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Association of Independent Liberal Arts
Colleges for Teacher Education

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Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the *AILACTE Journal*

Call for Manuscripts for the *2023 AILACTE Journal, Volume XX*

The Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education (AILACTE) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the work of educator preparation programs in private, liberal arts institutions. AILACTE supports, recognizes, and advocates for private colleges and universities that offer liberal arts, teacher education programs. An affiliate of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), AILACTE provides communication, resources, information sharing, and leadership across organizations.

Each year AILACTE publishes a peer-reviewed journal. The goal of the journal is to disseminate scholarly work that enhances the work of teacher education professionals.

The 2023 *Journal* will be a themed volume addressing **The Intersection of Neuroscience and Education**. Educators are increasingly conscious of the diversity of their students and the need to provide all students with high-quality instruction that is relevant to their diverse, lived experiences in the world. Pedagogy that is responsive to students' various identities (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, socio-economic status, ability, etc.) results in greater learning and higher achievement. Culturally relevant/responsive/sustaining pedagogies are topics receiving more attention in educator preparation programs as teacher educators work to equip teacher candidates with the skills they will need to teach all their students well. One aspect of diversity that seems not to receive as much attention in teacher preparation, however, is neurodiversity. In preparing your manuscript, you might want to consider the following questions.

- How well are our educator preparation programs (EPPs) preparing teacher candidates to teach neurodiverse students?
- How can adverse childhood experiences (ACES) impact a

student's neurology, learning, and coping strategies?
- What essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions must teacher educators cultivate in teacher candidates for them to be effective teachers of neurodiverse students?

Further, given the recent proliferation of scientific research and education texts about the brain and how students learn (e.g., Goodwin & Gibson, 2020; Jensen & McConchie, 2020; McTighe & Willis, 2019; Posey, 2019), how are teacher educators drawing on neuroscience to improve educator preparation programs?

- How can teacher educators harness what they know about the brain to enhance lesson planning and delivery?
- In what ways can teacher education courses incorporate brain-based instruction?
- How can teacher candidates be best prepared to consider neuroscience in their own planning and instruction?
- How do educator preparation programs bridge the gap between research/theory and classroom practice regarding the brain and how students learn?

Use these questions as a starting point as you consider submitting a manuscript for the milestone 20th volume of the *AILACTE Journal*. AILACTE is eager to learn from your experiences, research, and ideas related to education and neuroscience. Although submissions are not limited to research studies, manuscripts that are grounded in literature and supported by data will be given stronger consideration.

Manuscripts are due **June 16, 2023**, and must follow APA, 7th Edition guidelines, as well as additional *AILACTE Journal* requirements. Additional information about AILACTE's requirements, timeline, submission guidelines, and related materials is posted on the Journal website (www.ailacte.org/AILACTE_Journal).

To submit your materials, go to the Author Submission and Biography online form. Once you have completed the form, there is a link for you to submit your materials. If you have questions at any point, please feel free to contact Jackie Crawford (Jackie.crawford@simpson.edu).

The 2024 Journal will be a non-themed volume. Manuscripts

may address any issue that will enhance the work of teacher educators in an independent, liberal arts context. Topics that are appropriate for the journal include teaching and learning strategies; candidate and program assessment; diversity, equity, and inclusion; policy changes; program models; accreditation; etc. A detailed 2024 Call for Manuscripts will be posted on the AILACTE website (www.ailacte.org) no later than September 2023.

The *AILACTE Journal* editors are Jackie Crawford (Jackie.crawford@simpson.edu), Professor Emerita at Simpson College, Iowa, and Elizabeth Leer (leere@stolaf.edu), Professor at St. Olaf College, Minnesota. Assistant editors are Julie Kalnin, Associate Professor at University of Portland, Oregon, and Kevin Thomas, Professor at Bellarmine University, Kentucky.

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From the Editors

The *AILACTE Journal* publishes scholarship that furthers the work of teacher education professionals, particularly those working in liberal arts contexts. This non-themed edition features four articles exploring a broad range of topics: cultivating a sense of belonging among underrepresented teacher candidates, engaging teacher candidates in digital storytelling, examining teacher identity development, and promoting success among early career teachers. Initially, these subjects may appear to lack a unifying thread; however, when taken in order, these seemingly disparate articles offer a chronological journey through the teacher preparation process. Here is an overview:

Jill Heiney-Smith reports findings from her mixed methods study examining how graduated teacher education students describe experiences affecting their sense of belonging in teacher preparation programs. Beginning with the admissions process—before students even enter a program—her findings suggest that structures can be "inhospitable" to underrepresented students and that intentional scaffolds may be required both to recruit and retain these students. She argues that programs should examine their approach to hospitality and consider how policies and programmatic supports might promote enhanced feelings of welcome and belonging.

Kevin Thomas and Winn Crenshaw Wheeler's qualitative study concerns teacher candidates concurrently enrolled in technology and literacy methods courses. The methods professors collaborated to create a digital storytelling learning experience for their students with the goal of developing effective writing pedagogies among the teacher candidates. The study demonstrates the benefits of integrating technology instruction into methods courses and providing authentic writing and publication experiences for students, and also serves as a model of effective collaborative instruction that teacher candidates could take into their future classrooms.

Tiffany Young, et. al., are interested in the formation of teacher identity as teacher candidates transition from student to teacher during their teacher preparation programs. They

conducted their qualitative study to explore what dispositional traits host teachers, school administrators, clinical experience supervisors, and education faculty members deem essential for successful teaching practice. While the authors focus on dispositional development, based on their findings they argue that transitioning from student to teacher "requires more than acquiring discrete characteristics, perceptions, and behaviors, but rather a holistic transformation of being." Drawing on the results of this study, the authors have developed a tool to assess teacher identity development.

In the final article, Kristina Valtierra describes a workshop series she developed to prepare and support student teachers and early career teachers for the pressures they face that often lead to burnout and attrition. She suggests ways that teacher preparation programs can continue to support their students after they have transitioned from student to teacher. While early career teacher attrition is well-documented, Valtierra's data suggest that teacher educators are able to influence this trend and help their new teachers stay in the profession and thrive, even after they have completed our programs.

We hope you enjoy reading about these varied and creative ways to support teacher candidate development as they move into, through, and out of their preparation programs. In closing, producing an academic journal is a considerable undertaking, and we could not do it without the contributions of many. We would like to thank our authors; assistant editors Julie Kalnin and Kevin Thomas; the *AILACTE Journal* Editorial Board; Alyssa Haarer, executive assistant; and Barbara Grinnell, graphic designer. We would also like to thank the AILACTE Executive Board for their support.

Jacqueline Crawford, Simpson College
Elizabeth Leer, St. Olaf College

Reimagining Hospitality and Sense of Belonging for Underrepresented Students in Graduate Teacher Education

Jill Heiney-Smith
Seattle Pacific University

Abstract

This article presents findings from a sequential mixed methods study that examines how graduate teacher education students describe the experiences that either enhance or interrupt a sense of belonging before and during the university preparation program. The paper focuses primarily on analysis from two focus groups and demonstrates particular complexity for underrepresented students as they navigate university-based graduate coursework and clinical internship in K–12 schools simultaneously. Theoretical frameworks and research on hospitality and belonging are applied to interpret the results and reimagine the concept of hospitality on a program-wide level. Participant voices from each point of data collection are elevated in the findings and are presented in depth. Findings suggest that underrepresented students need various intentional and structured scaffolds to survive sometimes inhospitable school environments. These scaffolds must begin with the admissions process and be informed by deep partnerships with external community-based organizations who often hold discrete and relevant cultural knowledge.

Keywords: graduate teacher education, hospitality, belonging, underrepresented, community-based organizations

Reimagining Hospitality and Sense of Belonging for Underrepresented Students in Graduate Teacher Education

University program leaders can engage the vast body of research showing how a sense of belonging promotes persistence for both undergraduate and graduate programs (e.g. Freeman et al., 2007; Gardner & Barker, 2015; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). O'Meara et al. (2017) studied graduate students' sense of belonging and academic self-concept, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and persistence. They argued that a sense of belonging in graduate school differs from undergraduate study due to its focus on the discipline and profession over allegiance to the institution. In graduate teacher preparation programs, the popularity of so-called "fast-track" or accelerated programs suggests that this issue may be even more complex, as graduate teacher education students may only affiliate with their university program for twelve to fifteen months, including an immersive off-site internship in K–12 schools (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2018).

Admittedly, a sense of belonging is critical for participation in any organization and ranks only behind physiological and safety needs for most (Maslow, 1954; O'Meara et al., 2017). Certainly, teacher education programs (TEPs) strive to engender a sense of belonging for their students and to create supports for managing the dual roles of graduate student in the higher education institution and teacher candidate at the K–12 school. These supports traditionally include investment in professional development for mentor teachers and university supervisors, orientation activities, and professional learning communities to promote connections and relationships (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Students from underrepresented groups have historical legacies to navigate and may benefit from further supports in order to claim a sense of belonging in university programs (O'Meara et al., 2017). In their guest editors' introduction to a special journal issue on the state of teachers of color in education, Jackson & Kohli (2016) explore multiple studies linking the high attrition rates for novice teachers of color with poor

preparation in their mostly white teaching programs. Jackson & Kohli note that "Whiteness frames how pre-service teachers of Color are recognized and treated in their programs" (Jackson & Kohli, 2016, p. 3). Well-intended TEP leaders most likely create these supports and program features themselves, using internal program feedback or reports to guide their work rather than deep and meaningful partnership with community leaders or other non-university-based stakeholders who should have a say in the work of teacher education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Guillen & Zeichner, 2018). Community partners hold key cultural knowledge that can help situate graduate students' experiences and enhance the university's efforts to welcome and support their students (Zeichner, 2021). Such collaboration could diminish what Brown (2014) calls the "alienating and ineffective" experience for students of color in TEPs (Brown, 2014, p. 336).

Context and Focus of Study

This study was designed to illuminate the program values, initiatives, policies, pedagogical strategies and community partnerships that would best support equitable and mutually beneficial learning spaces and a sense of belonging for all participants in graduate TEPs. This sequential mixed methods study was conducted at an independent liberal arts university in the Pacific Northwest, where the graduate program has historically attracted students similar to the state's teacher work force (mostly white, mostly female). The TEP includes K–12 state certification plus master's degree, typically earned in fifteen to twenty-four months, depending on when students complete their coursework. The students complete a supervised clinical internship in K–12 schools of varying duration depending on the program route. As the study evolved through sequential data collection and analysis, the focus on "underrepresented" students became students with self-identified racial or ethnic identities and older or "non-traditional" students who are sometimes isolated from their peer group. Some of the participants were Fellows in a community-based organization (CBO) designed to support teachers of color during their preparation

and induction. The Fellows attend sessions on topics such as learning how to assess the safety of the environments they are working in and developing strategies to sustain identity. University partners do not collaborate in the programming delivery but are invited to provide input and insight through intentional shared leadership. Fellows described how this partnership between the university and the CBO enhanced their sense of belonging both within the TEP and in the profession more broadly. Multiple sources of information were collected and examined in order to develop an in-depth understanding of student experiences (Creswell, 2013). As such, student voice and storytelling are central values in the approach to sharing the results of this study (Creswell, 2013). To engage in this exploration of both K–12 and higher education institutions in the United States, this paper uses Delpit's (1988) definition of the dominant culture of power, which highlights both the implicit and explicit beliefs, values, codes, and rules that elevate some individuals and disadvantage others.

Theoretical Framework: Notions of Hospitality and Research Questions

A concept of a *sense* of belonging is ambiguous, because its very construction is subjective. Much is owed to the extensive body of research on identity, subjectivity, and what Ferguson (2008) describes as the particular "problem of assimilation" for oppressed groups in particular. This study acknowledges the broad research on identity but is anchored by the work of Derrida (2000) and many after him, who explore the notion of "hospitality." According to Derrida, a hospitable environment is free of hostility, one in which every person is treated as an ally. An individual can develop an identity and a sense of belonging, and indeed feel "at home" within such a space. Rather than a focus on how TEPs develop and nurture individual students' identities, I argue that a program can engender a sense of belonging through a new application of the notion of hospitality. The theoretical questions about the nature of hospitality in the classroom can be reframed for teacher education to consider the students' experience of hospitality at the program-level.

Most recently, Piquemal et al. (2019) built upon Levinas (1969) and Derrida (2000) to construct their own claims about hospitality and responsibility in the classroom. Their study envisioned the individual classroom instructor as the "host" and "giver of hospitality," and the student as the "guest." The researchers also considered Ruitenberg's (2011, 2018) arguments that explored how moments of incivility in the college classroom should be managed through critical reflection and awareness of the instructor's own social positioning in a system still predominantly shaped by dominant culture values. Piquemal et al. (2019) noted the authority associated with the host, the concept of the "stranger" in the classroom, and the sensitive pedagogical choices required within this responsibility. The authors claimed that as classroom "hosts," teachers must balance choosing when to challenge a student's point of view with keeping the classroom a safe space for all learners.

The present study will envision the whole program as the host and giver of hospitality rather than just a classroom or a single instructor (Piquemal et al., 2019) and will extend the metaphor to ask, "Who owns the home, and who is the stranger? How are you invited into the home (admissions)? How do you experience the home while inside it, and what opportunities do you have to survive within the home if it is inhospitable by structural design?" These questions further ground the argument that a more hospitable home for graduate students will lead to a deeper sense of belonging in the program.

Following are the more formal research questions to be answered through the data and findings in the study:

1. Which TEP program experiences and opportunities enhance or interrupt a teacher education student's sense of belonging before and during enrollment in the program?
2. How do racially and ethnically underrepresented students describe their experience in a TEP compared to their dominant culture peers?

Guiding Literature

Reimagining the Subject as well as the Host

Much of the research on the frameworks of hospitality in education is ultimately centered on the self; either the student is the subject or the host and giver of hospitality. These frameworks privilege ideals of the virtuous subject in education: the student who becomes a rational and autonomous individual through careful character development and modeling by instructors. For example, Rogers and Freiberg (1993) describe how a teacher's willingness to model authenticity, trustworthiness, and empathy promotes the student-subject's desire to learn. Ruitenberg (2011) examined the gaps in dominant ethical frameworks in education and proposed a framework anchored in Derrida's (2000) ethics of hospitality, one that envisioned a subject with more agency. She noted that while researchers like Noddings (2002) improved upon virtue ethics, their theories might strengthen the subjects but do not quite go far enough in empowering them. Ruitenberg (2011) distinguishes between virtues and attitudes that the host may employ, such as "being welcoming" or being "welcoming of Blackness" (p. 32), in a multicultural context. These beliefs or actions may empower the guest but do not push the host to remove conceptions of the roles of host and guest. Ruitenberg argued that this new approach to hospitality must accept that the guest may change the space into which they enter.

Doing the Work of Welcoming

For the purpose of this study it is important to develop an application for a whole teacher education program, and for possible actions by program leaders as hosts and givers of hospitality. Likewise, the program leaders must engage in philosophical discourse and program development that somehow imagines greater agency for the collective student.

One possibility for programs to engage in the work of welcoming is to provide a space for students to participate in affinity groups or cultural communities. A recent ethnographic case study (Pour-Khorshid, 2019) shows how a racial affinity group in one TEP grew organically out of a need to survive

the systems of Whiteness described earlier by Brown (2014) and developed into a community of healing that even supported the retention of its novice teachers of color. While this group was a grassroots, student-led group, another possibility for TEPs to engage in the work of welcoming is through deep investment in university-community partnerships. Ostensibly, local communities are the best positioned experts on their own K–12 students and their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Recent research shows that effective, university-community partnerships can increase teacher candidates' access to culturally responsive and sustaining teaching practices (Guillen & Zeichner, 2018; Hong, 2019; Ishimaru, 2019; Lee, 2018). Though this has not been the focus of these studies, certainly, these partnerships could extend to the program's ability to welcome and sustain the teacher candidates themselves.

If universities can prioritize resources for building meaningful relationships with community partners, it could not only enhance the sense of belonging for graduate teacher candidates, but also encourage democratic accountability for the program as a whole (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). This is of critical importance because of the university's tendency to reproduce hierarchical relationships rather than disrupt them (Guillen & Zeichner, 2018; Zeichner, 2018). In sum, the theoretical frameworks on hospitality in education can be radically reimagined when we consider a less linear and less university-centric approach.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

During the period of this study, I served as an administrator of the program being studied. It was critically important to bracket assumptions about and relationships with the participants, the data, and the results, not only for validity in the findings (Richards & Morse, 2007), but because the research questions anchor my core values as an educator. The research design provided natural opportunities for me to pause and engage in methodical reflection, so at times these will be described in the first person for transparency and authenticity.

This study employed an explanatory sequential design in two phases: quantitative → qualitative (Biesta, 2012; Creswell, 2015) and was selected in order to develop a full picture of the graduate teacher education student experience. As seen in Table 1, the first phase included a quantitative survey with both closed- and open-ended questions, and the second, qualitative phase, included two focus groups that helped to explain the survey results in more depth (Creswell, 2015). While the study was always designed for sequential mixed method data collection, this approach became even more appropriate when the response rate for the survey was quite low, and the quantitative responses did not provide enough data to draw meaningful conclusions from the survey alone.

TABLE 1
Data collection and participation

Data Source	Date(s) of collection	Participants
Survey	February–March, 2019	45 graduates between 2017–2019
Focus group #1	June, 2019	Three alumni self-referred in survey
Focus group #2	March, 2020	Four current students of color

The survey in phase one (see Appendix A) included a 5 point Likert-scaled section as well as open comments for each question and general comments at the end. The survey was administered via Survey Monkey in February and March, 2019. The survey was sent to 271 graduates who completed a graduate teacher preparation program (certification plus Masters' in Education) within the past three years. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted prior to administration.

The items in the survey were designed to gather more data on the student experience in the program, rather than student perceptions about their preparation for classroom teaching, which are measured in program assessments. As such, a selection of closed questions with response alternatives were developed to promote valid and consistent responses (Fowler, 2013), while the open questions allowed respondents to enhance their answers in their own words. This survey was not piloted in advance; however, multiple steps were taken during

item development to reduce bias and enhance validity and reliability.

First, the initial items were drafted based upon a review of program handbooks and end-of-program assessments. Overall those data lacked the narrative power of the student experience, especially for underrepresented teacher candidates. The analysis of program materials informed the survey questions regarding particular program policies and perceptions of climate in the program; this analysis also offered the first opportunity to examine my bias as a researcher, as I was initially expecting and looking for particular responses based on my knowledge of the program. One way to mitigate this bias was to co-construct the items with other teacher educators not involved in the study. Accordingly, each item was evaluated and substantially revised in collaboration with two education faculty colleagues of color and further revised by the university's Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion prior to administration. Finally, each item was aligned to the school of education's conceptual framework and stated vision, mission and commitments, including an important link to hospitality (see Appendix A). Additional steps were taken during the item development to ensure consistent meaning for respondents (see Appendix A for these steps).

45 of 271 potential respondents participated, yielding a 16% response rate. 11 of 45 respondents identified as "underrepresented" and 34 selected "not underrepresented." While this low response rate certainly impacts the findings and limits generalizability, the open-ended responses in particular provided useful anchors for the first focus group of graduate student alumni. In addition, the participants for the first focus group self-referred in the survey. Table 1 summarizes the data collection and participants for each data collection point and also shows the purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) developed for this study, which started broadly with a survey to all recent alumni, then volunteers in focus group one, and finally invited participants in focus group two. This sampling was a direct result of inquiry and analysis as this sequential study evolved.

The first focus group of three graduates was conducted in

the summer of 2019 on the university campus. Of the three participants, two identified as a racial/ethnic or linguistic minority, and one as white. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 45 and included one male and two females. The session lasted for 65 minutes and followed focus group protocols outlined by Creswell (2013) and shown in Appendix B.

Questions for the first focus group (see Appendix B) were developed from analysis of the survey in addition to end of program assessment data. Data from both the survey and the first focus group surfaced questions and concerns regarding structural programmatic supports for racially and ethnically underrepresented students. As such, a second focus group was organized to develop a deeper understanding of the student experience in the existing partnership with the community-based organization (CBO) described in the introduction. The second focus group was comprised solely of current Fellows and was conducted in March of 2020 at the university. This group was recorded for 28 minutes.

Questions for the second focus group were drawn from analysis of the first, as well as the researcher's knowledge and interest in the Fellowship partner program. Specific participant racial and ethnic identities are not discussed here to protect participant confidentiality and all names have been changed. Participants of both focus groups represented a range of teaching content areas and grade levels, including elementary and secondary science, math, and humanities teachers.

Both focus group recordings were converted to transcripts using Temi software. Both descriptive and topic coding were conducted separately for each transcript, while the codes were combined in order to develop resulting overall themes for the study (Creswell, 2015; Richards & Morse, 2007). This will be further discussed in the results.

Integration of Data and Triangulation of Methods

As previously described, the questions for the two focus groups were drawn in large part from the analysis of the survey conducted in phase one. This was a natural point for the integration of data in this mixed methods study. Creswell's (2015)

claim that integration is the moment in the study where one thing "dissolves into the other" (p. 82) is aptly applied here, as the survey provided valuable data that informed the questions for the focus groups. In a sense, the quantitative findings from the survey "dissolved into" and were animated by the narrative power of the qualitative focus groups.

Additionally, the inclusion of multiple discrete forms and points of data collection in Table 1 allowed me to triangulate the information that contributed to the overall themes, and each point of data collection allowed an opportunity to bracket assumptions that may have impacted the analysis. The research and analysis of program documents during item development, the survey itself, and data from two focus groups provided varied sources for evidence regarding how students perceived and described their sense of belonging in the program. This triangulation of data sources and research methods (Creswell, 2013) helped to develop a framework for how TEP programs can enhance hospitality and sense of belonging, as well as to broaden the description of the importance of community partnerships.

Results

Together, perceptions reported by graduate and current student participants of varied gender, age, racial, and ethnic identity and across K–12 disciplines identified both effective and problematic values, policies, behaviors, and structures present in the graduate TEP program. All of the data helped illuminate the degree to which the university as host and giver of hospitality (Piquemal et al., 2019) promoted or inhibited a welcoming and hospitable environment that cultivates a sense of belonging for teacher candidates (TCs). The results will be reported sequentially per the research design.

Hospitable for Some, Not for All

The results in phase one are reported primarily to describe their role in enhancing and improving the research questions and to triangulate the research methods and strengthen data collection in phase two. This is necessary given the low

response rate and the fact that the participant demographics did not match the desired demographics for the study. Further, the data itself provided incomplete and conflicting insights. For this reason, the survey questions seen in Appendix A are not a direct match to the research questions, which evolved after survey analysis. Descriptive statistics were gathered for each item and included a mean, median, and mode as well as frequency and percentage. Responses were disaggregated into two groups based on self-identified membership in an underrepresented group and non-identification in an underrepresented group (see Appendix A for demographic selection options). Although each question clearly stated the directions for completion based on demographic self-identification, participant responses were uneven and inconsistent. Some participants seemed to skip questions randomly, which skewed results and limited statistical power. Nonetheless, in an effort to gather group comparison data, a two-sample t-test was run for questions that all respondents replied to. No statistical significance was found.

Two respondents reported microaggressions by faculty and three reported microaggressions from peers, but eight respondents responded to this prompt in the survey: "Please consider describing one or more event that you experienced or observed (without naming names). Concrete examples within the SOE will help us learn and improve." These eight responses varied from, "I was lucky. I didn't experience any microaggressions" to, "In class, people (colleagues and professors alike) would look to me to speak from the perspective of people of color as if I should 'speak on behalf of all people of color,'" and also, "One student in particular made multiple disparaging statements during a course taught by a minority professor. I felt compelled to address these indiscretions several times in a polite manner to correct misconceptions even though I appreciated hearing his perspective." The disparity in these results and the obvious difference in student experiences compelled further review. It could be that students who had graduated from the program several years earlier were not motivated to provide answers for every question and focused only on items of the most interest to them. Nonetheless, the inconsistent survey data helped to

directly shape the questions developed for each focus group (see Appendix B).

Both focus groups revealed several positive patterns for the program leadership, including reported satisfaction with communication about equitable policies and response to feedback. Students reported an overall sense of appreciation for faculty who worked to model equitable teaching pedagogy. While the survey provided an opportunity for alumni to report on many forms of underrepresentation, the self-referred participants for group one were most interested in describing their observations or experiences regarding race/ethnicity. As such, the following themes emerged. They are reported together, though the specific group is indicated for context. The emphasis on student voice demands inclusion of direct quotes from participants in various stages of the study (see Table 1). A summary of the themes with corresponding data source and research questions is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Summary of themes from all data sources and alignment with research question

Theme	Data Source	Research Question
Theme One: The application and interview process centered dominant culture knowledge and skills that sometimes carried into the classroom	Survey, Focus groups 1, 2	1
Theme Two: Students experienced or observed exclusionary grouping during the program	Focus groups 1, 2	2
Theme Three: Student teachers of color working in predominantly white spaces need a place to process identity	Focus group 2	1, 2
Theme Four: Learning the rules of the profession may need particular scaffolding and coaching for teacher candidates of color	Focus group 2	2

The themes were developed using both topic and analytic coding methods (Richards & Morse, 2007). Analysis of the transcript from the first focus group produced twelve topical codes. The most frequently occurring codes related to positive

or negative experiences with program and/or classmate communication, culture, and climate. As previously noted, this analysis informed both the sampling and the question development for the second focus group. After the second group, topic coding was repeated and became more analytic (Richards & Morse, 2007) as the thematic categories emerged. For example, it became clear that some of the initial data from the survey and first focus group showed idiosyncratic experiences for particular students that did not appear to be generalized. The analysis of the most frequently occurring codes shaped the final describable themes and represents broad discovery regarding graduate student experiences.

Theme One. The Application and Interview Process Centered Dominant Culture Knowledge and Skills that Sometimes Carried into the Classroom

In the first focus group, participants were asked to reflect upon their experiences with the admissions process. For context, the admissions process at the time included application review and an interview day, comprised of a group interview with five to eight candidates and a "Seven minute mini-lesson" designed to hear how candidates communicate and engage a group of "learners." Several participants noted that the day favored extroverts, while Morgan, the only woman of color in the group, shared a particular version of this dynamic:

> [For a person of color] entering into spaces where you have discussion can be difficult because of the layers and levels of power in the room… It's like the people cooking up the admissions process are all dominant culture, you know, kind of extrovert people-person, thinking, "Oh, we just want to see how these people perform in this setting and kind of what ideas they have," and it, it feels much lower stakes [to them]. (Please see the full text of Morgan's profound comments in Appendix C).

The participants were asked to reflect upon discussion norms while in the program, and whether or not they felt that they had an entry point for being heard and a place to hear other

perspectives. One (dominant culture) participant, Aly, noted that her smaller disciplinary cohort had four students who tended to dominate discussion, but the instructors paid attention and invited diverse perspectives. "I think it had to do with people being aware of themselves, but we became aware of ourselves because of our instructors, kind of making us aware of ourselves." Conversely, participants in group two described weighing the benefits or costs of pushing back on their peers in class. Raya noted, "I felt like it was going to make my classmates so uncomfortable for me to push back that I just let it be and I didn't, you know?"

Theme Two. Students Experienced or Observed Exclusionary Grouping During the Program

Another theme that emerged from group one was the perceived exclusionary grouping that developed somewhat organically in the program when unchecked. Morgan noted an "inner circle" in her cohort that she was not part of, while Daniel noted that he was excluded from program events due to childcare, which caused coursework registration challenges that persisted during the program (see Appendix C for these comments). Aly seemed to realize one of the exclusionary realities as she talked, which was the unintended discrimination of older students by their peers in the program. Aly processed this out loud,

> I think if I remember it too, that person was older, and they didn't come to as many of our social events….And it was someone who wasn't really a part of the group. And I don't know if maybe they weren't a part of the group because they didn't identify as being a part of the group. Right. Yeah. Cause they're much older and they weren't, they were not a young white female.

Morgan and Daniel relayed similar reflections of their cohorts (all three were different) with Morgan finally exclaiming, "Not having childcare for students in this program is a microaggression." As the focus group progressed, it became clear that students with children, older students (possibly also parents) and students of color were all perceived as outsiders in some way.

The experiences and observations of Morgan, Aly and Daniel prompted a more in-depth exploration of supports and structures in place for current students who identify as racial or ethnic minorities. As previously noted, one of the primary structural supports for students of color was a partnership program with an external organization that supports teacher candidates of color. The invitation for current students to participate and offer feedback on their experiences was accepted by four of six current Fellows: Raya, Mina, Marcus, and Lee. Their racial and ethnic identities are not shared to protect their confidentiality. The focus group session was shorter and focused only on observations and experiences in the Fellowship, however the conversation illuminated two key themes with relevance for all teacher candidates of color.

Theme Three. Student Teachers of Color Working in Predominantly White Spaces Need a Place to Process Identity

Each Fellow described moving through their internship in a predominantly white profession as a person of color. However, two Fellows noted the ways that the fellowship helped shape their new teacher identity, particularly through discussion and collaboration with other Fellows. Raya shared:

> I'm more aware of my low confidence in being in spaces, and the Fellowship allows me to reflect on reasons why. [It also shows why] it's important for POCs to be in classrooms and for students to see themselves as possible teachers and or even people doing this sort of work. So it empowers me in that way, especially when I'm feeling like [I should go back] to making a living as a barista. I feel like there is a sense of like, there's worth in the work that we're doing. It allows for me to just walk into these spaces a little bit more comfortable and to understand why I felt uncomfortable to begin with. I feel like a lot of times there isn't a language that we learned while growing up and as we enter adulthood. Like, there isn't anybody really saying you're going to feel uncomfortable for these reasons, but you do end

> up feeling like that. I personally always felt, not always, like some days I was just like, why am I hesitating to do this? Why? You know? So I feel like that space has allowed for me to just kind of explore and be able to then explain it to my own children who may or may not have those experiences.

Lee noted:

> I was talking to another Fellow, [who has] like me never even thought about microaggressions until he was in the Fellowship. Like I'm just thinking maybe I just have thick skin, I just ignore things, what not. But like I realized that some of the things in life were maybe some of the things that I did experience. Also microaggressions [I've done] towards other people.

Theme Four. Learning the Rules of the Profession May Need Particular Scaffolding and Coaching for Teacher Candidates of Color

Related to the theme of creating a space for exploration of identity and experiences in white spaces is the reality that teacher candidates of color may also need differentiated coaching and support to learn and cope with the "rules" of the profession. Said Raya:

> The Fellowship definitely gives us ways to ask questions instead of being super direct where people might be offended or a little bit more sensitive. I personally feel like as a first-generation person working in a white collar job, I didn't take a course or didn't learn from anybody on how to ask these questions. For example, even to ask a [a colleague, a boss, a presenter] can you clarify this for me? I heard you say this and this is how I interpreted it (see Appendix C for full text).

Further illuminating this theme, Marcus described the difficulty of moving between professional spaces:

> For me, I think when we go into seminars [for the Fellowship] and whatnot, it's like we're there, we have that experience. But then to translate that into my school where I work at, it's very hard for me to do that

> cause it's like the space totally changes. I think there needs to be some kind of help in transitioning.

Discussion and Implications for TEPs

The research questions in this study sought to answer what kinds of program experiences will enhance or interrupt a TEP student's sense of belonging, and how racially and ethnically underrepresented students describe their experiences in particular. These questions can be answered together through the lens of student experiences with hospitality. As the only person of color to speak about the admissions process (Theme One), Morgan's voice represents an objective truth about the design of the interview day: it privileges applicants who walk into a room where most people look like them. The doubt and lack of confidence that Morgan described is echoed in some of Raya's stories about her transition to teaching and an environment that no one prepared her for. These stories demonstrated an overall inhospitable "home" in the program, which is a structural problem that administrators must tend to. Certainly, there are opportunities to put candidates at ease and manage "talk time" much like Aly notes that her professors did in class. Pedagogical choices that classroom instructors make can also be used more deliberately on interview day, such as establishing discussion norms, training interviewers to check personal bias, and auditing the interview performance criteria and evaluation process. As noted by Ruitenberg (2011), strategies like these will convey a sense of welcome to the guests and will hopefully prevent interviewers and program leaders from inadvertently making applicants the "stranger." Another striking opportunity to reimagine the ethics of hospitality for teacher education is to consider how the program/host can (and should) be aware of its indebtedness to the guest. This must be especially true for programs run by dominant culture administrators who are preparing underrepresented teachers for service in diverse school settings. According to Ruitenberg's (2011) reading of Derrida, hospitality must be offered unconditionally and with awareness of indebtedness to the guest (p. 31). Indeed, this theory must be carefully explored so that programs do not inadvertently ask

more of its underrepresented graduate students.

The results articulated in Themes Three and Four show evidence of problematic exclusionary grouping in the TEP but also that programs *should* provide a separate space for Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) students; these contradictions must be explored. Admittedly, students in a professional teaching program will not have the same needs around community. As O'Meara et al. (2017) found, all graduate students feel a sense of belonging when both their peers and faculty members care about them and they feel valued by the greater community. The stories from each focus group demonstrate that the problem isn't necessarily grouping, but rather a particular exclusionary grouping that isolates or diminishes the student experience.

In group one, Aly and Morgan both described social events that older students or students with children seem to be excluded from, while Daniel and Morgan identified the barriers related to lack of childcare for even basic program participation. While it might be challenging for a program to offer childcare for all of its events, it could be accomplished for some, or events could be offered in multiple modalities so that no one is excluded. Similarly, programs can consider affinity groups for students who are parents and train faculty to practice equitable community building and ensure that certain groups (such as parents) are not isolated from developing relationships with their peers. Aly noted the benefit to social belonging for career support beyond the program, and this cannot be underestimated for persistence in the profession.

The findings show that for some students, establishing opportunities for safe and separate spaces will promote a sense of belonging both during the program and in the profession more broadly. The teacher candidates of color in the second focus group describe what can happen in these spaces through experiences with professional scaffolding and coaching. It is clear that Raya, Mina, Marcus, and Lee all benefited from a separate, sacred place to process their experiences in the program and in their internship sites. As the only participant of color who was not a Fellow, Morgan (from group one) did not

have this support, and her experience suffered. She felt isolated from admissions day throughout the entire program, noticing the social ease that others felt. She recommended affinity groups for everyone not able to participate in the structured Fellowship.

The biggest surprise in the analytic coding and theming process was finding that the Fellows did not name specific strategies, research, resources, or even mentorship that the external program offers; what they named was what I will call *the sacred space to be themselves*. This space allowed Fellows to ask questions, to process experiences such as Raya's stories about professional development (PD) in her school, or Lee's new awareness of his experiences with microaggressions. The Fellowship provides structure and scaffolding into the profession, allowing participants to "learn the rules" outside of the white institution. When asked whether or not they would recommend that Fellows have more of a leadership role back on campus, the resounding answer was "No." They need it for themselves, and they want it to be sacred and separate. This raises the question about how to recruit Fellows without targeting them or asking more of them. There is clear evidence that the university cannot, and should not, attempt to meet graduate student needs in an institutional vacuum. TEP programs must invest in community partnerships not only because of the good work that many CBOs are doing, but also for accountability in what should be the shared work of teacher education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Zeichner, 2021).

That said, I would like to explore this concept of community partnership a bit further here. What I have learned, and what really challenged my thinking as a researcher, is that the power of the community partner is their knowledge of our students and their needs, and their capacity to serve them *outside* of the institution. The CBO in this study has the staff and the community and cultural resources to deliver vital professional development content for its Fellows. The BIPOC staff experienced schools in a way that many white TEP leaders have not. Further, the CBO partners with teacher preparation programs and school districts across the state and are able to assess the

needs and realities that the Fellows will enter into upon graduation. A single TEP cannot do this.

This study shows that the students are best served by the deep relational work and trust that must be developed between the TEP and the CBO. This shared commitment to developing a professional sense of belonging will ensure that our teacher candidates are equipped to flourish and persist in K–12 schools for the long haul. As Guillen and Zeichner (2018) argue, this model and orientation towards partnership is the best way for TEP programs to be relevant—to disrupt negative experiences for both the CBO staff and the TEP students and to replace them with positive ones. This model has the opportunity to extend the concept of hospitality and sense of belonging even further, to include what "belonging" can look like for the teacher candidates, the TEP program staff, and the community members as well. Further study would only strengthen the layers in our understanding of what it means to truly belong.

Limitations and Conclusions

The findings in this study will not be particularly surprising for those who have consumed research on urban teacher education, diversity in education, representation in teacher education, and many more similar and broad topics (i.e., Banks, 1993; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). We know that assimilation has historically been expected for people of color in higher education (Brown, 2004; Callan, 2005) and that this impacts identity and self-concept for new teachers.

This study included the voices of 45 alumni (phase one survey and focus group one) and four current students (focus group 2) in an effort to gather thick description (Creswell, 2015) of student perceptions and sense of belonging in one TEP. The resulting study cannot draw generalized conclusions or claims and may have limitations due to the idiosyncrasies of the program studied and particular biases of the researcher. The themes and assertions provide a narrative picture of one TEP and contribute to the body of research on graduate students' sense of belonging in teacher education programs.

Every program might not have access to a partnership as

rich as the Fellowship described in this study. However, all programs can examine their approach to hospitality, and how their policies, student experiences and programmatic supports would indeed promote equity in these learning "homes." Further, all TEP programs are situated in a community and can imagine the kinds of partnerships that might help them to replace the old models with a new vision of hospitality and belonging. For now, listen to the stories of Morgan, Aly, Daniel, Raya, Mina, Marcus, and Lee. Good teachers know that they learn more from their students than they teach. Here is what I learned from Lee:

> I joined because it was important for me to understand or at least try to understand. I don't speak much in the fellowship, I just try to soak it in, see what people are experiencing. Cause I have no idea what it's like to be in your shoes and even if you are from the same culturally backgrounded place, we're not the same human beings.

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Prior to transitioning to academia in 2004, Dr. Heiney-Smith taught language arts in rural Vermont and urban Seattle. She has held various administrative roles at the University of Washington and Seattle Pacific University (SPU) and has chaired the graduate teacher education program at SPU since 2018. Dr. Heiney-Smith's scholarly agenda addresses the gap in research on supporting pre-service K–12 mentor teachers, and her current research examines the university's responsibility in making mentors feel valued and supported in their important roles as clinical teacher educators.

Appendix A: Survey

Definitions for terms used in the questions were hyperlinked throughout the survey (shown below). For example, participants were asked to indicate experiences with (or observation of) microaggressions by faculty, staff or peers while in the program, to reflect upon their experiences or observations of curriculum and policies, and whether or not the faculty helped them to develop their own ethnic identity. Participation was anonymous and participants were asked to self-select from a list of underrepresented groups also defined through hyperlinks in the survey (see the survey below). *Editors' note: Hyperlinks are shown in brackets as URLs, for this publication, p.28, sections 1–3.*

Items aligned to the school's conceptual framework (revised for anonymity):

We strive to enhance opportunities for all, especially for those who have traditionally been underserved by and underrepresented in the institutions of our society. We commit to supporting students by fostering a hospitable climate and a diverse community that seeks the reconciling of all people

Survey (sent to graduates within three years of completion, see Table 1)

The [university] collects end-of-program and completer survey data in order to gather our graduates' perceptions regarding their preparation as new teachers to the profession. You may recall questions regarding your perceived preparation for skills like classroom management, designing assessments, and creating curriculum before you exited our program. While we ask our students to report perceived skills supporting P-12 students from diverse backgrounds, we do not have a full picture of our students' own experiences throughout the program. *Please take a moment to provide us with this valuable opportunity to listen. This survey is anonymous.*

Please note, the intent of this survey is not to target particular faculty or staff, but to get feedback on the teacher credentialing program. We ask that you not name names. If you would like to participate in a focus-group for deeper conversation, please provide your contact information at the end of the survey.

1) I identify as an individual from an ***under-represented*** [*https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf*] and/or under-served group.

   I do not identify as an individual from an under-represented and/or under-served group, but I would like to give feedback about my observations and/or experiences (skip to #4).

2) Please select any groups that apply:
   Dropdown:
   Racial/ethnic minority
   Sexual orientation minority
   Gender expression minority
   Religious minority (could be described as any faith practiced by less than 50% of the United States population, according to statistics ***here***: [*www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/*]
   Socio-economic status (your family of origin, as defined by the ***US Census Bureau*** [*https://www.census.gov/en.html*])
   English language learner
   Citizen of another country
   Physical disability
   Learning disorder
   Mental health or other disabilities

3) While a graduate student in the SOE, I experienced ***micro-aggressions*** [*https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/microaggression*] (select one or more-do not select if not applicable)
   Dropdown:
   By my professors
   By my peers
   By staff
   (open response comment box)
   Please consider describing one or more event that you experienced or observed (without naming names).

Concrete examples within the SOE will help us learn and improve.

4) While a graduate student in the SOE, I experienced a safe and respectful learning environment
(Likert scale-never, rarely, sometimes, somewhat often, often)

5) While a graduate student in the SOE, I saw myself reflected in the curriculum, including course materials and discourse
(Choosing "rarely" or "sometimes" would indicate select courses and faculty. Choosing "somewhat often" or "often" would indicate systemic issues.)
(Likert scale-never, rarely, sometimes, somewhat often, often)

6) While a graduate student in the SOE, I was made aware of policies and procedures designed for developing an equitable learning community
(Likert scale-never, rarely, sometimes, somewhat often, often)

7) While a graduate student in the SOE, I experienced or observed efforts by faculty to support our diverse students in forming a stronger ethnic identity
(Likert scale-never, rarely, sometimes, somewhat often, often)

8) Optional-provide narrative comments regarding any of your choices above.
(Open response comment box)

9) Please let us know if you are willing to participate in a focus group to discuss these topics further. You may either provide your email address here, or email the chair if you would prefer to keep your survey response anonymous.
(Open response comment box)

Survey Results

Demographic results (Questions 1 and 2)

Participants in the survey were invited to select from the following list of "underrepresented" groups. Parentheses indicate the numbers selected, however there was not statistically significant nor narrative data sufficient to draw any conclusions. Additionally, no self-identified individuals other than racial/ethnic minorities volunteered for the first focus group.

Racial/ethnic minority (7)
Sexual orientation minority (5)
Gender expression minority (4)
Religious minority (could be described as any faith practiced by less than 50% of the United States population, according to statistics (9)
English language learner (0)
Citizen of another country (0)
Physical disability (1)
Learning disability (5)
Mental health or other disabilities (3)

Question 3

While a graduate student in the SOE, I experienced micro-aggressions (select one or more-do not select if not applicable)

By my professors	15.38%	2
By my peers	23.08%	3
By staff	0.00%	0
Open comments	61.54%	8
Answered		13
Skipped		32

Question 4

While a graduate student in the SOE, I experienced a safe and respectful learning environment

Never	0.00%	0
Rarely	0.00%	0
Sometimes	6.67%	3

Somewhat often	11.11%	5
Often	82.22%	37
Answered		45
Skipped		0

Question 5

While a graduate student in the SOE, I saw myself reflected in the curriculum, including course materials and discourse (Choosing "rarely" or "sometimes" would indicate select courses and faculty. Choosing "somewhat often" or "often" would indicate systemic issues.)

Never	2.22%	1
Rarely	15.56%	7
Sometimes	22.22%	10
Somewhat often	22.22%	10
Often	37.7%	17
Answered		45
Skipped		0

Question 6

While a graduate student in the SOE, I was made aware of policies and procedures designed for developing an equitable learning community

Never	4.44%	2
Rarely	8.89%	4
Sometimes	13.33%	6
Somewhat often	26.6%	12
Often	46.67%	21
Answered		45
Skipped		0

Question 7

While a graduate student in the SOE, I experienced or observed efforts by faculty to support our diverse students in forming a stronger ethnic identity

Never	8.89%	4
Rarely	15.56%	7
Sometimes	20.00%	9

Somewhat often	24.44%	11
Often	31.11%	14
Answered		45
Skipped		0

Question 8
Optional-provide narrative comments regarding any of your choices above.
(Open response comment box)

Answered	9
Skipped	36

Appendix B: Focus Group

Focus group participants agreed to being recorded on the researcher's voice memo application and to participation in the study via signed IRB. Focus group protocols were guided by Creswell's (2013) assertion that a carefully managed focus group avoids overly simplistic conclusions about what the participations "felt." Both the context of the study and the questions for discussion (below) were provided in print to each participant in both focus groups. The researcher established norms for equitable discussion and encouraged a conversational tone.

Focus Group #1

Agenda

Welcome, and thank you for coming!

Purpose of the focus group:

Recent reflection upon potential areas for improvement in the teacher education program revealed a need to collect more feedback from students about their experiences in our program. While we have a lot of data about how well we prepare our students to teach in diverse settings and/or to diverse students, we have very little data on how we ourselves support our students who identify as underrepresented or underserved in some way.

This group was convened in order to help us interpret and further the findings of the initial survey that was administered in the spring.

Summary of background and initial findings:

Your participation today is welcome regardless of how you identify with any group membership.

Consent Forms

Participant Demographics:

Years since graduation from program _____

Age: _____

Gender M/F or other, please note: _____

Race/ethnicity _____

*If you would like to note membership in an underrepresented or underserved group as described above, please do so below on the reverse

Norms for Discussion

Questions:

Your participation today is welcome regardless of how you identify with any group membership. Our goal is to hear the lived experiences and observations regarding the topics we will discuss today.

For any of these questions, you may speak from your lived or observed experiences, however it will be helpful for interpretation if you feel comfortable describing your role. This is entirely optional.

1. How would you describe your overall experience in applying to the program when considering marketing materials and language, the application process, images on the website and brochures, etc.?
2. What was your experience of the curriculum and materials used in the program? Did you see yourself represented? If yes, how? If no, how?
3. Describe your experiences with course discourse and discussion norms during your time in the SOE graduate program. Did you see yourself represented in discourse norms? How would you describe your opportunities to participate in discussion? What did you observe when considering your peers?
4. Describe your experience of the learning environment. What kinds of policies, programs or initiatives were or were not in place to support students?
5. While you were a student, did you experience or witness one or more microaggressions? Please explain.
6. What were the greatest overall strengths of your program experience?
7. What were the greatest overall opportunities of your program? What general feedback would you like to communicate for program improvement?

Focus Group #2

Agenda

Welcome, and thank you for coming!

Purpose of the focus group:

Recent reflection upon potential areas for improvement in the teacher education program revealed a need to collect more feedback from students about their experiences in our program. While we have a lot of data about how well we prepare our students to teach in diverse settings and/or to diverse students, we have very little data on how we ourselves support our students who identify as underrepresented or underserved in some way.

This group was convened after a previous focus group revealed questions and concerns regarding program supports for students of color.

Summary of background and initial findings

Consent Forms

Norms for Discussion

Questions:

What general comments do you have about the XX Fellowship and XXU's collaboration with XX?

How has the PD been for you? How has it enhanced your experiences in internship?

In what ways could be better incorporate what you are learning and experiencing into the program without adding more to your plate?

Data from previous surveys and focus groups suggests that we certainly have work to do in developing a safe and inclusive learning environment. Some comments suggested that micro-aggressions were most common from peer-peer and that the majority white demographic is one of the main reasons. If you feel comfortable, please share your thoughts on this (personal experiences or observations).

We are about to admit a new group of students and want to do a better job recruiting Fellows. In your experience, how can we do that better? How can we encourage more candidates to apply?

Appendix C

From Theme One, Morgan's full text (see p. 15):

[For a person of color] entering into spaces where you have discussion can be difficult because of the layers and levels of power in the room… it's very much anxiety inducing for me to enter into that space because I am constantly hyper aware of is he gonna talk first, is she going to talk next? I don't want to talk over someone else. I don't want to take up space so that somebody else doesn't have space. So it was hard. It was challenging. I remember that being like one of the hardest things that first day like for that, for like the [admissions] interview process, when we were having to do that interview group. I remember I had to go into those interviews and give myself a pump-up speech. Like in my head what you have to say is valuable, just go in there…it's like the people cooking up the admissions process are all dominant culture, you know, kind of extrovert people person, thinking, oh, we just want to see how these people perform in this setting and kind of what ideas they have and it, it feels much lower stakes [to them]. Right? Yeah.

From Theme Two, full text referenced on p. 15:

Morgan:

> I think there were 13 of us [in my cohort] maybe and we took a lot of the same classes throughout the two years in our program and there was definitely that inner circle, these six girls who all hung out together and were best friends and on group texts, and never once did I hang out with them.

Daniel:

> I missed the orientation cause I didn't have childcare and I had my children that night and couldn't make it. And if perhaps somebody there had [advised my registration] none of [my problems with missing a course] would have happened.

Theme Four, full text from Raya, p. 17:

> In schools, I see a lot of annoyed eye rolls. Like whenever we're doing PDs about equity and justice. There's somebody in my building who will say things like, do

we hire white people anymore? The Fellowship, [helps interpret these situations] to see it wasn't intended this way, but it was the impact that it had on you when somebody said something. They are very transparent about the imperfect world we're working in. I personally oftentimes feel like not the greatest because I'm not an expert in my field yet. So it's safe space to be heard, or like play off as a sounding board.

Digital Storytelling in the Time of COVID: Developing Writing Pedagogies with Pre-Service Teachers

Kevin M. Thomas
Winn Crenshaw Wheeler
Bellarmine University

Abstract

This qualitative case study examined a cross-curricular collaboration between two-methods instructors using digital storytelling to engage pre-service teachers in developing writing pedagogies through the curriculum integration and authentic application of the practice of writing and technology. Pre-service teachers learned about writing techniques in a writing methods course and relevant components of digital storytelling in their technology class. These experiences were combined and resulted in the pre-service teachers developing a digital story related to their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. An analysis of participants' work products including their digital stories, reflective essays, and exit slips was conducted to discern emergent patterns around two research questions: 1. What patterns and themes emerged in examining the content and craft of candidates' digital stories? 2. How does the personal use (and sharing) of digital stories influence candidates' perceptions of their own writing and its connection to supporting the development of writers in elementary classrooms? Results revealed that the learning experience facilitated participants' connections to their future practice and the benefits of digital storytelling for their future students, including differentiating instruction, writing for an authentic audience, developing digital literacies, and increasing social-emotional learning.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, educator preparation programs, literacy, digital literacy, writing pedagogy, digital storytelling

Digital Storytelling in the Time of COVID: Developing Writing Pedagogies with Pre-Service Teachers

Literacy development has consistently been the purview of pre-service elementary teachers. Broadly defined, literacy focuses on receptive and generative communication including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Despite the need to engage students in each of these modalities, there has been little emphasis on writing in K–12 classrooms (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Brindle et al., 2015; Gillespie et al., 2013). In 2003, the National Commission on Writing reported that NAEP assessment data revealed that 97% of elementary students reported spending less than three hours a week on writing and writing assignments; approximately half of twelfth-graders surveyed reported completing an assignment of 3 or more pages once or twice a month, while approximately 40% reported never having such assignments. In 2015, Brindle et al. further supported the notion that students write little in elementary classrooms when discovering that third and fourth-grade teachers reported only teaching writing for 15 minutes a day with students only writing 25 minutes a day (across disciplines and content areas). Given the reality that writing is often de-emphasized or neglected altogether in K–12 classrooms, it is important that pre-service teachers understand not only the importance of writing instruction, but that they understand how to engage students in the process of writing. One means of supporting this understanding and the development of writing pedagogy is to support pre-service teachers in their own personal writing development so that they may model and convey a writing identity in their future classrooms.

In the context of the 21st century, it is also critical to acknowledge the intertwining of writing, composition, digital literacy, and digital tools. The emergence of digital technologies, including the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs), has changed what it means to be literate. Building on foundational literacies, new literacies require students to develop the knowledge and skills to read, write, view, and communicate with the numerous ICTs that we use

daily (Leu et al., 2004). As a result, preparation programs must also prepare their students to use instructional technologies to teach foundational, new, and digital literacies.

Although the importance of written communication and digital literacy are evident, challenges abound for pre-service teachers as they transfer learning into their own classrooms. Specifically, there is a need to support them in understanding the value of written composition and digital literacy and to develop their sense of efficacy in implementing instruction supporting written composition and the use of digital tools. Research on transfer in the process of learning "indicates that students often do not spontaneously transfer what they have learned, at least not across superficially dissimilar scenarios" (Goldstone & Day, 2012, p. 149). Research on pre-service teachers' ability to use technology to teach has found that while most pre-service teachers feel prepared to use technology in the classroom, few of them integrate technology in their lessons (Batane & Ngwako, 2017). This speaks to the challenge faced by methods teachers who work to support students in the development of theory and methodology to carry into their future teaching practice.

In order to support teacher candidates' development in writing pedagogy and understanding of the importance of writing instruction, and in recognition of the value of intentional integration of technology methods and content methods, two professors in an educator preparation program collaborated to create a shared learning experience. The two professors, one teaching a technology methods class and the other a literacy methods class, designed a learning experience engaging candidates in the creation of a digital story connected to COVID-19. Candidates developed the composition portion of the assignment through their literacy methods class and learned about digital storytelling and relevant tools through their technology methods class.

The purpose of this study is to examine candidates' experience with the process, including an analysis of their products, reflections on the process, and their thinking about their own writing development and future classroom instruction. The

findings of the study will benefit the development of composition skills and digital literacy of pre-service teachers' future students. Additionally, the study of the process benefits educator preparation providers by demonstrating the positive impact of collaborative efforts of methods instructors to create authentic learning experiences.

Review of Literature

Educator preparation programs can support pre-service teachers' use of technology by employing digital tools in their courses (Shedrow, 2021). Historically, pre-service teachers have learned about instructional technologies in stand-alone technology courses; however, research has demonstrated this to be an ineffective method in preparing pre-service teachers to successfully integrate technology into their instruction (Karatas, 2014). While stand-alone courses continue to be used in many educator preparation programs, a more effective approach to teaching candidates to effectively use technologies to support instruction is by integrating them into methods and content courses (Childs, Sorensen, & Twidle, 2011; Foulger, Wetzel, & Buss, 2019; Pierson & Thompson, 2005; Tondeur, van Braak, et al., 2012). This approach is aligned with Shulman's (1986) work on aligning pedagogy with content knowledge as well as Mishra's and Koehler's (2006) related research on the incorporation of technology to support pedagogical approaches to teaching content knowledge.

Humans are natural storytellers and by engaging students in the act of storytelling, teachers can help them to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Gaeta et al., 2014) while facilitating their ability to make sense of the world and their personal experiences (Egan, 1988; Rambe & Mlambo, 2014; Wyatt-Smith & Kimber, 2009). Digital Storytelling–short movies that combine "the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia" (e. g., images, audio, and video)–has been popular in K–12 classrooms since the early 1990s (Robin, 2006, p. 1). These short movies typically take the form of one of three types: personal narrative, historical events, or informational/instructional. Each of the different formats of digital stories

must contain seven elements: point of view, a dramatic question, emotional content, the creator's voice, music, under three minutes long, and appropriately paced (Robin, 2006). The continued popularity of digital storytelling in the classroom can be attributed to the instructional benefits they provide students and teachers (Girmen, Özkanal, & Dayan, 2019).

Perhaps the primary benefit of integrating digital stories into the classroom is the development of traditional literacy skills. Creating digital stories can improve writing (Alismail, 2015; Shelby-Caffey, Úbéda, & Jenkins, 2014; Tanrıkulu, 2022) by engaging students in a "continual process of planning, writing, and creating," including "constant revision as students evaluate whether the story works and is appropriate for the intended audience" (Yearta, Helf, & Harris, 2018, p. 15). The digital nature of these stories allows them to be placed online and shared with a wider, authentic audience, which has been shown to prompt students to spend more time planning (Graham & Harris, 2013) and revising their stories (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009) as well as to be more active and invested in the writing process (Graham & Perrin, 2019; Yearta, Helf, & Harris, 2018). Through sharing their stories with an authentic audience, students come to understand that being part of a collective conversation means listening and learning about ourselves and one another (Yearta, Helf, & Harris, 2018, p. 15). This process can assist in the development of a sense of community (Bromley, 2010; Cunningham, 2015; Lambert, 2013), an understanding of each other and the world (Cunningham, 2015; Lambert, 2013), empathy and perspective-taking (Garcia & Rossiter, 2010; Yearta, Helf, & Harris, 2018), and an emotional connection to the content students are learning about. Writing can support students' emotional health through offering an avenue for expression (Smyth, 1998).

Digital storytelling has also been linked to gains in students' reading fluency and oral language skills (Campbell & Hlusek, 2015; Isbell et al., 2004; Liu, Tai, & Liu, 2018; Morgan, 2014). Creating digital storytelling circles can improve student reading (Morgan, 2014). Fluency and vocabulary can also be improved when teachers assign students to work collaboratively

with a peer on their stories (Morgan, 2014) and encourage them to use new words in their stories (Royer & Richards, 2008). The creation of digital stories has been shown to excite reluctant readers about literacy (Morgan, 2014).

In addition to the development of traditional literacy skills, the integration of digital stories in the classroom provides teachers with the opportunity to engage students in the development of several new literacies. As noted by Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, and Henry (2013) "new literacies build upon foundational literacies rather than replace them completely" (p. 5). Communication through traditional literacies, reading and writing, will take new forms as text is combined with new media that allows multiple modes of communication (Leu et al., 2013). By incorporating digital storytelling into their instruction, teachers allow students to demonstrate learning through multiple modes of communication (Miller & McVee, 2012), which in turn can expand their understanding of what "counts as valued communication" (Hull & Nelson, 2005, p. 253). Johnson and Kendrick (2016) explain that working with different modes and their respective cognitive and affective qualities challenged the students in their study to take different approaches to thinking about their experiences. The process of choosing an appropriate image further involved considering which image best represented their own experience of that emotion through design elements such as color, light, perspective, and foregrounding. Finally, selecting music (i.e., thinking musically) required paying attention to the overall structure of a piece and its elements, such as tempo, dynamics, melody, key, and instrumentation (p. 672).

Using different modes of communication in a literacy project can "shed new light for students on their experiences and themselves" as well as improve their self-confidence and positive identities and lead to increased feelings of personal achievement and significance (Johnson & Kendrick, 2016, p. 673). The multimodal nature of digital storytelling can also assist struggling writers including English Language Learners (Dollar & Tolu, 2015). The limited nature of traditional modes of communication constrains the ability of students to

communicate (Kress & Jewitt, 2003). The auditory and visual nature of digital stories provides alternative means for struggling writers to develop their voice and "the opportunity to express themselves in new ways" (Erstad & Silseth, 2008, p. 221).

Digital storytelling also facilitates the development of 21st century literacies (Robin, 2006). Shelby-Caffey, Úbéda, and Jenkins (2014) point out that the development of digital stories often requires students to conduct research, providing students with an opportunity to develop the necessary skills associated with 21st century literacies such as reading on the internet to locate, analyze, synthesize, and communicate information (Leu et al., 2013). Robin (2016) identifies several other literacies associated with 21st century literacies that students develop when creating digital stories:

- Digital Literacy - the ability to communicate with an ever-expanding community to discuss issues, gather information, and seek help;
- Global Literacy - the capacity to read, interpret, respond, and contextualize messages from a global perspective;
- Technology Literacy - the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity, and performance;
- Visual Literacy - the ability to understand, produce, and communicate through visual images;
- Information Literacy - the ability to find, evaluate, and synthesize information. (p. 21)

Additional benefits of digital storytelling in the classroom include enhancing students' communication skills by "learning to organize their ideas, ask questions, express opinions, and construct narratives" (Robin, 2006, p. 4; Tetik & Arslan, 2022), as well as promoting student engagement and reflection (Ribeiro, 2016; Robin, 2016; Tanrıkulu, 2022) and presenting reflections in multiple modalities (Kim, Coenraad, & Park, 2021). These findings extend to prompting pre- and in-service teachers in self-reflection (Gachago et al., 2013).

Pedagogically, digital storytelling is an effective tool for teaching content knowledge. In the process of creating digital

stories, students can develop traditional and new literacies while building community and gaining insight into personal experiences and developing empathy for the experiences of their peers. Digital storytelling can also be used with pre- and in-service teachers to model effective integration of technology to support content instruction and promote reflection.

Purpose of the Study

As a pedagogical strategy, digital stories support students' development of traditional and digital literacies (Tetik & Arslan, 2022). Digital storytelling can assist students in the development of perspectives and provide insights into their personal experiences and making sense of their worlds (Egan, 1988; Rambe & Mlambo, 2014). Furthermore, research suggests that narrative digital storytelling can be a transformative learning experience for students (Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007) and provide them with an opportunity to express key events in their lives from a position of strength (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 668), including assisting in the treatment of trauma (Anderson & Wallace, 2015; Cohen, Johnson, & Orr, 2015; Hancox, 2012), and making connections between their experiences and academic content. This study focused on examining the following research questions:

1. What patterns and themes emerged in examining the content and craft of candidates' digital stories?
2. How does the personal use (and sharing) of digital stories influence candidates' perceptions of their own writing and its connection to supporting the development of writers in elementary classrooms?

Method

This qualitative research study employed a case study design (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative inquiry was selected as the means of observation given that the data gleaned are "a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions of social processes" (Miles et al., 2020, p. 3). The case was bound by time, experience, and place. Junior pre-service teachers taking both a literacy methods course and a stand-alone technology course in the spring of

2020 were asked to participate in the research inquiry through sharing product and process artifacts of creating a digital story connected to their experience with COVID-19. Candidates could determine the mode of their writing (informative, narrative, argumentative), but brought their composition to fruition through digital storytelling.

Participants

Thirteen candidates participated in the study. All participants were pre-service teachers at a small, private liberal arts university in a midwestern city and had a double major in elementary education and exceptional children's education. It is notable that the university is in a city that experienced intense turmoil due to the police killing of a woman of color in the late night/early morning delivery of a search warrant. This was reflected in the content of some candidates' storytelling as they connected to the idea of multiple pandemics – not only COVID, but also the long-lasting disease of racial injustice.

Data Sources, Collection, and Data Analysis

Data resulted from a project entitled "Living Life as a Writer" in a literacy methods course and included digital stories, reflective essays, and written exit slips. The "Living Life as a Writer" project consisted of two parts: 1) the digital story, including their writing script for their story, and 2) a reflective essay, which included chronicling what they had learned about their own writing process, the role of writing instruction, and ways to engage their future students in the writing process. The day that the digital stories were due, candidates shared their digital production with their literacy methods professor and other members of the class. Exit slips were a regular routine in the class and were used to gather responses, thoughts, and reflection about the experience of composing and sharing their digital stories and thoughts about their future practice. The reflective essays were submitted at the end of the semester as a synthesis of candidates' insights about their own writing processes and teaching writing in the future.

The assignment was introduced early in the semester. The

pandemic digital story was assigned a due date close to mid-term. Once the assignment was introduced in literacy methods, candidates explored components of digital stories in their technology integration class. This included reading and discussing relevant articles, identifying key characteristics of digital stories, and analyzing models. Candidates were given a choice about what software to use in completing their stories including, but not limited to, i-Movie, Movie Maker, and PowerPoint. After working on their digital stories for several weeks, candidates shared their work in class through an author's chair – an opportunity for candidate authors to share their compositions. As the class was structured as a synchronous virtual experience, candidates were able to share their digital stories through the share screen feature of the meeting. During the sharing of the stories, peers had opportunities to provide feedback and make connections with one another through the meeting chat. At the end of the class period, they reflected through personal responses to digital exit slip prompts that included important walk-aways from the experience such as thoughts about composing and crafting as well as the impact and benefit of sharing with peers.

Processes of open coding and in-vivo coding (Miles et al., 2020) were used in analyzing candidates' work products (including exit slips from the day the pandemic digital stories were shared, pandemic digital stories, and reflective essays) (See Appendix A). Codes were assigned by each researcher independently and then collapsed into relevant themes (See Tables 1-3, pp. 67–73). The sections that follow articulate the patterns that emerged and evidence from artifacts which supported the presence of a particular concept.

Discussion

Data analysis revealed themes clustering around three central concepts: content and themes of the digital stories, characteristics and craft applied to the digital stories (RQ1), and instructional implications for their future classrooms (RQ2). Within the concept of content (RQ1), themes which emerged included an exploration of dichotomies (or juxtapositions)

from the conflict, a feeling of epiphany or insight referred to by some candidates as "opened my eyes," and an exploration of time, space, and isolation. Characteristics and digital story writing craft (RQ1) evident in candidates' products included the purposeful selection of visual images, intentional use of music, and application of narration that created an increased sense of writing voice.

As candidates were participating in methods classes (both for writing and technology integration) reflections on their personal use of and experience with writing and digital storytelling were central and used as a springboard to consider future teaching practice (RQ2). Patterns that emerged included discussion of the role of sharing writing in creating classroom community, the utility of digital stories as a means of increasing elementary students' efficacy and motivation, and the importance of choice in the learning process and through assigned tasks (for candidates and their future students).

Content and Themes of Digital Stories

Three central themes/concepts emerged from the content of the digital stories: awareness of time and relationships, insights or revelations, and juxtapositions. The ways in which candidates expressed and revealed these themes and concepts was different; however, there were patterns in how universal ideas were revealed through both content and structure.

The passage of time and how it contributed to feelings of both isolation and connection was an explicit and implicit theme throughout the stories. Several candidates structured their stories around the passage of time within the pandemic (about a year at the time when the stories were created) by tracing the seasons, months, or milestone events (weddings, holidays, and birthdays).

This awareness of time was met with gratitude by some and bitterness by others. Several candidates expressed gratitude for the time to improve hard relationships with families. One candidate reflected, "Though this past year has been horrible, I'm grateful for the growth in my relationships and honestly, I wouldn't change anything." In a similar vein, another candidate

shared, "Without the summer of forced together time I think my family relationships could have been severely damaged. I am so thankful that during the pandemic I learned to get along with my family." Another candidate expressed gratitude for time at home to spend with the family's aging dog, Sammy, "We were able to spend the last months spent at home loving our lifelong friend for her last four months of life. We were so lucky to have that time with you" (Link to "To My Sammy Girl": https://bit.ly/3MXoG9o).

In contrast, one candidate reflected on the unwelcome presence of COVID through moments and milestones in her family including holidays, her sister's bridal shower and wedding, and her own twenty second birthday. Her frustration with COVID and the omnipresence of COVID through 2021 is clear in the closing lines of her digital story, "I will always remember you COVID because you will always be attached to these memories, for better or worse." Another candidate reflected on how the intense time together increased tension, "The journey didn't start when the pandemic hit, it only got worse when it did. Changes were made on a daily basis. 'We will get through this together' was the new motto; but we had never felt more distant from another. The glue holding everything together started to fall apart."

Insights about life were woven throughout many of the digital stories. As with the examples above, several of these insights indicated a sense of gratitude. One candidate reflected on the power of disconnecting to discover what you love, how to love yourself, or to realize what's really important in life. "Maybe just maybe you'll realize the best way to connect is to disconnect." Another candidate reported on the year of tragedy that she experienced through the pandemic: losing a pet, losing her grandfather and her aunt, and struggling financially because of the inability to work. In spite of these struggles, her closing lines revealed insights connected to gratitude, "It's made me strive to make the best use of my time on earth, because no day is guaranteed … I am thankful God had given me the time to experience this crazy year of 2020."

Several candidates shared their revelation about the

pandemic in the phrase "opened my eyes." One candidate, heartbroken and disappointed that her life-changing internship at Disney World was cut short by the pandemic, ultimately reflected that the pandemic "opened her eyes to new possibilities." Another candidate reflected on seeing the movement of disease throughout the world and also the trauma of racial injustice (Link to "Opened My Eyes": https://bit.ly/3DmRkhc). In the pain of these observations, she found her passion and the ability to move hope to action. She summed all of this up by saying the pandemic was the "year that opened my eyes."

A third theme or concept that emerged from the analysis of the content of the stories was the exploration of dichotomies or juxtapositions. These tensions were apparent in different ways; in some digital stories they served as a universal idea, in others they were a means for structuring the story. Some stories used the concept of juxtapositions thematically and as an organizational structure. One candidate titled her poem "Inhale," and throughout the poem she contrasted the calm of inhaling with the challenges present in the pandemic world (e.g., breathing with a mask, being inside all the time, fleeting attention) and closed with the direction to inhale, inhale, inhale "until it doesn't feel real, until your lizard brain remembers to exhale" (Link to "Inhale": https://bit.ly/3VRkDj4). The author of the digital story, "To My Sammy Girl" filled her story with warm images of a family pet bringing presence, connection, and humor to a difficult time that contrasted with the pain of loss that was felt when the pet died. Through the story the audience gets a strong sense of both the warmth and gratitude of intense time spent together while also understanding the grief and sadness of losing Sammy.

Several candidates alluded to the idea that "not everything has changed for the worse" as they reflected on improved relationships with family and friends or greater understanding and appreciation for the meaning and gift of life. Similarly, the concept of before and after (the pandemic) was used as an organizing frame for a writer thankful for personal growth and development. Stillness and busy-ness also emerged as a dichotomy as one candidate wrote, "a pause in the busy-ness of

life was the opportunity to start living again."

One candidate explored a juxtaposition through content and structure as she framed her digital story around a list poem of single words with images of paintings that she created. The list shifted through the poem from words of despair to words of hope. The use of juxtaposition in terms of revealing theme and driving structuring is indicative of the mix of feelings candidates felt in considering their pandemic experiences.

Benefits of Digital Stories in Revealing Written Composition and Instructional Practice

Participants' digital stories, written reflections, and group discussions revealed numerous benefits to incorporating technology into a writing activity. Benefits clustered around three major ideas: 1) the ability of the medium of digital storytelling to convey candidates' compositions, 2) the congruence of digital story telling with recognized best practices in writing instruction, and 3) the capacity of digital storytelling for supporting candidates' socio-emotional development and the creation of classroom community. By incorporating technology into the writing process, candidates were able to communicate multimodally through images, videos, music, and their voices. Best practices in writing instruction that were revealed to candidates through the process included writing for authentic audiences beyond the teacher and sharing and publishing writing within the classroom community. Through the process of creating the digital story, candidates reported the benefits of writing on their own mental health and a strong sense of connectedness to their peers through the sharing of the stories.

Using Craft to Convey Meaning

All the candidates incorporated visuals into their digital stories. These multimodal forms of communication included stock photos, original artwork, and personal photos and videos. The use of images, whether selected from stock collections or self-created, offered an additional means of communication. As one candidate stated, "I used my own art to describe the words I wrote," which she felt added "a whole new level of emotions

and structure to the piece that was not there before." In fact, the use of images to "describe the words" was reflected in the themes and emotions conveyed in all the pandemic stories. For example, participants selected images of the virus, people wearing masks, family, friends, pets, outdoors, and social distancing, all of which connected to themes of loss, isolation, routines (e. g., normal vs. new normal), and discovery conveyed in their stories. One candidate wrote in her reflection that the use of images in the writing process has the power to elicit memories, which was an emotional experience. She went on to connect this to her future class, noting that she could only "imagine how that may be beneficial for my future students." The "multimodal nature of digital stories enable children and young people to express complex thoughts and emotions" (Nilsson, 2010, p. 152).

Half of the candidates used music in their digital stories. Music can frame and contextualize the story (Alonso, Molina, & Requiejo, 2013, p. 382). Candidates provided emotional context through their selection of music, which were primarily somber instrumental arrangements that reflected their feelings about the pandemic. Music is often used in digital storytelling to convey the feelings and emotions (Chung, 2006). The emotional content of the stories and accompanying music were not limited to melancholy. One candidate decided to write about the positives that she found in the pandemic and incorporated a soaring choral song that reflected her choice. Another candidate used a fast-paced instrumental piece that conveyed the anxiety and stress associated with the "emotional turmoil" and feeling that the "walls around us seemed to be getting closer and closer" which she also communicated in her writing and her voice. Similarly, a candidate captured a feeling of nostalgia in her story conveying her wistfulness for musical theatre (Link to "Musical Theatre": https://bit.ly/3QQn6b4).

The development of voice is an element of teaching writing as well as one of the seven required elements of digital storytelling. Using a multimedia approach assists candidates in discovering voice in their writing (Banaszewski, 2002). Candidates record their voices narrating their stories,

incorporating another method of multimodal communication. Like the images and music incorporated into their stories, candidates' voices reflected the emotional tone of their writing. For example, the strained emphasis on the word "inhale" as the candidate repeats the word over and over, implores the listener to take deep breaths as they face the various challenges of the pandemic. Another candidate inserted long pauses in her narration to emphasize a point.

Supporting Writing Development and Community-building

The process of creating digital stories was valuable to candidates in that it gave them first-hand experience with practices recognized as beneficial in writing instruction. These included: writing for authentic audiences beyond the teacher (Fredrich, 2019), creating an engaged community of writers (Graham et al., 2012), and engaging candidates "by involving them in thoughtful activities" (Graham and Harris, 2019, p 14). It was through engagement with these processes that candidates were able to see benefits beyond writing development to include the creation of strong community. Nine candidates expressed the intertwining of writing development with learning about peers and how these contributed to the overall development of community.

Consistent with a challenge to provide students opportunities to create writing for an audience beyond the teacher (Fredrich, 2019), participants cited the value of sharing their stories with an authentic audience. Candidates published their stories through presenting them to the class; therefore, they were viewed by all the students in the course. Participants discussed how they were able to make connections to their peers' stories and life experiences. One candidate commented, "Writing lets you get to know your students." General comments about the process included that the digital stories were engaging, powerful, impactful, and promoted social emotional development. Such sentiment is revealed in the following reflection:

> I also have learned how much writing can help make a strong classroom community. Creating an environment

> where students are able to share their stories and learn about each other—an environment where students can flourish. I hope that my students feel safe and secure in my classroom. Each student wants their story to be heard and they want to share, so it is necessary that we give them an environment [where] they are able to.

One candidate wrote, "A lot of people have had a pandemic experience similar to my own. I want to be better at checking in with everyone around me. I think that is so important, and I will carry that forward to my future students." These findings are supported by research that demonstrates that sharing digital stories can promote the development of a sense of community and an understanding of their peers' experiences (Cunningham, 2015), create empathy (Yearta, Helf, & Harris, 2018), and build an emotional connection to the content they are learning (Shelby-Caffey, Ubeda, & Jenkins, 2014, p. 196).

Candidates also cited the ability to assess students' digital stories and written scripts as a benefit of digital storytelling. They found that the peer feedback provided by their colleagues improved their writing and cited this as another reason for using them in their teaching. The ability of digital stories to support formative and summative feedback is supported by research on the use of digital stories to teach writing (Kearney, 2011).

Incorporating digital storytelling into the writing process greatly influenced these pre-service teachers and their conceptions of their future practice, as this comment shows:

> [I] honestly want my future students to be able to do some type of digital story. It would probably have to be for older students and a little less complex. But, I really enjoyed being able to learn so much about my peers; I'd like to do the same with my future students.

Participants discovered that digital stories have the potential, through multimodal means of communication, to create an emotional impact that can, as one candidate pointed out, heighten words and facilitate writing. Reflecting on the process of turning their written pieces into digital stories, candidates conveyed a newfound sense of pride in the product of their

writing and spoke with enthusiasm about sharing digital storytelling with their own students: "Digital storytelling can be so impactful for students. Students are able to make connections to their peers' writing pieces and overall tell their story in a unique way."

Implications

Findings from this study provide several implications for teachers in K–12 classrooms. The cross-curricular collaboration serves as a model for the benefits of professional partnerships and the authentic application of technology (e. g., digital storytelling) in writing methods courses. By engaging pre-service teachers in the authentic application of digital storytelling to support narrative writing, instructors can improve their understanding of the benefits of specific instructional technologies. For example, requiring pre-service teachers to write, create, publish, and discuss their digital stories with their classmates, instructors can facilitate their development as writers by helping them to recognize strengths and areas for growth, which can inform their future practice. Additionally, creating digital stories and discussing them with classmates supports processing personal experiences and assists in developing classroom community, building empathy, and social-emotional learning. Finally, by requiring pre-service teachers to reflect in their journal, and discuss the assignment with their classmates, instructors can help them to make connections to the benefits of digital storytelling and teaching writing to their future students.

Results also support candidates' adoption of digital storytelling to assist their students in the development of important 21st century literacies through multimodal communication, which also facilitates their differentiation of writing instruction. Integrating digital storytelling into writing instruction in both educator preparation programs and K–12 classrooms allows teachers to engage students in the development of important 21st century skills related to creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication. Each of these benefits align with International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) educator and student standards.

One area traditionally associated with the integration of digital storytelling that was not evidenced in the findings from this study was the development of digital literacies. In their discussions and written reflections, participants did not identify technology as an area of skills developed as part of their work on this assignment. This could be an oversight on the part of the pre-service teachers or could be a result of their long-term use of technology. Additional research should be conducted to examine to what degree digital stories continue to contribute to the development of digital literacies in this population of students.

Conclusion

In this cross-curricular study, two instructors collaborated to engage pre-service teachers in the use of digital storytelling to support narrative writing. The study serves as a model for educator preparation programs by demonstrating the benefits of collaborative instruction as it relates to moving technology instruction into the method courses which supports pre-service teachers' thinking about the transfer of practice in their own classrooms. Findings from the study support the existing body of literature on the benefits of authentic integration of technology into methods courses and the potential this integration provides for an authentic means of sharing and publication within and beyond the confines of the classroom. Likewise, results align with research on the ability of digital storytelling to support and augment student writing.

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Kevin Thomas is a Professor of Instructional Technology at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. He received his Ph.D. in Instructional Technology from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. His research areas of interest include pre- and in-service teachers' perceptions on mobile phones, the impact of professional development on in-service teachers' application of TPACK, and the integration of instructional technologies to support student learning.

Winn Crenshaw Wheeler, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Literacy Education at Bellarmine University. Before beginning work in higher education, she worked for 20 years in K–12 schools including roles as an elementary classroom teacher and literacy coach. Her research interests include writing development, creating inclusive classroom spaces, and instructional coaching.

Appendix A: Coding Index of Stories

Participant	Analysis of Written Product (Techniques)	Analysis of Digital DIgital Product (Techniques)	Content
BG	"Inhale" poem Used of repeated structure Poem of address Use of irony Use of paradox	Author narration Stock images Prosody Pictures convey anguish	Finding space Coexistence of hope and anxiety Pandemic Sameness
LE	Poem Sense of the pandemic taking over Sense of doom	Music (used for dramatic effect) Author narration Use of stock images	Things falling apart Isolation Hopelessness
BT	"To My Sammy Girl" Repeated line you were Parallel structure	Author narration Video clips Piano music	Focused on dog, Sammy Sadness of losing furry friend Gratitude for the time
LW	"Disconnect to Reconnect" Parallel structure "Life is about…" Poem of address Maybe just maybe - circular ending - the only way to disconnect is to reconnect	Use of personal images Music	You and the people you love Bigger things in life Make what you want
MY	"My Digital Story" Use of paradox	Author narration Intense music Starts with stock images Moves into personal images	Language of the pandemic Not everything has changed for the worst Better family relationships Gratitude Also–what I miss Trying to make the best of it
NI			Miserable at first–grew in family relationships–a pause–time to start living again Wistfulness over what didn't happen Mentioned BLM

Appendix A: Coding Index of Stories, cont.

NS	A Year of the Pandemic	Not really a digital story– PP with pictures	Narrated each month of the pandemic–victories and challenges of the year
RD	List poem, one word	Original artwork	Shifts from despair to hope
DB	Pandemic Writing Piece Narrative description		Shifts before/after What has been good about the pandemic (time with familly, taking initiative, interacting more)
TC		Personal images	Year that opened my eyes Pandemic of racial injustice (disease) Awakening Ultimately found passion Put hope to action
VT			Compared to Jumanji Personal losses (pet and family) Job loss Thankful for the time even if it was hard
ST	March 18, 2021		Disney Friends for the first time Sense of loss Shift from loss to hope Opened my eyes to new possibilities
BM		Use of personal images	Connection to theatre Value of friendship Life is theatre (vice versa)
OC	Poem of address to COVID "I will always remember"	Use of personal images	Connection to family events and that COVID was unwelcome and present (bridal shower, wedding, junior practicum, Halloween party, 22nd birthday)-always remember for better or worse because you are attached to these memories

TABLE 1
Themes from Content of the Writing

Participant	Content
	Dichotomies
BG	Poem – inhale – each line contrasts the peace of inhaling with a challenge (breathing with a mask, being inside all the time, fleeting attention, hard, hurts to get out of bed, though muscles are tight, today is not forever, sunshine and possibility, until it doesn't feel real, until your lizard brain remembers to exhale)
BT	"My Sammy Girl" - contextualized dichotomy – sadness over the loss of a furry friend, gratitude for the extra time to spend with her
LW	"Maybe just maybe the only way to reconnect is to disconnect"
MY	"Not everything has changed for the worse" couples language of the pandemic with benefits – stronger family relationships, gratitude
NI	A pause in the busy-ness of life was the opportunity to start living again
RD	List poem of single words that shift from despair to hope
DB	Pandemic Writing Piece – contrasts before and after (what is changed? What is better?)
VT	Thankful for time, though it was hard (loss of family members, work)
ST	Shifts from new adventure to despair to regaining hope
VT	Therefore, the idea for the writing piece stemmed from that reflec tive practice, but the quote "despite the immense grief, fear, panic, anxiety, etc. that this year brought, I would not have changed my experience for the world" was really where the piece emerged from.
	Time/Space/Isolation
ST	Isolation –describes this in the joy of finding friends through her internship and then having to leave them again
LW	talks about the value of time to refocus
MY	talks about the value of time to connect with family
NI	talks about the value of time for healing
LE	captures strong feeling of isolation and sadness even as people are in the same house

TABLE 1
Themes from Content of the Writing, continued

Participant	Content
	Time/Space/Isolation, continued
BG	talks about finding space and the monotony of the sameness of it
	"Opened My Eyes"
TC	"Year that opened my eyes" (seeing the pandemic of disease and racial injustice) (finding passion – moving hope to action)
ST	"Opened my eyes to new possibilities"
MY	"Opened my eyes to new possibilities"
NI	I decided that it was up to me to find some of the brighter aspects of the pandemic. The project actually helped me productively process the pandemic. I am someone who wants to start projects early, but that hope is rarely executed correctly. However, I started this project days early because I was excited about it, and I had ideas. Overall, I was excited and proud of my final project.

TABLE 2
Themes from Technology

Participant	Content
	Stock Images
All	Stock images associated with pandemic (pictures of the virus, pictures of graphics and numbers, pictures of people struggling with emotion)
	Original Artwork
RD	Use of her own art
	Photographs
BT	family and dog
BM	pictures from the theatre and with her friends - even times where she may have used stock images were tightly tied to the message of the story and could have been pictures that she had taken
MY	pictures of family, self, friends
LW	use of personal images of self, friends, and family
NS	use of personal images
ST	use of personal images
TC	use of personal images
	Video Clips
BT	clips with dog and her family members
TC	some personal videos (from protests)
	Music
All but one participant	(somber, reflective, triumphant, nostalgic, intense)

TABLE 3
Themes of Instructional Practice

Participant	Content
	Community Relationship
BG	"Writing lets you get to know your students"
DB	"One thing we learned more about today was digital storytelling. Digital storytelling can be so impactful for students. Students are able to make connections to their peers writing pieces and overall tell their story in a unique way."
LW	"Digital storytelling is a way to get to know students better and assess writing at the same time"
BM	"A lot of people have had a pandemic experience similar to my own. I want to be better about checking in with everyone around me. I think that is so important, and I will carry that forward to my future students. Digital stories can be so powerful for students. I felt like I learned so much about my classmates today, and I will take that into the classroom when learning about my students."
MY	"I honestly want my future students to be able to do some type of digital story. It would probably have to be for older students and a little less complex. But, I really enjoyed being able to learn so much about my peers; I'd like to do the same with my future students."
VT	"Everyone has had a different experience with the pandemic."
NS	"Through digital storytelling, everyone has had similar experiences with the pandemic, however they all tell their story in a unique way."
BT	I also have learned how much writing can help make a strong class room community. Creating an environment where students are able to share their stories and learn about each other. An environment where students can flourish. I hope that my students feel safe and secure in my classroom. Each student wants their story to be heard and they want to share, so it is necessary that we give them an environment they are able to. "I'm interested in writers writing to entertain friends, inform peers, persuade parents, change minds, provoke tears, project thinking" (Kissel 18).

TABLE 3
Themes of Instructional Practice, continued

Participant	Content
	Motivation and Efficacy
DB	Through digital storytelling, everyone has had similar experiences with the pandemic, however they all tell their story in a unique way.
BT	"Through my reading and class work I have learned many strategies and techniques to use in my writing. One technique I tried was to just write, put down all of my thoughts on a page. To not think about grammar or punctuation and instead to that after. I really enjoyed doing this because it helped me get my thoughts out and not forget them. When I went back to reread my writing, I was able to change parts around to make it more impactful. This is a strategy I enjoyed and will continue to use."
LW	Before beginning EDUC 339 this semester I never thought of myself as a writer. I thought I was no good at writing and I was terrified to teach writing to a room full of students every year once I had my own classroom. After working through multiple writing projects during this semester and focusing on my individual writing process, I feel a bit more confident about being a teacher of writing to my future students. I also now feel like everyone can be a writer if they want to be.
	Fear of Openness
LW	During this semester, one thing I learned about myself as a writer is that I enjoy writing poetry. Before this semester started, I was terrified of poetry in every single way. I hated learning about it and analyzing it in school, and crafting poems using a specific format. Since I never had wonderful experiences with poetry in my K–12 schooling, the thought of having to teach a roomfull of students about poetry was mortifying to me. There are a lot of components to poetry that I am not comfortable with using, let alone teaching, so I still have a long way to go, but I am slowly becoming more confident.
RD	For the first part of the project, one thing was on my mind: the rules. I have always had an urge to always follow the rules. I guess you could call me a "goodie-two-shoes," but this has always been my personality. So, for the first portion of the writing, I just did not want to follow them- I wanted to push my limits a little bit. I went for simple and too the point and when drafting I did not worry about spelling or punctuation or grammar. I just wanted to focus on the words and emotions that I wanted to emote

TABLE 3
Themes of Instructional Practice, continued

Participant	Content
	Fear of Openness, continued
ST	Growing up, Ive always been afraid of writing. My fear of other people's judgement prevented me from being open with my writing or sharing it with anyone. I have little to no confidence in my writing abilities which is why it takes me such a long time to complete any writing assignment. I analyze every word over and over to make sure it sounds okay. I read and analyze until I just hate the whole piece. I was afraid if my writing was bad, my teachers and professors would think I was dumb and that I wasn't smart enough to teach. This anxiety I feel about writing is something I would never wish upon any of my students. It's important to me that my students feel com fortable with me and their peers reading or hearing their writing and be proud of what they accomplished. During this semester, we learned a lot about how to build students' confidence in writing and making opportunities for students to write every day. The things we learned from this class have helped me develop ideas of how to use writing as something students will enjoy and look forward to everyday in class.
	Choice
LW	When we first started, I took the invitations very literally and only wrote about exactly what was asked. This made it hard to connect with the invitations sometimes because I was focusing too much on the question that was asked, not what was going on in my mind. As I engaged with more invitations, I found myself taking them in my own directions, which allowed me to write more and feel more connected to the pieces I was writing.
	Role of choice for students
LW	With this information and personal experiences in mind, when I give students writing invitations in the future, I will make sure to remind them that they can choose to take the writing invitation or write about something else that is on their mind. We were reminded of this every week, but I did not feel comfortable with that until I began writing more often. There will be times I want every student to respond to the writing invitation, but more often than not I will allow students to choose what they write. I will find writing invitations that relate to what we are talking about in other subjects, what is going on in the world, and what interests the students.

TABLE 3
Themes of Instructional Practice, continued

Participant	Content
	Role of choice for students, continued
MY	At the beginning of the semester, when we did our weekly writing invitations, I honestly dreaded them. I hated feeling like I had to write about something that I did not care about. However, Dr. Wheeler explained that she wanted us to take our writings wherever we felt we needed to. This was really beneficial for me as a writer. I did not like feeling like I had a box that I had to write in; I wanted to let my mind wander. I am the type of person that lets myself just think and let my brain wander off. I appreciated that Dr. Wheeler gave us the opportunity to do this with our writing invitations. I think this helped me gain a better appreciation for writing. I realized that I do not have to place my thoughts and ideas in a box or limit them to the prompt that was placed in front of me (sometimes). I feel more confident in my ability to "brain dump" and let my deeps thoughts just pour onto the page. I think this is important for students.
RD	One that excites me the most is the writing invitation. I really want to include this in my classroom because it always students to practice their writing without the worry about formalities. They can write what they want or respond to the prompt- it is their choice and that is what I favor the most. Student choice is a very important part of education and must be exercised to have a positive and effective classroom.
VT	In a love for writing, it is important to allow them the opportunity to be creative in their writing. Therefore, it is important to give them some freedoms in what they choose to write about and some freedoms in how they present their writing. We also did this in class. With the digital story project, we were given an overarching theme of "2020," but were free to explore the topic in the direction we wished and our creative outlet to showcase our writing was the digital story. Another example of creative ways of showcasing writing would be a poetry showcase in class, a writing trailer, a slide show presentation, a scary story campfire, etc. Maintaining the drive for writing by providing creative opportunities for students will ensure they are engaged in writing instruction and hopefully facilitate a love for writing.

Teacher Identity Development: A Formative Approach to Pre-service Teachers' Dispositional Development

Tiffany T. Young
Trina Pettit
Linda M. Kalbach
Rod Diercks
Lisa McClurkin Vargason
Doane University

Abstract

As teacher shortages increase across the United States, educator preparation programs are tasked with preparing a new generation of teachers equipped to succeed in an increasingly challenging landscape. Along with ensuring that candidates develop deep content knowledge and effective pedagogical skills, national accreditation bodies also require educator preparation programs to monitor and support pre-service teachers' dispositional development. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand teachers, administrators, clinical experience supervisors, and education faculty members' perspectives of the dispositional qualities that pre-service teachers need to develop to be successful educators. Our goal was first to gain an understanding and then to use it to develop a tool to teach and evaluate the dispositional characteristics pre-service teachers need to successfully transition into their teaching careers. We collected data from 30 participants via an open-ended survey and a subsequent focus group of five participants. Using open and focused coding followed by code mapping, three themes emerged including a commitment to (1) professionalism, (2) relationships, and (3) learning. We used these three themes and their 12 subthemes, along with feedback from our participants, to create a *Teacher Identity Development* tool. With specific indicators of each disposition, this tool can be used by educator preparation programs not only to monitor and assess pre-service teachers' discrete dispositional skill development but, more

importantly, to facilitate the development of a teacher identity as candidates journey toward becoming effective educators in our current educational landscape.

Keywords: dispositions, pre-service teacher development, teacher preparation, teacher identity development

Teacher Identity Development: A Formative Approach to Pre-service Teachers' Dispositional Development

What makes a good teacher? Few would argue that good teachers have strong instructional skills and a passion for their content matched by depth of knowledge. Yet, the best teachers—the most impactful—arguably have something more, something less tangible. They seem to have a human capacity that supports and yet transcends instructional skill and content knowledge, giving them a heightened ability to succeed in a complicated and often conflicted institution. This capacity, or disposition, reflects specific values and beliefs that guide decisions and behavior; it is crucial to teacher development (Ellis et al., 2009). Dispositional development is complex and develops throughout the career of the educator as new experiences are encountered (Beijaard & Meijer, 2017). Consequently, it is an issue that needs to be raised early and consistently in educator preparation programs (EPPs) as a key piece of professional development. There is now greater urgency on the topic as school districts across the country replace scores of veteran teachers with new hires, some of whom will have yet to complete their educational preparation and therefore will have not yet solidified a thorough awareness of their own dispositional qualities.

While pre-service teachers are working to develop their dispositional qualities, EPPs and education scholars are grappling with the particulars of disposition (e.g. Casey et al., 2021; Ellis et al., 2009; Truscott & Stenhouse, 2022; West et al., 2018). What makes up teacher dispositions and how can their development be evaluated? Better yet, what does the word "disposition" even mean and when did it take such importance in teacher education? Since the term disposition dates back to the 14th century, (Merriam-Webster, 2022), clearly the idea that humans have varying dispositional natures is not new. However, the notion that teachers should have a particular set of dispositional qualities is only a few decades old. It was first formalized with the work of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) in 1992,

followed by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in 2002 (Karges-Bone, 2009). The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2022) currently requires that EPPs help students develop professional responsibility (Standard 1.4) and provide clinical experiences that "develop candidate's knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to demonstrate positive impact on diverse students' learning and development" (Standard 2). CAEP also requires EPPs to monitor and support students' progress throughout the program (Standard 3). These standards give the current parameters within which accredited EPPs guide their students' development and analyze programmatic success. CAEP adopted InTASC's definition of dispositions as "the habits of professional action and moral commitments" that guide an educator's performance (CCSSO, 2013, p. 6); InTASC provides further guidance for EPPs via their delineation of 43 critical dispositions.

Despite accreditation requirements, many challenges exist for EPPs in addressing dispositional qualities. The various interpretations of the word dispositions is one major obstacle identified by several scholars (e.g., Casey et al., 2021; Ellis et al., 2009; West et al., 2018). Others have questioned the validity of assessing the construct of dispositions due to its abstract definition and its limited capacity to be observed (Cummins & Asempapa, 2013; Diez & Raths, 2007). However, despite disagreements regarding how to define and assess such qualities, there is widespread agreement that a focus on dispositions is necessary for teacher development (Ellis et al., 2009). Scholars have noted that pre-service teachers do not consistently enter EPPs with the dispositions necessary to be an effective teacher for all students (e.g., Garza et al., 2016; Saultz et al., 2021). Therefore, EPPs have a responsibility to monitor and assess pre-service teachers' dispositional development.

In a study of the ways in which EPPs across the United States are engaging in this work, Ellis et al. (2009) found wide variations across institutions regarding how EPPs identify, assess, and teach educator dispositions. For example, some institutions identify dispositions as teacher behaviors while others focus

on teacher characteristics, teacher perceptions, or a combination of these categories. Furthermore, institutions use a variety of methods for selecting which dispositions to assess. Faculty surveys and conceptual frameworks were most commonly utilized, however few institutions sought feedback from PreK–12 partners or other stakeholders (Ellis et al., 2009). Casey et al. (2020) argued that the contribution of these partners provides an authentic lens into the multiple perspectives of dispositional qualities and their importance.

As identified in Ellis et al.'s (2009) work, several methods and tools have been created to identify and assess teacher dispositions. For example, Bradley et al. (2020) created a 25-question, survey tool via "assessment of teacher education faculty and administrator needs" (p. 54) and a review of literature including existing tools and professional standards. Their survey identifies five main dispositional areas, including responsibility, integrity, enthusiasm, communication, and reflection. Bair (2017), on the other hand, surveyed faculty in EPPs along with their colleagues in the liberal arts and sciences, school administrators, and classroom teachers and created an exhaustive list of desired qualities resulting in broad categories such as professionalism, communication, relationships, and leadership. Other researchers have focused on developing assessment tools in select dispositional areas such as empathy, commitment to responsive instruction, or awareness of school policy (Bullough, 2019; Evans-Palmer, 2016). Ultimately, while Casey et al. (2021) also developed an assessment tool, they argued against a "one-size-fits all approach to defining and selecting which dispositions to measure" (p. 22).

Once an EPP determines its focus regarding dispositional development, accrediting agencies require ongoing assessment of their success in achieving that focus which can lead to further complications, such as reducing dispositional development to a checklist of expected outcomes rather than focusing on instructional efforts to promote students' growth. To avoid this tendency, Bair (2017) suggests EPPs resist developing a "single measure" of dispositional development and instead utilize a "complex, multifaceted assessment" (p. 224) with an emphasis

on growth and development. By introducing dispositional assessment early in EPPs, students are able to develop a clear understanding of the dispositional expectations in the field (Cummins & Asempapa, 2013). Continued dialogue and reflection on these areas may support the development of pre-service teachers (Garza, et al., 2016; Graus, et al., 2022).

Researchers have taken different approaches to understanding the ways in which dispositions develop and the impact those dispositions have on the field of education. Saultz et al. (2021) examined the dispositions of 164 pre-service teachers at the beginning of their education course work. Given that the majority of those entering EPPs remain white females from predominantly middle-class backgrounds, (King et al., 2016). Saultz et al. (2021) suspected most pre-service teachers would not believe intuitively that the educational system is inequitable, since this demographic generally lacks the lived experience of a marginalized group. Their survey results confirmed "that our entering [pre-service teachers] will more than likely bring dispositions that will lead them to reproduce inequalities if we do not use our [EPPs] as an educative space to support critical consciousness" (p. 26). Consequently, Saultz et al. concluded that structured opportunities for pre-service teachers must include immersion in schools which serve highly diverse student populations. Conversely, Thornton (2013) examined whether such a focus on dispositions in EPPs can be sustained once educators are in the field. Thornton focused on the degree to which middle-school pre-service teachers remained committed to responsive teaching methods and confirmed that unless the participants had a strong commitment to highly responsive instructional practices, they struggled to avoid complying with systemic expectations even when it conflicted with their teacher education training. The implication of both studies emphasizes the importance of helping pre-service teachers develop a strong dispositional foundation through their EPPs that allows them to engage with the educational system in a committed manner. Without such a foundation, pre-service teachers may struggle to effect change as professional educators within the system even when it is unjust or in

conflict with their knowledge or dispositional inclination.

Although research regarding pre-service teacher dispositions has been conducted over time, the increasingly challenging landscape teachers are experiencing requires a new understanding of the dispositions EPPs need to cultivate to support teachers' desire to remain in the profession. Furthermore, such a tool needs to be created in collaboration with PreK–12 stakeholders who are experiencing the fluctuations that are present in the current educational system. Just as we teach content and pedagogy, we believe that it is our responsibility to teach pre-service teachers how to navigate the current educational challenges by developing dispositions that support their success. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to understand participants' perspectives of the dispositions and skills EPPs need to nurture in pre-service teachers and, subsequently, to use that understanding to develop a tool to teach and evaluate those dispositional characteristics. Our research was guided by the following question: What are the dispositional characteristics and skills that EPPs need to teach and assess?

Method

We used a basic qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to understand better the necessary dispositional characteristics and skills from the perspective of individuals invested in the development of pre-service teachers. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), while all qualitative research focuses on the construction of meaning, as humans engage in the natural world, the "*primar*y goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings" (p. 25, emphasis in the original). As researchers, we ascribe to a social constructivist worldview and recognize that meaning is subjective and dependent upon personal life experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, we believe that any tool we create to teach and evaluate pre-service teachers' dispositions may also be used in subjective ways, reflective of the personal, cultural, and societal experiences of the individual using the tool. As faculty and staff in a private, liberal arts EPP, we worked to set aside our own experiences and biases regarding pre-service teachers'

dispositional development by interrogating our beliefs during multiple team research meetings. During these meetings, we acknowledged that each member of our team values certain dispositional characteristics and skills more than others. This enabled us to have discussions regarding our individual interpretations of the data and arrive at consensus during the analytical process. To engage both widely and deeply with participants, we designed and implemented the following two-phase approach.

Data Collection and Analysis Phase One

We selected our participants using maximum variation sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) to capture the voices and perspectives of multiple stakeholders and identify common patterns among them. Using this approach to sampling, we purposefully included individuals representing four different roles in pre-service teacher development: administrators, teachers, clinical experience supervisors, and university faculty members. We also included individuals from a variety of schools, districts, and universities to capture differences that existed across communities of education. We began by piloting an open-ended survey that solicited the perspectives of five participants (including at least one member of each role listed above) regarding pre-service teacher dispositions. Following the pilot survey, we adapted some of the questions and added an additional question to elicit more robust data (See Appendix A for our revised open-ended survey). Following revisions, we sent out a recruitment email to an additional 60 individuals, 25 of whom agreed to participate for a total of 30 participants. Table 1 displays the educational roles of the individuals who participated. Each participant completed our revised online survey that included two parts: a demographic questionnaire and a series of open-ended questions regarding their perspectives of the dispositional skills and characteristics that pre-service teachers need to develop in a teacher preparation program.

TABLE 1
Current Roles of Survey Participants

	PreK–6	Grades 7–12	Postsecondary
Teachers	6	8	1
Administrators	5	3	–
Teacher Educators	–	–	13
Clinical Experience Supervisors	–	–	5
Total*	11	11	19

Note. * The table does not add up to the total number of participants since some participants served in multiple roles.

After collecting the survey responses, we uploaded the data to MAXQDA.22 and engaged in open coding, primarily using In Vivo codes to capture the unique sentiments of the participants (Saldaña, 2016). Two members of our research team collaboratively coded the entire data set and engaged in rich discussion regarding the coding scheme to increase the validity of the findings. This resulted in over 100 codes and 1000 coded segments. Although we reached saturation mid-way through the data analysis process, we continued to analyze all of the remaining survey data, which allowed us to move from an inductive to a deductive analytical approach, whereby we focused on testing our emerging codes and categories against the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Our full research team met to engage in focused coding (Saldaña, 2016) during which we condensed the codes into 35 categories that fit under three broad themes.

Data Collection and Analysis Phase Two

To delve deeper into participants' views and triangulate our data, two members of our research team conducted a focus group in which we presented and discussed the emerging categories and themes. While focus group size can vary from four to 12 participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), we purposefully selected five of our survey participants. These participants had particularly insightful responses to our survey and represented a variety of positions, workplaces, experiences, and

identities. Table 2 provides the educational roles of the focus group participants (all names and places are pseudonyms). The focus group lasted for 90 minutes and was conducted via Zoom so that we could be inclusive of participants who lived in a broad geographic range. Participants received a $25 gift card as compensation. During the focus group, participants viewed the preliminary themes and corresponding categories and codes. Then they provided additional data regarding dispositional skills or characteristics that needed to be added or removed, reasons for the inclusion of dispositional characteristics and skills, potential biases in creating and using a teaching and evaluation tool, and the dispositions that might be difficult to cultivate in the current educational climate (See Appendix B for the semi-structured protocol).

TABLE 2
Focus Group Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Role(s)	Grade(s)
Nicholas	Teacher; Teacher Educator	PreK-6; Postsecondary
Evelyn	Teacher; Teacher Educator	7-12; Postsecondary
Nadia	Teacher; Teacher Educator; Supervisor	PreK-6; Postsecondary
Franklin	Teacher	7-12
Sally	Teacher; Administrator; Teacher Educator Supervisor	PreK-6; 7-12 Postsecondary

We recorded the focus group session, transcribed it, and uploaded the transcription into MAXQDA.22. We coded the data from the focus group session and combined these codes in the larger dataset. We used the new data to collapse codes, rename codes, and recategorize codes to represent participants' voices. Following this phase, we drafted a tool to be used to support the teaching and evaluation of pre-service teacher dispositions. To enhance validity, we engaged in member checking. We sent the draft to all 30 participants and elicited their feedback regarding the tool's composition, relevance, and ease of use. Thirteen participants submitted feedback, which we utilized to make revisions to the tool. Some of these revisions included removing redundancies, reordering of indicators,

clarifying language, and including two additional open-ended questions.

Findings

During the initial survey process and subsequent focus group, participants resoundingly shared that there was a strong need to address the work of dispositions within EPPs. Without eliciting this feedback, one participant offered: "I'm so glad you are working on this. This is important work." Another participant added that "to get really strong educational leaders, you have to have really strong pre-service teachers." These messages and participants' expansive responses to our open-ended survey reiterated the purpose and importance of delving into the work, which resulted in the emergence of three main themes and 12 subthemes. We will briefly address each of these themes and their corresponding subthemes before explaining and introducing the teaching and evaluation tool that encompasses a comprehensive overview of the data. Table 3 includes an overview of the themes, subthemes, and examples of codes.

TABLE 3
Overview of the Findings

Themes	Subthemes	Example Codes
Commitment to Professionalism	Exhibits a strong work ethic	Work ethic, persistence, organized, timeliness, attendance, initiative, reliable
	Utilizes effective and professional communication skills (speaking, listening, writing, body language)	Speaking, listening, body language, writing
	Demonstrates self and contextual awareness	Contextuual awareness, emotional regulation
Commitment to Relationships	Exhibits nurturing attributes when working with others	Friendly, empathy, patience, respect, kindness
	Displays a collaborative spirit that fosters comminity building	Collaborative, community

TABLE 3
Overview of the Findings, continued

Themes	Subthemes	Example Codes
	Demonstrates a willingness to put the good of others ahead of self	Vulnerability, humble, courage, altruistic, integrity
	Engages with others in ways that promote diversity, equity, inclusion	Equity (others), inclusion, culturally proficient
Commitment to Learning	Displays characteristics of a self-directed learner	Competence, reflective, goal oriented
	Demonstrates an eagerness to learn from others	Learning from others
	Exhibits the characteristics of a *thinker* in the field	Autonomy, self-efficacy, creativity, curiosity, inventive, risk-taker
	Works to deconstruct personal biases to advocate for inclusivity	Self-equity, open minded

Theme One: Commitment to Professionalism

Participants described the importance of pre-service teachers developing a set of skills and characteristics—particularly important during challenging times—related to being a professional teacher dedicated to strengthening the goals of the school community. To demonstrate a commitment to professionalism, participants indicated four subthemes: (1) exhibiting a strong work ethic; (2) utilizing effective and professional communication skills, including speaking, listening, writing, and body language; (3) demonstrating a professional presence; and (4) displaying self and contextual awareness. For some participants, such as Franklin, many of the skills and characteristics in this theme were simply "common sense" and therefore he said he didn't write about them in his survey. Others such as Nadia noted that during her tenure in the educational field, what once had been considered common sense is now something that "you really have to push in order to see those pieces really happen."

Specific skills and characteristics highlighted by participants included being reliable, persistent, organized, and timely.

Participants also indicated the importance of having a positive attitude. One survey participant described the need to "keep away from negative thoughts and comments." During the focus group, participants emphasized the need to avoid "toxic positivity" which Sally related to the "ostrich syndrome" wherein individuals bury their heads in the sand rather than confront difficulty. Participants believed positivity isn't an avoidance of difficulty or a failure to acknowledge difficulty, but rather developing a positive outlook and approach to responding to challenges. Participants also indicated pre-service teachers need to demonstrate engagement and overall "presence" in the work they are doing, whether they are in their field experiences or their college courses.

While many of the skills in this theme are transferable to other professions, such as maintaining professional levels of attendance and being organized, participants indicated that teachers need to develop a unique ability to understand their role in various contexts. As participants noted, pre-service teachers are tasked with assuming a professional role earlier than some of their college-aged peers. One teacher summed up this expectation: "As soon as they walk into the building/profession they are seen as professionals. They should exhibit the same qualities as an educator already in the field." As pre-service teachers confront the reality of their dual roles as both college students and professional teachers during their field experiences, they must develop a great deal of self and contextual awareness and other professionalism skills earlier than peers. Furthermore, participants stated pre-service teachers must "remain calm under pressure," "have control of their emotions in difficult and stressful situations," and develop the "ability to self-advocate when they are overwhelmed or struggling." Considering the recent changes in our educational landscape, demonstrating a commitment to professionalism as described by participants may require much more than "common sense."

Theme Two: Commitment to Relationships

The second key theme was a commitment to establishing and maintaining relationships that foster genuine collaboration.

To demonstrate a commitment to relationships, participants identified four subthemes: (1) exhibiting nurturing attributes when working with others, (2) displaying a collaborative spirit that fosters community building, (3) displaying a willingness to put the good of others ahead of oneself, and (4) engaging with others in a way that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion. The significance of this theme can be identified by Franklin's statement during the focus group: "Relationships are really the heart of everything we do." Relationships are a critical aspect of being able to have a vision for shared goals that maintain high expectations for all students.

One of the key characteristics identified in both the survey and focus group discussion was the need for teachers to have nurturing attributes when working with others. As Nicholas stated, "If we are not teaching people to be empathetic, or courageous, I think we are in the wrong field." Characteristics such as kindness, courtesy, and compassion stood out as attributes necessary for cultivating relationships with students, families, other educators, and community stakeholders. Participants believed these characteristics are essential in promoting an environment that values and respects diverse backgrounds and promotes inclusivity.

Beyond these key traits, participants also noted the importance of acting in a selfless manner to contribute to the service of others and the profession and doing so in a collaborative manner. A word that frequently appeared throughout the survey was "humility." During the focus group, participants were asked to think of a colleague who had strong dispositional qualities and to describe what that colleague was like. Nadia replied:

> Part of what I would see as that delicious bit of specialness would be the sense of humility. And with that humility is the moment I can say… "I don't know how to do this, and I'm okay with that."

Having the ability to look beyond oneself and seek out others for resources and collaboration is essential to contributing to a positive school culture and climate.

Many of the participants of the focus group believed that

relationship building was one of the hardest dispositional elements to cultivate. As Franklin stated, "You can tell somebody to be more personable, you can tell somebody to be more relatable… it's just some people just lean into that, and some people are much more hesitant just through who they are." Focus group participants identified relationship building as an area in which teacher educators must be thoughtful and intentional about creating opportunities to practice and teach these skills.

Theme Three: Commitment to Learning

The final emerging theme was a commitment to learning, which includes a commitment to personal and professional self-growth. Within this theme, participants identified four subthemes, including (1) displaying characteristics of a self-directed learner, (2) demonstrating an eagerness to learn from others, (3) exhibiting the characteristics of a *critical thinker* in the field of education, and (4) working to deconstruct personal biases to advocate for inclusivity. Participants shared the importance of pre-service teachers exhibiting a growth mindset in their current experiences that drives them through their entire career.

Importantly, learning from others was described actively by most participants, wherein pre-service teachers not only accepted feedback, but also sought feedback, asked questions, and demonstrated a willingness to request help. Participants suggested that pre-service teachers should be open to constructive feedback and purposefully act upon it to improve their effectiveness, while "showing appreciation for opportunities" provided to them. However, participants felt that pre-service teachers also need to take ownership of their learning by using effective and reflective goal setting to develop competence as a teacher. Franklin's comment during the focus group discussion noted the importance of developing this ability to learn and grow by "understanding that best practice isn't a destination but a journey." Sally added that pre-service teachers need to "know no matter how good you are that you can get better."

Participants noted that one of the ways to grow as a teacher is to become a critical thinker in the field of education, which

involves creativity, curiosity, and innovative thinking. However, participants emphasized the current educational climate often stifles these dispositions in teachers. When reviewing the data from the open-ended survey, focus group participants were distressed at how much more frequently participants noted other dispositional skills, such as timeliness and appropriate dress, in comparison. Franklin expressed his fatigue in trying to combat teachers' lack of autonomy in today's educational context, stating, "Can this get better at any point? Or am I just a drone?" Nicholas recalled his first year of teaching: "It was very much like, 'Here's your book, do it the way it's been done. If and when you master this, then we can talk about doing engaging lessons.' And that was very troubling to me." Participants felt it was necessary for teachers to develop a sense of autonomy or "to be able to do what's right for kids based on [their] professional knowledge."

Participants' sentiments also signified the importance of being able to deconstruct personal biases to learn to advocate for inclusivity. They indicated that pre-service teachers must be able to reflect on their personal experiences in a way that allows them to recognize their own biases. This work is important so that pre-service teachers "believe deeply that every single student, regardless of what they bring to school, can learn at high levels." By expanding their knowledge related to topics of diversity, equity and inclusion, teachers can affect the power structures of schools. Sally shared an enlightening perspective built off of Nadia's previous insight with the focus group: "I like to think of [reflectiveness] as…the way we build relationships, the way we treat people, what our deep beliefs are, our biases… Because, as Nadia said, the heart and mind, move the hands." Ultimately, participants felt that a focus on students' commitment to learning in EPPs will help to create the habits of heart and mind that are necessary to move the hands in a way that meets the needs of all learners.

Discussion

Throughout data collection and analysis, we were confronted with the unique dispositions pre-service teachers

need to develop in the current educational context. However, participants problematized the term *disposition* since it meant different things to each of them. Their concern echoed the contrasting definitions of this term across institutions of higher education (Casey et al., 2021; Ellis et al., 2009). Since the most common dispositional category used across U.S. institutions was teacher characteristics (Ellis et al., 2009), we were concerned that the word *dispositions* connotes potentially fixed and innate personal characteristics rather than learnable behaviors. In fact, some institutions consider dispositional proficiency as a criterion for entrance into their EPP (Brewer et al., 2011) rather than as objectives that can actively be taught along with pedagogical knowledge and skills. Our participants resoundingly indicated the importance of viewing the development of these skills as a teachable and malleable process.

Garza et al., (2016) indicated the importance of teaching students the dispositional qualities that are necessary to "shift from self-as-student to self-as-teacher" (p. 19) as they continue to grow professionally. Based on our research and interactions with our participants, we argue that such a transition, from student to teacher, requires more than acquiring discrete characteristics, perceptions, and behaviors, but rather a holistic transformation of being. According to Beijaard and Meijer (2017), teacher identity is a complex and dynamic interaction of the personal values and beliefs one holds interlaced with the professional space in which individuals interact. In addition, teacher identity is actively constructed (Trent, 2010) and is influenced by pre-service teachers' educational contexts, prior experiences, and learning communities (Izadinia, 2013). Jones and Kessler (2020) noted the particular importance of context given the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting increased need for teachers' identity to encapsulate the "ethic of care" (p. 2), while Quezada et al. (2020) stressed the inescapable role the pandemic would play in the teacher identity of those pre-service teachers whose development journey intersected COVID-19. Due to the socialized nature of teacher identity development, Izadinia, (2013) argues:

"[F]ailing to incorporate a realistic and sophisticated

> understanding of teacher identity construction into teacher education amounts to failure to fulfill the most fundamental aim of teacher education, which is helping teachers learn to teach" (p. 709).

Therefore, we believe EPPs have the responsibility to provide the contexts, experiences, and learning communities necessary to weave a discrete list of dispositions into a complex web of actional and observable behaviors that support the development of a meaningful teaching identity. As a result, rather than use the term disposition we named our tool *Teacher Identity Development* (Appendix C).

As dictated by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2022), EPPs have a responsibility to help students develop "professional responsibility at the appropriate progression levels" (Standard 1.4). This language reifies the importance of the developmental foundation of our Teacher Identity Development Tool whereby pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to demonstrate their growth over time. Specifically, CAEP requires that EPPs provide evidence that pre-service teachers engage in professional learning, act ethically, take responsibility for student learning, and collaborate with others. The Teacher Identity Development Tool teaches and monitors these four areas, along with several others that our participants noted as essential in the current educational climate.

Since many institutions rely on the InTASC standards for programmatic guidance and development, we analyzed how our 12 identity characteristics align with the 43 critical dispositions outlined by InTASC (CCSSO, 2013). InTASC integrates dispositional elements throughout each of its ten core teaching standards, noting specific characteristics that align with those standards. We conducted a comparative analysis of our 12 evaluation areas on the Teacher Identity Development tool and found that all of the critical dispositions identified by InTASC are incorporated into at least one of the three overarching themes on the Teacher Identity Form. Therefore, EPPs that use this tool will also be supporting their pre-service teachers' development of the critical dispositions outlined by InTASC.

Interestingly, two of the twelve areas of development identified by our participants as necessary in the current educational landscape are absent from the InTASC critical dispositions. Specifically, we found no evidence in the InTASC standards regarding the ability to "display self and contextual awareness." Our participants resoundingly shared the need for EPPs to teach pre-service teachers how to adapt their behavior and display appropriate interpersonal boundaries with children and adults as they represent themselves as an emerging professional. They saw this as something that the pre-service teachers currently struggle with as they navigate their dual roles of college students and clinical field teachers. Developing the skill to foreground certain parts of their identity according to context may also be helpful for pre-service teachers later in life as they seek to sustain a work/life balance.

The second area not identified by InTASC is the ability to "display a willingness to put the good of others ahead of oneself." Indicants of this characteristic include demonstrating humility, exuding courage by doing the right things for the right reasons, practicing vulnerability, acting in ways that illustrate a student-centered belief system, and demonstrating integrity by being trustworthy and honest. Due to the current demands of the educational field, teachers are often expected to display this characteristic at an unsustainable level. Thus, while we recognize that educators must learn to put the good of others before themselves, we also acknowledge that teachers must learn how to advocate for themselves when necessary to avoid burnout. Assisting students and providing feedback in this area throughout their pre-service years can help to prepare them for success in the professional world.

Recommendations

In opposition to discrete dispositions, we recommend a comprehensive focus on teacher identity that highlights the importance of the developmental process students experience from the point at which they enter their first education course until they are ready to move into the profession. A more comprehensive focus also emphasizes the ways pre-service teachers

develop that are distinctive to the teaching profession, as their identity shifts from student to teacher (Garza et al., 2016).

We encourage cooperating teachers, clinical experience supervisors, education faculty members, and the students themselves to utilize the Teacher Identity Development tool to teach, assess, and monitor students' progress in each of the 12 identified areas throughout their period of pre-service development. Central to the form are the indicants which describe examples of the ways in which pre-service teachers can outwardly display their developing identity as a teacher. These indicators, derived from participants' own words, should be used as the primary points for explicit teaching and should inform the conversations regarding areas for continued growth. Importantly, since we believe that neither dispositions nor identity can be objectively measured, all indicants are of observable behaviors, and the evaluation choices reflect the frequency of the observed behaviors. Therefore, we recommend evaluators do not attempt to measure the extent to which a pre-service teacher has developed their teacher identity, but rather that they document observable behaviors. These examples can be used to initiate conversations with pre-service teachers about how to make such an identity visible to others (Graus et al., 2022).

The development of teacher identity is essential to the success of all educators; however, focus group data suggests that each characteristic manifests differently by context. Pre-service teachers must learn to be mindful of how the pressures of these characteristics vary among different districts, schools, content areas, and grade levels. Curriculum revisions should address ways in which EPPs can intentionally teach the importance of context in teacher identity development. Participants expressed that these learning opportunities should be implemented throughout the EPP to help students align their beliefs and actions with the expectations of the profession. Pairing early immersion in diverse field experiences with explicit instruction regarding the themes, subthemes, and specific indicants on the Teacher Identity Development tool can help pre-service teachers develop their own identity in meaningful ways. In addition, cooperating teachers, field experience supervisors, and EPP

faculty who exhibit a strong teacher identity should be purposefully selected to mentor students. EPPs can also encourage students to self-evaluate their own progress using this tool. Self-evaluation combined with mentor feedback and discussion can help students identify their strengths and areas for future growth (Leeferink et al., 2019).

Limitations and Future Research

During data collection, the use of an open-ended survey enabled us to include a larger but still limited number of perspectives. Such an instrument, however, may have narrowed our ability to capture more complex thoughts or beliefs from the participants. It also limited the ability of participants to ask clarifying questions and engage in a more in-depth discussion surrounding this topic. To best mitigate these concerns, our methodological design included a focus group session with maximum variation sampling, which allowed focus group participants to review the data that had been collected and offer feedback regarding the initial themes.

Furthermore, while we sought to include a wide range of voices, people of color and other marginalized populations are strikingly underrepresented in the educational field (King et al., 2016). Although this survey had a large response rate (46%), our participant demographics are reflective of the educational population and therefore were also limited in diversity. A more diverse participant pool would ensure the research results are informed by and represent the beliefs and experiences of the larger population. In future studies, including an additional sampling criterion focusing specifically on diversity would be beneficial. While utilizing the Teacher Identity Development tool developed in the present study, it will be critical for users to monitor its sensitivity to racial and cultural differences.

Although this tool has potential to support pre-service teachers' development, we are cognizant of the ways it can be both limiting and subjective based on the experiences of individuals who are using it. Nicholas aptly stated: "There's strengths to words and there's limitations to words," indicating that such a tool, no matter how comprehensive, can be

understood differently by different audiences. We acknowledge that work must go into teaching others how to use and interpret this tool for it to be used effectively. Our individual biases regarding the importance of specific teaching qualities were mitigated via research discussions, and similarly, individuals using this tool may benefit from explicit training and discussions regarding its utilization to decrease the influence of their life experiences, perceptions, and biases on their use of the tool.

The findings from this study hold important implications for the future of EPPs. The Teacher Identity Development tool created through this study can inform EPPs of the characteristics and skills that faculty need to teach and assess in pre-service teacher preparation programs. However, it is important that future efforts are aimed at identifying appropriate methods for utilizing this tool and considering how the data will be collected, used, and reported. One of the difficult factors in assessing pre-service teacher identity development is the inability to consistently observe the qualities and behaviors identified as essential. Based on our research, we suggest this form be used as a formative tool to foster conversations between pre-service teachers and their cooperating teachers, clinical experience supervisors, and education faculty members throughout their program. Effective assessment of these skills should be done continuously and openly so that teacher educators can give meaningful and necessary feedback to teacher candidates. Future researchers should investigate ways in which EPPs intentionally implement practices that strengthen the qualifications and skills necessary to be effective teachers.

Finally, researchers should continue to explore the alignment of the identified characteristics and qualities with success in EPPs and in the teaching profession. Through our experiences as faculty in a liberal arts EPP, we have often observed characteristics of teacher identity that have been associated with success, or lack thereof, in program completion. Further investigation of the use of this tool to guide curriculum additions and adaptations in EPPs is warranted to determine effective approaches to support students in developing their teacher identity. Continuing to address content knowledge and pedagogy without direct

curricular attention to developing teacher identity development is an injustice to the teacher profession, especially given challenges of the current educational climate.

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Tiffany T. Young, Ph.D, is Assistant Professor in the College of Education at Doane University. She serves as the Director of Elementary Education and teaches courses in literacy methods, early childhood methods, and qualitative research design. Her own qualitative research primarily focuses on early literacy development and working with teachers to develop equitable instructional practices. She currently serves as Co-Editor of the Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research (JEQR).

Trina Pettit, Ed.D., is Assistant Professor of Special Education in the College of Education at Doane University. She is the Director of Undergraduate Special Education and teaches introductory courses, practicum, and methods courses.

Linda M. Kalbach, Ph.D., is Professor in the College of Education at Doane University. She currently serves as the Chair of the Undergraduate Education Program. She teaches a variety of courses at the undergraduate and graduate level from foundational methods, instructional methods, and research methods.

Rod Diercks, Ed.D., is Professor of Education at Doane University. He is the director of Middle School Education and teaches practicum and methods classes. In the fall of 2022, he assumed the role of Co-Chair of the Undergraduate Teacher Education Program at the university.

Lisa McClurkin Vargason is the Assistant to the Dean of Education and manages the student tracking system. In addition, she is the coordinator for the teacher education assessment system and prepares state and federal reports.

Appendix A: Survey

Pre-service Teacher Disposition Survey

Demographic Data

1. Please select your position (mark all that apply)
   - Teacher
   - Administrator
   - University Supervisor
   - Teacher Educator
2. Please indicate the level of students with whom you work. Select all that apply.
   - Elementary PreK-6
   - Middle Level (4-9)
   - High School (7-12)
   - Post-secondary
3. Please write the name of your affiliated school and/or district. (Please note that this information will be used only to demonstrate that we have received feedback from multiple districts and will not be linked directly to your responses in reporting of the data.)

Open-Ended Questions

1. What characteristics do college students need to develop in order to exhibit the professionalism of effective teachers? Please list (and explain as needed) as many characteristics as you can think of.
2. How do pre-service teachers demonstrate professionalism? Please list (and explain as needed) as many ways as you can think of.
3. What additional qualities of mind and character, if any, do college students need to develop and demonstrate in order to become an effective teacher?
4. What experiences/learning opportunities might colleges provide to help pre-service teachers develop those skills and characteristics?

5. Please include any additional comments you might have regarding these topics.

Focus Group Recruitment

Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up focus group to respond to the preliminary findings? By participating in the focus group, you will receive a $25 Visa gift card for your participation.

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Appendix B: Focus Group Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Focus Group

Introduction

Thank you so much for first completing our survey and then joining us for this focus group session. We are so excited to have you with us. Each of you provided us with really insightful information and the group of you demonstrate a variety of educational roles. During our conversation tonight, we encourage you to share your thoughts and insights freely as we explore this topic on a deeper level. Please know that we will be recording this meeting but anything you share will remain anonymous. We ask that you also keep the ideas that others share in this session confidential. Let's start off by introducing ourselves. Please share your name and a little bit about yourself.

Content Questions

1. Think about a colleague with really strong dispositions. Tell us about them.
2. Take a look at the data collected from the survey. What are your initial thoughts?
3. Consider a pre-service teacher needing support on their dispositions. What might be missing from the themes/categories that you see?
4. Consider all of the experiences you have had with pre-service teachers. In which of these areas do the pre-service teachers demonstrate they need the most support?
5. Which dispositions, if any, transcend content and grade level? Are all of these necessary for success?
6. Is there bias to having a set of expected dispositions that keeps certain people out of the teaching profession based on their identities and cultural experiences?
7. Which of these in the current educational climate are hardest to cultivate?
8. Do you have any additional information you would like to share with us?

Closing

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this focus group. We will use this information to further refine our work. Then we will email each of you, along with all of the individuals who completed the survey, a copy of our disposition rubric in order for you to provide us with any additional feedback you might have. We will also mail a $25 Visa gift card to you as a thank you for participating.

Appendix C: Teacher Identity Development Assessment

Directions: Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out the Teacher Identity Development Assessment. We are committed to helping our pre-service teachers develop into effective practitioners. As you complete this questionnaire, please help us identify areas that will enable us to support this pre-service teacher's growth. We will use this information throughout their program to support their growth toward becoming an effective teacher. Your individual results will not be shared with the pre-service teacher or used as summative assessments, rather they will used to promote discussion of how their behaviors are perceived across contexts.

When filling out this form, please rate each of the 12 statements, thinking about the indicators as you make your determination. Please know that you may not observe all indicators in all settings, but you will assess based on the overall statement. Some of these statements are harder to observe than others. If you are unsure if you have had the opportunity to observe one or more of the 12 statements please use the "not observed in this setting" option. We encourage you to use the comment section to provide examples and/or to further explain your rating.

Open-Ended Questions:

1. Effective leaders are always learning and developing a professional disposition. What are two strengths you feel this teacher has developed?
2. What are two suggestions you have for this pre-service teacher to grow their identity?

Commitment to Professionalism *Demonstrates a commitment to being a professional teacher that is dedicated to strengthening the community goals.*	
1. Exhibits a strong work ethic. Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Arrives punctually and fully prepared • Maintains professional levels of attendance • Follows through on commitments • Demonstrates a willingness to go above and beyond • Takes the initiative • Organizes in a way that supports efficiency and reliability • Demonstrates accountability • Perseveres through difficulty	Comments:
2. Utilizes effective and professional communication skills (speaking, listening, writing, body language). Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Speaks clearly, courteously, and respectfully • Shifts language usage/style according to the context and the individual(s) • Listens thoughtfully and responsively • Uses inviting body language and facial expressions • Written communicating, including email, is appropriate and timely	Comments:
3. Demonstrates a professional presence. Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Portrays a positive attitude and outlook • Exhibits flexibility when changes occur • Conveys interest/engagement across contexts (e.g. asking questions, taking notes, nodding) • Participates actively and appropriately in conversations and tasks • Uses technology appropriately, for instructional purposes and responsibilities • Displays a polished appearance and dress	Comments:
4. Displays self and contextual awareness. Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Demonstrates awareness of self as a student in relation to professionals • Displays appropriate interpersonal boundaries with children and adults • Adapts behavior to appropriately match a variety of contexts • Acts as a role model in public settings, including social media • Represents self as an emerging professional • Behaves sensitively to school culture and climate	Comments:
Commitment to Relationships *Demonstrates a commitment to establishing and maintaining relationships that foster genuine collaboration*	
5. Exhibits nurturing attributes when working with others Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Shows care and kindness to each and every student and adult • Provides help to others in a variety of ways • Demonstrates empathy • Exhibits behaviors that are friendly, collegial, and courteous • Treats each person with respect • Demonstrates patience with others and gives grace while providing accountability	Comments:

6. Displays a collaborative spirit that fosters community building Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Contributes to building a positive culture and climate (e.g. greets others, smiles, initiates conversations, gets to know others, etc.) • Contributes to collaborative conversations • Takes time to encourage others and celebrate their successes • Participates actively on a team and by working to meet shared goals • Positively impacts the success of others via personal actions • Shares and welcomes ideas, materials, and resources • Recognizes personal strengths and those of others	Comments:
7. Displays a willingness to put the good of others ahead of oneself Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Demonstrates humility • Exudes courage by doing the right things for the right reasons • Practices vulnerability • Acts in ways that illustrate a student-centered belief system • Demonstrates integrity by being trustworthy and honest • Demonstrates selflessness in service to others and the profession	Comments:
8. Engages with others in ways that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Demonstrates value and respect for others with diverse backgrounds, lived experiences, and worldviews • Invites and considers the perspectives of others • Implements equitable practices to ensure all students are highly engaged • Balances the knowledge of culture/care with high expectations • Takes actionable steps to promote inclusive educational practices • Confronts negative stereotypes and language that further suppresses marginalized populations • Actively seeks to disrupt rather than maintain inequitable power structures	Comments:
Commitment to Learning *Demonstrates a commitment to personal and professional self-growth*	
9. Displays characteristics of a self-directed learner. Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Effectively works to improve upon essential teaching competencies • Identifies areas of strength and areas of growth • Uses effective and reflective goal-setting • Monitors and evaluates progress on set goals and adjusts goals as needed • Applies new learning in future work • Exhibits a growth mindset	Comments:
10. Demonstrates an eagerness to learn from other Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Actively seeks feedback • Utilizes constructive feedback to support growth • Asks for help or advice from professionals in the field • Proactively seeks out opportunities/resources to support learning • Respects the knowledge and experience of in-service teachers, leaders, and course instructors to support personal/professional development • Shows appreciation for the opportunities provided • Engages in networking opportunities and activities	Comments:

11. Exhibits the characteristics of a *critical thinker* in the field of education Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Demonstrates a curiosity about teaching and learning • Makes purposeful, thoughtful decisions to best meet students' needs • Asks complex questions to stimulate thinking and isn't satisfied with easy answers • Seeks out research to inform thinking and answer questions • Make autonomous decisions based on professional judgment and resources • Thinks creatively to support the learning process • Takes risks by learning and trying new things • Works towards innovative solutions to problems in the field	Comments:
12. Works to deconstruct personal biases to advocate for inclusivity Circle: Not observed in this setting Consistently Frequently Sometimes Rarely	
Possible Indicants of Observed Behavior: • Examines how personal experiences may influence beliefs • Develops an awareness of one's own cultural biases • Displays an open mind by viewing a situation/topic from multiple perspectives • Seeks out new ideas/information to expand understanding of topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion • Acknowledges and acts on one's responsibility in working towards a more equitable reality for all students • Critically considers how privilege and power influence schooling	Comments:

Teach and Thrive Learning Circles: Priming Early Career Teachers to Flourish

Kristina M. Valtierra
Colorado College

Abstract

This article shares innovative practices from a workshop series called Teach and Thrive Learning Circles (TTLCs) offered to pre-service and recent graduates from the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program at Colorado College (CC). TTLCs aim to proactively prime pre-service and early career teachers to navigate the pressures that can contribute to burnout and attrition. Inspired by the scholarship on teacher development and characteristics of thriving teachers, I invited twenty-two novice teachers ranging from pre-service through three years of experience to co-construct and co-facilitate the TTLC monthly workshops. In this article, I first share an overview of our co-construction process, the resulting workshop structure, and chosen topics. Based on trends from a pre-workshop questionnaire, the workshop topics included early career teacher development, maintaining purpose, self-care, navigating toxicity, and cultivating efficient systems. Next, I provide a detailed synopsis of the first workshop focused on early career development. I provide an overview of this workshop to offer readers an example of our TTLC structure and a glimpse into its value. I share the session workshop agenda, materials, and TTLC teacher reflection journal themes. Preliminary qualitative trends derived from the reflection journals suggest that understanding their development through the lens of the teacher lifecycle scholarship empowered them to be more patient with their pedagogical growth and to seek out mentorship and peer support to thrive. The TTLC framework, example session, and preliminary themes presented offer liberal arts teacher educators a dependable framework to establish similar offerings in their context.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, early career teachers, teacher educators, teachers thriving, teacher lifecycle

Teach and Thrive Learning Circles: Priming Early Career Teachers to Flourish

As a teacher educator, I frequently ask my students why they want to teach. Aspiring teachers commonly remark that they love being with and empowering youth. They are passionate about the profession, were inspired by teachers from their past, and value teaching to contribute to positive social change. Yet, once they enter the workforce, new teachers undergo a reality shock as they learn to juggle the multifaceted professional learning curve (Botha & Rens, 2018; Dicke et al., 2015) and to navigate educational reform efforts that often prioritize standardized test scores (Dunn, 2018) over the altruistic reasons that inspired them to choose to teach (Moss & Ehmke, 2020). Navigating the tensions between one's professional vision and the complex reality of what it takes to be a teacher in contemporary times contributes to early-career teacher burnout (Sulis et al., 2022) and the endemic problem of teacher "churn" (Au, 2009; DeMathews, et al., 2022).

Numerous studies have calculated that between 40% and 50% of novice teachers exit the profession within the first five years of teaching (e.g., Papay et al., 2017; Räsänen et al., 2020). In the United States (U.S.), this revolving door is most prominent in urban schools, where studies reveal that as many as 70% of new teachers may leave their position by their fifth year (Papay et al., 2015). Rural schools are not far behind, with reports of up to 50% of beginning teachers turning over (Nguyen, 2020; Ulferts, 2016). Early career teacher turnover is a national crisis that perpetuates chronic instability. This revolving door adversely affects students, schools, districts, and our entire public education landscape (Wronowski, 2021).

Not only is teacher burnout and early career exit a waste of extensive training and talent, but this crisis also has damaging effects on student achievement (Madigan & Kim, 2021; Nguyen & Springer, 2021). Teacher turnover disproportionately affects youth in low-income schools who are more likely than their more affluent peers to experience poverty; be racially, ethnically, and/or linguistically minoritized; receive special

education services; and experience trauma (Camacho & Parham, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2019, 2022a & b,). Moreover, studies demonstrate that high teacher turnover rates impose significant financial costs on school districts, perpetuating the inequities experienced by low-income schools and their students (Blizard, 2021; Learning Policy Institute, 2017). More affluent school systems are also affected by this crisis. Studies indicate that increasing numbers of suburban teachers are moving schools or abandoning the profession altogether. An adverse school climate, ineffective school leadership, and top-down accountability pressures contribute to early career burnout and attrition across our nation's schools (Wronowski, 2021).

While the profession has grappled with teacher burnout and attrition for decades, the consequences have become more apparent. COVID-19 exacerbated many educational inequities that existed pre-pandemic and caused additional teaching challenges. In 2020, teachers quickly shifted to remote teaching with little warning (Shedrow, 2021; Wu et al., 2020). In addition, most had to swiftly learn new formats (virtual, hybrid, in-person with COVID protocols, etc.), which required mastering unfamiliar technologies (Baliram et al., 2021; Marshall et al., 2020), all while navigating the shared trauma of a global pandemic. The pressures of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic have been immense. For example, a 2022 National Education Association (NEA) study reports that many previously thriving educators are calling it quits. Furthermore, countless potential pre-service teachers are changing their plans. Finally, survey results also indicate that 90% of U.S. K–12 teachers feel burnout is a significant problem, and 55% plan to leave the profession sooner than initially planned (NEA, 2022).

Concerned with the longstanding crises of early career teacher burnout and turnover as well as the ways the pandemic has exacerbated these issues, this article shares innovative practices from a workshop series called Teach and Thrive Learning Circles (TTLCs). I invited pre-service and recent graduates from the MAT program at Colorado College to participate. By sharing the TTLCs practices and framework, I intend to inspire

other liberal arts teacher educators to adopt similar approaches to help prime early career teachers proactively to navigate burnout and thrive.

Scholarly Context

The transition from pre-service to early-career teacher is a complex and demanding period (Dayan et al., 2018). Simultaneously exciting and intense, this formative period heavily determines whether people remain in teaching and, if they do, what kind of teachers they become (Cobbs, 2020). Despite the grim burnout and attrition statistics, some early career teachers sustain their passion for the profession and thrive. I conceptualized the TTLCs as a proactive opportunity to support the beginning teachers I train to thrive.

The Formative Years

Teaching is a developmental process. Scholars refer to teacher development as the "teacher career cycle" (Fessler & Christiansen, 1992) or "life cycle" (Steffy et al., 2000). This body of work concerns teachers' progression, growth, and stages, from student teaching through retirement (Bressman et al., 2018). Three broad stages of teacher development are discussed in the literature: early career, middle career, and late career (Coutler & Lester, 2011; Eros, 2011; Hargreaves, 2005; Sprague Mitchell, 2008).

Several teacher lifecycle theorists have examined the early career period, which commonly ranges from pre-service through five years of experience (e.g., Feimen-Nemser, 2001; Fessler & Christiansen, 1992; Huberman, 1993; Steffy et al., 2000). While most of these studies occurred 20-30 years ago, their frameworks continue to inform how we study and understand teacher development today (e.g., Headden, 2014; Kelchtermans, 2017). Lifecycle theorists agree that early career teachers often lack professional confidence and typically function in 'survival' mode (Huberman, 1993; Ro, 2019). Teachers commonly focus on their own professional needs in this early career stage. They tend to prioritize classroom management, curriculum mastery, and content delivery (Coutler & Lester, 2011). While concentrating

on lesson design and implementation, this exploration phase is often the teachers' first opportunity to develop their professional identity, including their beliefs, values, and commitments (Steffy et al., 2000). To thrive at this stage, early career teachers require mentorship and opportunities to set goals, reflect, and self-assess (Bressman et al., 2018).

How Novice Teachers Thrive

A dynamic interplay between personal characteristics and contextual factors contributes to teachers' capacities to flourish (Jennings, 2021). Studies suggest that personal characteristics of resilience, agency, and identity all operate interchangeably to contribute to a teacher's ability to thrive (Cobbs, 2021; Day, 2018). Teacher resilience entails an individual's capacity to bounce back from adversity (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Resilience enhances feelings of effectiveness for early career teachers (Hong et al., 2018). Teacher agency includes their active contribution to shaping their work and its conditions (Biesta et al., 2015). For beginning teachers, agency often depends on their self-confidence (Sulis et al., 2022).

A positive teacher identity is a continuing process of "interpretation and reinterpretation of who one considers oneself to be and who one would like to become" (van Lankveld, 2017, p. 326). A strong teacher identity can support one's capacity to teach according to their values and beliefs (Palmer, 2017). This dynamic interplay was evident in Cobb's (2021) in-depth study of four individual teachers during their first year. Cobb found that these first-year teachers' identities, resilience, and agency collectively helped them anticipate beyond challenges, pressure, and wavering confidence. Moreover, Trevethan (2019) found that early-career teachers' personal resources–including self-regulation skills (which encourages resilience), boundary setting (an agentive behavior), reflection, and self-awareness (promoting teacher identity development)–contributed to a positive teaching experience.

Several conditional factors are known to contribute to a teacher's ability to thrive, including targeted mentorship (Allies, 2021; Sulis et al., 2022), an affirming school environment,

administrator support (Baptiste, 2019), and strong collegial relationships (Hong et al., 2018; Trevethan, 2019). Zaharis (2019) found that novice teachers ranked mentorship from veteran teachers as highly important in supporting their practices and reducing feelings of stress. Baptiste (2019) found that administrators who promoted a shared mission, set high standards, valued teachers' self-interests, and promoted teaching as meaningful work, fostered a positive environment for teachers. Finally, Trevethan (2019) found that collaborative relationships with colleagues contributed to beginning teachers' success.

Most teacher preparation programs emphasize the technical aspects of the profession—lesson planning and delivery, assessment, and methods for teaching 21st-century literacy and mathematical skills (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], 2022; Ro, 2019). Later, when teachers transition into early-career educators, professional development typically centers on refining their technical skills to improve student academic outcomes (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019). However, while technical skills are vital, pre-service and early career teachers also need transparent opportunities to appreciate the developmental learning curve. Moreover, they need explicit guidance to cultivate the characteristics of thriving teachers. Hence, I conceptualized the TTLCs to proactively encourage beginning teachers to stay and thrive.

Methods

Context

Colorado College (CC) is a highly selective private liberal arts institution in the western United States. Like at other small liberal arts institutions, students and faculty value CC's communal spirit and expansive offerings. CC's Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program is a 13-month, social-justice-oriented curriculum that enrolls approximately eight to ten K–12 general education teacher candidates each year. Candidates spend the fall semester in full-time coursework and the spring semester in their student teaching placement. Along with full-time student teaching in the spring, candidates attend weekly seminars focused on various topics.

Participants

Over the years, I have offered a version of the TTLCs once per month as part of our spring semester weekly seminar offerings. In the Spring of 2021, I had the opportunity to expand this offering to include early career program alumni. Furthermore, because of COVID-19 safety protocols that moved our programming online, we were no longer constrained by location. This allowed a small cohort of interested teachers across the U.S. to participate in the TTLCs, resulting in a broadened representation of early career teacher experiences.

Participants ranged from pre-service to 3rd-year teachers with 27% pre-service, 18% first year, 37% second year, and 18% third year teachers. Participants taught across several general education disciplines, represented elementary, middle, and high school settings, and were primarily in urban schools. The participants' demographics were moderately more diverse than national public school teacher demographics (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021), with over 30% teachers of color and 20% males, as indicated in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Participant Demographics, Certifications, and Schools in Percentages

Demographics(%)		Certifications (%)		School Type (%)	
N=22		N=22		N=22	
Female	72	Elementary	45	Urban	82
Male	23	Secondary	55	Suburban	14
Non-binary	5			Rural	4
White	64	All core subjects	45		
Latinx	14	ELA	27		
Mixed-race	9	Science	9		
Asian	9	Social Studies	15		
Black	4	Math	5		

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection and analysis occurred both during and immediately after the TTLC sessions. Following IRB approval and gathering signed consent from participants, I collected and

used qualitative data to develop TTLC topics and to study how the learning circles shaped participants' thinking, feelings, and aspirations as novice teachers. My recursive process of collecting and responding to qualitative data integrated a pre-program questionnaire, ethnographic field notes, and reflection journal transcripts.

The short pre-program questionnaire sought to understand what teaching challenges participants were currently navigating. It asked them to suggest TTLC topics related to supporting their ability to thrive during the pandemic and beyond. Next, a research assistant collected ethnographic field notes during each TTLC session. Field notes documented the TTLC process, participants' thinking, and questions. Field notes were routinely member-checked by participants. Finally, at the closing of each TTLC session, I used reflective journaling to encourage participants to ruminate on their thoughts, feelings, and goals relative to each session. I transcribed and analyzed the field notes and reflection journals to understand how TTLCs supported participants' thoughts, feelings, and aspirations.

Immediately after collecting each data set (after questionnaire completion, after session field notes were collected and member checked, and after session journal completion), a research assistant and I independently coded the session data for themes. Next, we shared and discussed our independently identified themes, collaboratively re-examined the data, and deliberated until we agreed on salient themes for each data set, including trends and discrepancies across each TTLC session's field notes and journal reflections. This constant-comparative approach (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) helped me monitor and respond to participants' thinking and simultaneously examine emerging themes throughout the TTLCs.

After the TTLCs, we revisited the entire body of data collected. First, we independently re-coded the data for common themes. Then, again, we shared and discussed our thematic findings and collectively re-examined the data. We deliberated until we agreed upon overarching themes across the entire TTLC data set. Finally, we identified new questions and ideas that emerged through a comprehensive examination of the

data. This article shares how the data informed our co-creation process of the TTLCs and an analysis of trends from the first TTLC session.

Findings

The pre-program questionnaire helped guide the TTLC co-creation process, while the ethnographic field notes allowed me to keep a detailed record of each session. Finally, reflective journals illuminated participants' thinking, emotions, aspirations, and whether and how each session contributed to their skills as thriving early career teachers.

The Co-Creation Process

The initial TTLC meeting began with introductions and community building. Then, to establish the TTLC purpose, I provided a brief overview of the teacher burnout and attrition literature and the scholarship on the characteristics of teachers who thrive. Next, I shared questionnaire themes. Then, as a group, we narrowed the five remaining workshops to the following topics: early career development, maintaining purpose, self-care, navigating toxicity, and cultivating efficient systems. This process was simple as the topics were salient themes across the questionnaire data. And while the pandemic was a prominent concern, these topics were prioritized by participants as necessary to their immediate and post-pandemic thrival.

After establishing topics, small teams of 4-5 participants collaborated in virtual breakout rooms to develop an agenda template. Our goal was for the template to encourage applying attributes of thriving teachers and support participants' collective needs and goals. We compared ideas once each team shared their proposed template with the entire group. Finally, we agreed on a final agenda template, purposes for each section of our agenda, and estimated time frames for future meetings, shown in Figure 1.

I created a shared drive with the agenda template, meeting dates, and agreed-upon topics following our initial meeting. Teacher participants signed up via the shared drive to plan or co-plan and facilitate each meeting's centering/mindfulness,

check-in, and/or written self-reflection. Given the time and energy participating teachers put into their classrooms, we agreed that I would plan and lead the topic conversations since they required the most preparation.

FIGURE 1
Co-Created TTLC Agenda Template

TTLC Agenda Template

1. **Centering/mindfulness** (3–5 min.)
   Purpose: to practice wellbeing tools to support our resilience.
   Facilitator(s):

2. **Check-in** (15–20 min.)
   Purpose: to build community.
   Facilitator(s):

3. **Teach and Thrive Topic** (45 min.)
   Purpose: to understand important topics that can build our resilience, agency, and teacher identities.
   Facilitator(s):

4. **Written Self-reflection** (10–15 min.)
   Purpose: to facilitate praxis (reflection and action) to help us explore our teacher identities.
   Facilitator(s):

TTLC Meeting Example: Early Career Development

We collectively agreed on the following TTLC meeting topics: early career development, maintaining purpose, self-care, navigating toxicity, and cultivating efficient systems. The main objective of the first topic of early career development was for participants to develop an understanding that teaching is a developmental process. Many participants felt they were "the only one" struggling to learn the ropes. I anticipated that this session would help them recognize that growing into a confident and effective teacher takes time. Equipped with this

knowledge, I hoped that participants would be more resilient as they experienced the developmental learning curve's ebbs and flows (French, 2018).

As shown in Figure 2, and in line with our agreed-upon template, the meeting began with a five-minute meditation led by one of the pre-service teachers. Next, one of the third-year teachers introduced our check-in, and then teachers broke into breakout rooms and discussed the prompts on the agenda. Once we came back together as a collective community, each small group shared one theme from their check-in. From there, I facilitated a 45-minute interactive lecture on the early career teacher lifecycle. Finally, we closed with a 15-minute personal written reflection in which a first-year teacher introduced prompts listed on the agenda. The session agenda and lecture materials are shown in Figure 2, and the teacher development session topic is detailed below.

FIGURE 2
Teacher Development Agenda

TTLC 2021
Session #2
Agenda

1. **Centering/mindfulness** (3-5 min.)
   Facilitator: *Katherine*
   - 'Happy Place' guided meditation

2. **Check-in** (15-20 min.)
   Facilitator: Maria
   - Positivity Prompts
     - What is one funny moment from this school year?
     - What is your favorite moment from this school year?
     - What was one of your biggest successes from this school year?
     - What will you miss the most from this school year?
     - What is something you look forward to next year?

3. **Teach and Thrive Topic** (45 min.)
   Facilitator: *Author*
   Topic: Teacher Life Cycle & Early career stages

Breakout Rooms

FIGURE 2
Teacher Development Agenda, continued

4. **Written Self-reflection** (10–15 min.)

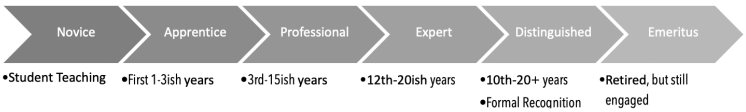
   Facilitator: *Jordan*
   - What phase in the early career lifecycle would you currently place yourself in? Why?
   - As you plan toward thrival, what aspects of the career lifecycle do you need to keep in mind?
   - What actions can you take to support your thrival in the immediate to near future? What steps will require you to think big picture?

5. **Housekeeping/Announcements**

Early Career Development Interactive Lecture Materials

While there are many teacher lifecycle models, I found Steffy's (2000) and colleagues' Lifecycle of the Career Teacher Model (LCTM) especially helpful for this TTLC session, in part because at the time of 2021 TTLC offerings there was not a more current model. Steffy and team found six phases of teacher development rather than the three broad lifecycle phases agreed upon in the literature (Bressman et al., 2018; Coutler & Lester, 2011; Eros, 2011), as shown below. Moreover, they studied career-long teachers, so their findings iterate the characteristics, contexts, and practices of educators who remained committed to the profession.

FIGURE 3
The Teacher Lifecycle Model (Adapted from Steffy et al., 2000)



For our session, I focused on the first three phases and began with an overview that included the continuum shown in Figure 3. Next, I discussed the following phase indicators, synthesized from Steffy et al. (2000) and other lifecycle scholars (e.g., Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Huberman, 1993). The information in Figures 4-6 was verbally discussed, shared as slides, and provided as an electronic handout to participants.

FIGURE 4
The Novice Phase of Teaching (Adapted from Steffy et al., 2000)

The 'Novice' Phase: Student Teaching

To thrive during this phase, it is important to understand that:

1. This is the exploration phase of teaching:
   - You are beginning to make sense of your professional identity.
   - Student teaching is an opportunity to take risks and learn through trial and error. A growth mindset is key!
2. You are likely to have your idealism tested for the first time due to:
   - The clash between your teacher preparation coursework focused on "best practices" and your schools' actual practices.
   - Feeling overwhelmed by the multiple tasks that come with student teaching.
   - Experiencing a range of conflicting emotions including anxiety, frustration, disillusionment, elation, fear, insecurity, and more.
3. Your focus is on mastering lesson design and delivery:
   - At the same time, pay attention to the organizational, administrative, and interpersonal factors that teachers in your school juggle. You are likely not directly responsible for these parts of the job yet, but it's smart to have them on your radar.
   - You are likely to struggle balancing the competing demands that professional teachers juggle.

Upon reviewing the "novice" phase of the teacher lifecycle, I prompted participants to identify and discuss points that resonated with their early career experiences. Next, we repeated this discussion process with an overview of the "apprentice" stage (Steffy et al., 2000).

Since the TTLCs cohort featured in this article included pre-service through third-year teachers, I also prompted more experienced teachers to use the "novice" and "apprentice" indicators to share how their experiences had evolved since their teacher training. Finally, we unpacked what Steffy and colleagues (2000) named the "professional phase" of the teacher lifecycle. My goal was to communicate to teacher participants that this next period was within reach and would provide a sense of stability.

Once we explored the lifecycle phases, the teachers met in breakout rooms with peers who had the same years of experience (pre-service, year 1, etc.) to analyze their current phase and debrief related insights and experiences. Next, after the

FIGURE 5
The Apprentice Phase of Teaching (Adapted from Steffy et al., 2000)

The 'Apprentice' Phase: The First Few Years

To thrive during this phase, it is important to understand that:

1. This is the most *complex* intellectual & emotional transition in the teacher life-cycle. Give yourself grace!

2. It is typical to feel a sense of simultaneous survival & discovery.

3. You are often laser focused on classroom management, curriculum mastery, and content delivery. Stay focused on mastering these important skills!

Apprentice teachers often navigate two common challenges:

1. Meeting your personal and professional needs:
   - You want to be respected by your colleagues.
   - You want to feel competent at your job.
   - You are navigating a whirlwind of emotions which can include feeling: overwhelmed, discouraged, anxious, exhausted, depressed, uncertain, excited and rewarded.

2. A Reality Shock:
   - You are adjusting from the cooperating teacher support you had during student teaching.
   - It's common to underestimate the time commitment of meeting your multiple duties: juggling planning and instructional delivery, student assessment, classroom management, induction, professional development, state testing accountability measures, and more.
   - This phase can feel overwhelming. This sentiment is normal. Things get easier over time!

breakout rooms, we collectively discussed small group reflections, insights, tensions, and questions. This was followed by fifteen minutes of reflective journaling, using the prompts provided on the session agenda shown in Figure 2.

Reflection Journal Themes

The research assistant and I completed a thematic analysis of the teacher development journal reflections after the first TTLC session. Our analysis of the journal transcripts revealed two themes. First, understanding the lifecycle phases illuminated the importance of participants being patient with their developing skills as beginning teachers. Second, teachers often wrote about the magnitude of seeking out supportive

FIGURE 6
The Professional Phase of Teaching (Adapted from Steffy et al., 2000)

The 'Professional' Phase: Over the Hump!

To thrive during this phase, it is important to understand that:

1. You will have figured out your personal needs in the classroom, leaving space for you to put your focus on the needs of your students.
2. You will have increased self-confidence:
   - Confidence often reinvigorates your commitment to the profession.
   - Your renewed commitment can fill you with more emotional & mental energy.
3. You will have greater command of your pedagogy:
   - Instruction becomes a *living process* at this phase.
   - This is known as a stabilization phase where after lots of earlier trial and error, you begin to consolidate your pedagogical repertoire. You've figured out what works for you and your students!
4. You've learned how to navigate the education system including school and district protocols.
5. You're in a phase of continuous growth seeking. You see yourself as a life-long learner.
6. You've established a network of supportive colleagues.
7. You may be comfortable taking on leadership roles including mentoring student teachers, early career teachers, peer coaching, and more.

colleagues. As the saying goes, “knowledge is power.” In this spirit, first-year teacher Maria wrote in her reflection journal, "this [our session about the teacher lifecycle] oddly makes me feel better. The struggle is real. I feel better and affirmed that I am doing the right thing."

Practicing Patience

Teachers at each stage of their early career trajectory recognized that having patience with their development into expert teachers would support their ability to thrive. Pre-service teachers connected patience to a growth mindset. These participants, who were student teaching during our teacher development workshop, recognized that a growth mindset, or as Casey put it, "a mindset of always learning," will help them maintain perspective and support resilience as they navigate the early learning curve. In this vein, Jeffrey acknowledged that

"becoming a strong teacher won't happen in a year or two; it takes time and dedication." Similarly, Jasmine recognized the importance of taking time to "notice and reflect on successes instead of just failures." Moreover, Nikki reflected:

> I just need to keep reminding myself that feeling secure will take time, and I must be patient with that. I am one of those people that tends to quit when I don't see instantaneous results. This is a habit I will have to get over to thrive.

First-year teacher participants shared similar insights. As Denise put it, examining the early career lifecycle reminded her, "I will grow over time, and the challenges I am experiencing right now are not forever." Similarly, it was common for first-year teachers to acknowledge that "change is slow," and understanding the lifecycle is a helpful "reminder of the teacher that I can become in time" (Jordan, first-year teacher).

Second and third-year teachers noted their progress since beginning their careers. When James compared his first year to his second, he noticed that he was now "able to focus on specific things rather than just trying to get through the day." Second and third-year teachers acknowledged that "teaching is fluid" and that thriving is a "continuum." Summer wrote, "I will toggle back and forth between stages as my journey continues." And third-year teacher Mike offered the following insight, "Learning [to teach] is hard, there will always be room for growth. Don't just focus on the bad things. Look at how you have grown. It takes time. Remember why you are here."

Thriving in Community

While embracing patience, participants also acknowledged the importance of mentorship and supportive colleagues. Participants viewed their teaching community as critical to supporting their potential to thrive. As they anticipated their first teaching jobs, pre-service teachers hoped to seek out a positive support system. Carter wrote, "Finding others who are passionate about learning and growing themselves for the good of their students is key." Moreover, pre-service teachers hoped for guidance and mentorship. For instance, Jasmine emphasized

her desire to "find a community and teammates who have made it through many years and can be an emotional support and professional mentor to me."

Likewise, first-year teachers acknowledged the importance of asking for help, seeking out and "learning from mentor feedback." For example, Catherine reflected on "knowing that it is okay to ask for help, and that feedback means they care about you and want you to succeed, not that they think they are better than you." Likewise, her first-year peers recognized that acknowledging their vulnerabilities and seeking support are essential.

While pre-service and first-year teachers most frequently recognized the importance of mentorship, second and third-year participants viewed like-minded peers as contributing to their ability to flourish. Therefore, these experienced early career teachers emphasized seeking out positive colleagues. For example, second-year teacher Layla wrote, "surrounding myself with positivity is what I hold most dear." Similarly, third-year teacher Aubrey wrote that "collaborating and being creative with other teachers or people in the community" keeps her going. She concluded that "thriving does not happen in isolation." Finally, third-year teacher Katherine synthesized our session on the teacher lifecycle like this:

> As I plan toward thrival, I think the big picture thing to remember is that each year gets better. Even with switching schools, moving across the country, having a quarter-life crisis, and surviving a global pandemic, the knowledge that things will improve is a huge relief. The information we looked at today was very helpful because it reminded me of the skills I have developed at this point in my career. It also reminded me of what all I've already gone through in terms of early-career struggles. Reflecting on how far I've come has been joyful!

Discussion and Implications

This article imparts promising practices from the Teach and Thrive Learning Circles (TTLCs) at Colorado College. I conceptualized the TTLCs under the premise that offering pre-service

and early career teachers deliberate opportunities to learn about and develop the characteristics of thriving teachers may help proactively prepare them to flourish.

TTLCs were co-designed and co-facilitated with the pre-service and early career teacher participants. This offered teacher participants a learner-centered approach (Ignacio, 2020) as we collaboratively determined topics, designed our agenda template, and co-facilitated sessions. As such, I was able to foster a learning community centered on the experiences of the participating teachers (Bergmark & Westman, 2015).

Our collaboratively developed TTLC agenda template helped us focus on the characteristics of thriving teachers (Figure 1). For example, by beginning each session with mindfulness, participants could gain ideas for self-care practices to incorporate routines known to support teacher wellbeing (Allies, 2021) and resilience (Harris, 2021). Moreover, by closing each session with self-reflection, participants could make personal sense of each topic and connect insights to their emerging professional identities (Valtierra & Siegel, 2019; van Lankveld et al., 2017).

Our collaboratively chosen topics of early career development, maintaining purpose, practicing self-care, navigating toxicity, and cultivating efficient systems, not only honored teachers' immediate experiences and concerns, but also mirrored novice teacher needs and challenges discussed in the literature (e.g., Allies, 2021; Boogren, 2015; Hewitt, 2019). For example, while scholars often use the teacher lifecycle literature to study teacher development, the technical focus of teacher preparation and professional development means that most teacher training does not address this topic (CAEP, 2020; Ro, 2019). This can result in new teachers feeling alone and that they are the only ones struggling to learn the ropes. Concurrently, current teacher evaluation expectations expect early career teachers to perform like their more experienced colleagues (Kraft & Gilmour, 2017). These expectations are incongruent with teacher development theories (e.g., Feimen-Nemser, 2001; Fessler & Christiansen, 1992; Huberman, 1993; Steffy et al., 2000).

These lofty expectations can contribute to early career

burnout and attrition (Ford et al., 2018). Therefore, while creating space for TTLC participants to understand and reflect upon the early career lifecycle will not change teacher evaluation practices, this knowledge can empower participants to "see the big picture" (Coulter & Lester, 2011). And as journal reflection themes suggest, teachers may consequently be more patient and optimistic with their developmental trajectory. Trends from participant journal reflections also suggest, along with patience, that these teachers may be more likely to embrace mentorship and seek out collegial support, which is known to bolster early-career retention (Sulis et al., 2022; Zaharis, 2019).

Through sharing TTLC practices and detailing one learning circle session, I want to inspire other liberal arts teacher educators to establish similar offerings in their programs. Colleagues in different liberal arts contexts could certainly adopt the featured agenda template, our chosen topics, and example TTLC session. However, I urge liberal arts colleagues to consider these examples a springboard to initiate a co-construction process with the novice teachers they support. By co-constructing this type of offering, teacher educators are more likely to offer timely and relevant offerings customized to their participating teachers' specific contexts and concerns (Bergmark & Westman, 2015; Ignacio, 2020). Furthermore, since this genre of scholarship is in its infancy, replication of the co-construction process may help us better understand the collective needs of novice teachers across various contexts.

Conclusion and Limitations

Within the first five years of teaching, numerous studies have determined that between 40% and 50% of novice teachers exit the profession (e.g., Papay et al., 2017; Räsänen et al., 2020). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated K–12 teachers' feelings of burnout and accelerated their plans to exit the profession (NEA, 2022). Given these challenges, as a teacher educator, I am highly invested in ensuring my teacher candidates stay and thrive. Therefore, I invited teacher candidates and alumni from the CC MAT program to design and facilitate the Teach and Thrive Learning Circles (TTLCs) collectively.

Our collaborative process and resulting framework provide other liberal arts teacher educators a launching pad to initiate similar offerings at their institutions. Finally, the qualitative themes from participant reflection journals suggest that the TTLC session on the teacher lifecycle empowered participants to embrace patience, mentorship, and like-minded colleagues to support their developmental trajectory.

While the TTLCs provide a useful framework, the small sample of participating teachers who graduated from the same teacher preparation program may be a limitation. As such, participants likely shared common values and practices that influenced the content and format of the TTLCs, reiterating the importance of the collaborative design process to ensure context-specific relevance. Furthermore, while I attempted to limit my personal biases through partnering with a research assistant and collaboratively developing and facilitating the TTLC sessions with participants, these precautions could not eliminate my inclinations. Furthermore, while I provided an overview of one of the TTLC sessions, this article does not examine the program holistically or analyze the field notes collected throughout the study. Finally, a forthcoming project will examine whether the TTLCs had a longitudinal effect on participants' retention and thrival.

While the problems of early career teacher burnout and attrition are immense, our collective commitment as teacher educators to proactively set up new teachers to thrive can contribute to a promising new trajectory. Therefore, I invite other liberal arts teacher educators to adopt their own versions of the TTLCs as we work to prime the promising new teachers we invest in to thrive.

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Kristina M. Valtierra, Ph.D., is Associate Professor and Chair of Education at Colorado College. She is the Endowed Ray O. Professor of Exemplary Teaching in the Liberal Arts. Her research examines urban teacher preparation, focusing on promoting teacher reflection, teacher identity, and teacher thrival. She is the author of two books and a two-time recipient of the AATC distinguished article award for her scholarship on teacher identity formation.