught lessons. Because this study involved various models of co-teaching between teacher candidates and university faculty, a qualitative design was used in order to achieve fluid movement in and out of the study to reconstruct the teaching process as a form of inquiry (Creswell, 1998, 2013; Hurd, 2012, 2013).

One focus group interview with four of our teacher candidates was used for a particular portion of our study in order to examine the professional educational benefit of co-teaching for teacher candidates and university faculty members. Focus group data from a convenience sample population of consenting teacher candidates were used as the primary data source for the study. The focus group took place after grades for the student teaching experience had been submitted, in an effort to avoid coercing the student teachers' into participating in this project.

## Participants

In order to introduce the teacher candidates, brief sketches are provided: Patrick was a 22 year-old Asian-American student teacher who was endorsed in math and science but spent the majority of his placement in an eighth grade math classroom. Cassie was a 22 year-old White student teacher who spent half of her time teaching language arts and the other half teaching reading. Cassie frequently used her split role to help create assignments that allowed her eighth grade students to make connections between the reading and Language Arts classes.

Etta was a 23 year-old African-American student teacher who was placed predominantly in an eighth grade language arts class. She also spent time working with Michelle's teacher in a reading class during the four week clinical block of the first semester.

Michelle was a 22 year-old White student teacher whose placement was similar to Etta's, except that she was primarily assigned to reading, but completed her four week clinical block with Etta's language arts teacher.

In addition, the university supervisor (Weilbacher) was somewhat of a "participant" in the study as he co-taught with each of the teacher candidates. At the time of the co-teaching experiences, he was a 58 year old white male, with 25 years of teaching experience at the collegiate and middle grades levels.

## Setting

Each of the student teachers' completed their PDS experience at Prairieland Junior High School (PJHS) (pseudonym). PJHS is the middle grades school for a Midwestern city with a population of approximately 80,000 residents. The Prairieland district consists of a unified district

which has one area career center high school, one comprehensive high school, one junior high school, and seven elementary schools serving approximately 5,605 students. According the 2015 State Interactive Report Card, the enrollment at PJHS was 1,209 students. Demographically, the population was 50.1% White, 25.2% African American, 12.4% Hispanic students, 2.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 9.0% bi/multiracial. The free and reduced lunch population at the school was 58.5%. PJHS has been part of the Professional Development School partnership for fourteen years.

## Procedures

One of the expectations in our middle level teacher education program is for our teacher candidates to become comfortable in co-teaching situations, as including students with disabilities and English learners in co-taught regular education classrooms has become a necessity in many schools (Conderman, 2011; Friend & Bursuck, 2011; Heck, Bacharach, & Mann, 2010; Miller, 2008; Hildenbrand, 2009; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008). In addition, it is important for our students to understand that including students with unique learning needs is a way to democratize classrooms while simultaneously valuing and increasing diversity (Rotuno-Johnson, 2010).

All of our student teachers co-taught with their cooperating teachers at some point in the 2014-15 PDS program at Prairieland. Three of the four also co-taught with special educators. In an effort to take co-teaching to a different level, during the spring of 2015, these four teacher candidates volunteered to co-teach two lessons with their university supervisor (Weilbacher). By having student-teachers co-teach with a university supervisor we hoped to allow the university supervisor to acquire a deeper sense of how student teachers plan, implement, and evaluate their lessons. This deeper sense involved having the university supervisor and student teacher co-plan two lessons, team-teach two lessons, and then critically discuss the processes. We also planned on having the cooperating teachers observe and critique other student teachers while this co-teaching was occurring.

During the first of week of May, Weilbacher facilitated one focus group with all of the four teacher candidates who completed their student teaching experience at Prairieland. The focus group centered on open-ended questions that were tied to the events that occurred during the co-teaching classes. The main focus questions included the following:

What do you see as the professional educational benefits

for teacher candidates who in engage in co-teaching?  
What do you see as some of the potential drawbacks to  
co-teaching?  
Did you learn anything about your own teaching processes  
through co-teaching with me?

In addition to these core questions, multiple follow-up questions were asked for expansion and clarification purposes.

The researchers audiotaped and transcribed the focus group interviews. The initial process of exploring all of the data collected involved first listening to the audio recordings, reading the transcripts through in their entirety, and then jotting down initial reactions and ideas. The manuscript was coded by building detailed descriptions, developing themes or dimensions, and providing interpretations based on our own perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Not all codes and themes were used in the discussion and analysis. Ultimately, the analysis was limited to themes of planning together, middle school student benefits, and changed relationships.

For data analysis and representation, Creswell's (2013) spiral method was used to examine the different layers of data on the impact of co-teaching included in the study. Specific responses from the focus group interviews were analyzed for patterned regularities in the data (Creswell, 1998). We used these patterns to construct comparisons among the student teachers in an effort to establish emergent themes. These themes were then compared with our own experiences as faculty, researchers and co-teachers (Hurd, 2010, 2012, 2013; Hurd & Weilbacher, 2014).

## **Exploring Teacher Candidate Perspectives of Co-teaching**

The focus for the following section of the paper will involve the teacher candidates' insights regarding their co-teaching experiences with their supervisor (Note: The supervisor was Weilbacher and any first person pronouns in this section of the text refer to him) during the spring of 2015.

### **Planning Together**

Given that this was the first time in fifteen years that I would spend extended time teaching young adolescents in a classroom setting, it was

critical to co-plan with the student teachers in order for me to become comfortable with the content of the lessons. The simple fact was I was nervous to face a “real” classroom again and I felt that being prepared would alleviate some of those nerves.

Our initial planning sessions typically lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and involved deciding on a topic, determining the activities, and selecting resources. After doing some work individually, we met again to decide which parts of the lessons we would be leading. In all of our lessons, the student teachers and I decided that we would predominantly use Team-Teaching as our preferred type of co-teaching, although I would describe the first session that Michelle and I did was more like One Teach One Assist, with me being the assistant (St. Cloud, 2012). We felt that Team-Teaching would allow each of us to lead elements of the lesson and would also model collaborative skills for the Prairieland students. In order to tap into potential “teachable moments” all of us also agreed that we were willing to let each other jump in as needed.

The teacher candidates appreciated co-planning with me because it allowed them to be observed while planning lessons, rather than only during instruction. Patrick pointed out that when university supervisors only observe a taught lesson, they ignore a valuable component of teaching:

I think you miss out too on seeing us in a different light, than just seeing what we deliver in our lesson plans. I think it’s really valuable for you to see us when we are planning. I think you get to see even more of how we think about teaching when you are planning with us.

His point about gaining insight into how teacher candidates think about teaching has merit as it is common to limit student teacher evaluations to observing the teaching performance and asking about decisions made during the lesson. While our program contains multiple courses that are designed to teach our students how to plan relevant, engaging lessons, Patrick’s insight expresses a need to move beyond having teacher candidates write lessons strictly for professors and examine how student teachers plan lessons for real students.

Cassie discussed how she intensified her planning while preparing

for our co-taught Holocaust lesson about the power and influence of Nazi propaganda:

I felt like you were stronger on that and you were able to take the lead. And I felt like you pushed me, and you know so much from all your experiences. I wanted to be at your level or try to step above your level, to even become the expert because I liked it so much and I saw how excited you were about the propaganda. So because of that I did spend five or six hours on Monday night prepping for Tuesday's class. I would say for sure that, especially sixth hour, was the best lesson to date that I've ever done. Now I want all of them to be like that – that is my goal. You pushed me in a good way.

While spending five or six hours each night to prepare lessons may not always be practical or necessary, it seemed clear that Cassie saw immediate benefits in being well-prepared and attributed them to planning with her supervisor. In addition, it is important to note that Cassie's cooperating teacher made a similar comment about how Cassie's planning changed in a positive direction after our co-teaching sessions.

It was encouraging to hear that all of the interns indicated that the co-planning process was valuable for their professional growth. However, one disheartening finding emerged during our focus group: our team-taught lessons were the first time that any of them experienced the kind of deliberate, detailed co-planning that we did. Patrick's remarks summed up the collective experiences of all teacher candidates:

I never had like a true co-planned lesson. So it was my first real co-planning experience and as an experience I think it really helped me. . . because I learned a lot about how to work with someone else and not just be in my own mind. It really helped me think of different ideas that improved the lesson more than it would have been originally. So being able to bounce ideas off each other was really great.

Each of the teacher candidates indicated that their previous co-teaching ex-

periences did not involve co-planning between the cooperating teacher and themselves. These events were portrayed as informal, spur of the moment lessons that sounded like the One Teach, One Assist type of co-teaching:

Etta: The planning part was big for me because like Michelle said, co-teaching is usually like winging it, jumping in whenever with the co-teaching, but we really don't plan. So I think us planning together – that was really beneficial for me.

Discovering this lack of deliberate co-planning between the teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers was disappointing, but it was also one of the major findings of our research and will receive more attention in the Discussion section of this paper.

### **Middle School Student Impact**

Initially, the hope of the co-teaching experiment was to help the student teachers grow and to provide the unique experience of having me get back in front of a classroom of young adolescents. A rather unanticipated benefit evolved during the focus group interview as the teacher candidates reported that they saw how some of their own students benefited from co-teaching with me. Cassie noticed how previously shy students became more engaged in our co-teaching session:

It was cool to see some of the kids that don't talk, that haven't talked all year, connect with you because you have a little bit of a different teaching style. So I had two or three students that I've never heard talk so much like they did when you were there, and they've kept talking since you left. . . . Now I'm like, 'Okay, you can do it because I saw you do it before.' That was really cool to see.

Michelle attributed changes in her students' participation to the novelty of having a different "body" in the classroom: "Having a new face come is like, 'Oh, this is different. I know I really got to pay attention.' Change, I think change was good for them." Along these lines, Etta remarked that many of her students changed their outlook during the co-taught lessons, as several of them had "checked out" after the PARCC tests were completed in early April:

I was impressed with how most of them stepped up and took it seriously, because I was afraid it was going to be really good or really bad. I think that most of them were really able to step up and took advantage of the opportunity that we gave them.

On a personal level, it was especially encouraging to hear three of the teacher candidates tell me that their students had asked them ‘when is that old dude from the university coming back to teach?’ While the “old dude” remark stung a bit, those comments implied a positive response to our co-teaching or at least an acknowledgement of the novelty of having someone different in front of the Prairieland students. Furthermore, such comments suggested that the student teachers were looking beyond their own growth as teachers and focusing on their students’ reactions to our lessons. In other words, it seemed that the student teachers were engaging in “a socialization process through which candidates transcend their self-oriented student preoccupations [and were becoming] more other oriented” (Goodlad, 1990, p. 59). Ultimately, these findings could indicate that partnerships between universities and public schools can have a positive impact on student engagement.

### Changed Relationships

The final benefit of co-teaching that was discussed in detail by the student teachers was their perception that the relationship with me in the role of university supervisor had changed. This change in relationship was described in different ways, but each one indicated that they felt more connected to me. Michelle implied that co-teaching with me created a unique, shared event for all of the student teachers who participated in the co-teaching study:

But it’s also cool that we all each have our own, like time. So like you as the supervisor, you and I taught and they don’t know about that. So it’s nice that I could like joke about that with you and Patrick can joke about certain things because you had him for a different class. I love that you have something with each one of us that no other person in the program has, and it’s kind of being selfish but it’s true.

This more personal experience, at least when compared with the more

typically formal relationship between supervisors and student teachers, comes to life in this extended excerpt:

Me: I was nervous [about co-teaching] because in the eyes of your students it does put us on equal footing. My fear was ‘what would happen if I really stink?’ [Group laughter].

Patrick: I was interested to see how your classroom management was, just because we’ve talked so much about mine. I was like, ‘oh, how is that going to go?’ Because I know how I handle it, I know how my cooperating teacher handles it, so I was just interested in how you’d do. It was really fine – everyone’s alive [more laughter].

Etta: I was nervous how the students would react, with a new person, an old guy [more laughter] like you know, just how they would respond to it. But they responded well.

Me: Yeah, I was concerned that I was going to sabotage your lessons.

Michelle: You did great. You get an A.

Cassie: You enhanced them.

Patrick: To me that was the point of planning in the beginning, so that you know, there’s no potential for sabotage. I think it gave you as a supervisor even more credibility than you already had, because now we got to see you actually teach instead of us. I was like, ‘ok, he really knows what he’s doing’ even more so than I thought I did. It’s like you walk the talk.

One implication in this exchange is that the student teachers and I switched roles to a degree, as they were evaluating how I would do in a classroom setting and how their own students would respond when I ventured into their world. In short, it appeared that the teacher candidates were evaluating my teaching. Admitting to nerves and concerns regarding “stinking” acted as a reminder to me in my role of the university supervisor as to how student teachers often feel when I observe their teaching. In other words, co-teaching with my students allowed me to empathize with them rather than solely evaluate their teaching. Passing their “evaluation” was also an upside, providing me with one of the “psychic rewards” that are so important to teaching (Lortie, 1975).

In addition, sharing thoughts about nerves allowed the student teachers to crack a few jokes and doing so seemed to substantiate that

a more collegial relationship had formed as a result co-teaching. While some supervisors may not be comfortable with this kind of familiarity, we would argue that this less adversarial relationship makes it easier for supervisors to provide more critical feedback when necessary, without causing animosity. It also shows teacher candidates that they are not the only ones taking risks in an effort to grow professionally. This less traditional, more egalitarian relationship is a step towards helping student teachers gain equal status with professional educators, as when they sign their first contract they will be evaluated as such, regardless of their years of experience. Recognizing that they can teach in the same classrooms with their supervisors, rather than just being evaluated by them, allowed the student teachers to acquire a newfound confidence that didn't necessarily exist before the co-taught lessons.

While we did not discuss this in the focus group, I wish I would have said something like this to the student teachers:

‘This new relationship is a model for the kind of collegial relationships that I would like to see you eventually form with your own students. The artificial barriers between us can be broken down to form authentic relationships. We planned and taught together, but we also taught each other. Doing the same in your own classrooms can help to establish a more democratic place.’

Ultimately, our conversation revolving around our unique relationship was a solid example for *postulate ten*: “Programs for the education of educators must be characterized by in all respects by the conditions for learning that future teachers are to establish in their own schools and classrooms” (Goodlad, 1990, p. 59).

## Discussion

As indicated previously, one of the goals of our middle level teacher education program is to deliberately try to embed more co-teaching within our coursework and clinical experiences in order to help prepare our student teachers for the likely co-teaching circumstances they will meet when they become professional educators. Our new “experiment”

exemplifies Goodlad's fifteenth postulate related to providing "each candidate the availability of a wide array of laboratory settings for simulation, observation, hands-on experiences. . . ." (Goodlad, 1990, p. 61). Unfortunately, our co-teaching with our student teachers were exceptional events as, quite contrary to our goal our students indicated that the majority of their co-teaching sessions with their cooperating teachers were not intentional. Given the positive growth experiences reported by the students during our co-planning sessions, we envision the potential for similar professional growth when cooperating teachers deliberately plan with our students. As a result of the positive growth experiences reported by the students during our co-planning sessions, we need to encourage our cooperating teachers to spend more time co-planning within their interns.

Based on Patrick's insight regarding how supervisors can see teacher candidates "in a different light" while planning with them, the need for supervisors to spend at least some time with student teachers as they plan lessons in the field seems like a valid idea. While we have reviewed lesson plans before observing student teachers deliver those plans, the resultant mentoring process is far less interactive and intimate than actually planning together. The increased attention to planning that took place as a result of co-teaching, along with the positive reactions that the student teachers had to the co-planning sessions, suggests that planning together resulted in a deeper understanding of the importance of planning. Such knowledge fulfills the notion that candidates "must . . . possess or acquire the literacy and critical-thinking abilities associated with the concept of an education person" (Goodlad, 1990, p.67) – and in this instance that "educated person" is a teacher. From a learning perspective, it seems likely that planning together resulted in stronger lessons that were reportedly engaging to middle grades students.

One challenge to co-planning together is finding the additional time it takes for both parties to meet. While all of the student teachers had two hours of planning time within their daily school schedule, it wasn't always possible for me to meet at those times because of prior obligations. In addition, the student teachers had obligations to their teams during team-planning time. This meant that planning mostly took place after school, which was somewhat of an inconvenience for the student teachers. In addition, choosing to co-plan and co-teach with student teachers meant that I was giving up time that could be used to do work that was more valued by the academy. Given the

historically low regard that mentoring student teachers has within both public schools and universities (Goodlad, 1990; Zeichner, 2002), spending hours co-planning and co-teaching with teacher candidates provides few tangible rewards during the annual review of faculty performance. Ironically, writing about our experiences (as long as they are published) may be seen by our faculty status committee as having more value than the mutual professional growth that took place during the co-teaching sessions:

Programs for the education of educators must enjoy parity with other professional education programs, full legitimacy and institutional commitment, and rewards for faculty geared to the nature of the field (Goodlad, 1990, p. 55).

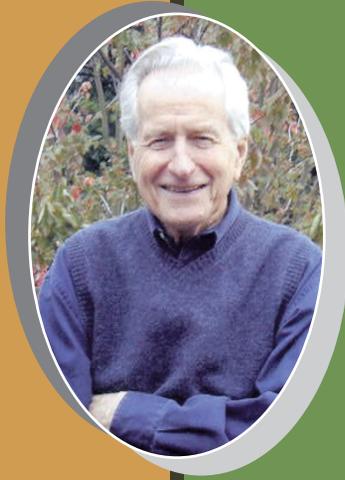
Sadly, what was written about rewarding faculty according to the nature of the field almost thirty years ago remains an unrealized vision.

Ultimately, we found that the mutual professional growth that occurred during co-teaching created a more collaborative, collegial, almost democratic relationship with our students. In part, this more genuine relationship may have been tied to the fact that the co-teaching sessions took place towards the end of the semester. The student teachers and I had known each other for almost a year and sharing the planning and implementing of two lessons deepened the already existing relationship. Breaking down the artificial walls between an evaluative member of the ivory tower and a soon-to-be public school teacher not only put both parties on more equal footing, but created a need to invest in each other's success to achieve a common goal: provide positive learning experiences for real middle grades students. The willingness of both parties to try something new, to take a risk together in a very public place in front of classrooms of young adolescents, created a binding memory that further contributed to the relationship. In short, co-teaching with student teachers encapsulated some of the most powerful aspects of an authentic education: self-challenge, collaboration, learning from each other, and building relationships.

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