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Call for Manuscripts for the 2021 *AILACTE Journal, Volume XVIII*

The Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges of 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 higher education institutions that offer a liberal arts education. As an affiliate of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), we provide 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 in independent, liberal arts colleges and universities.

The 2021 *AILACTE Journal* will be a themed edition; we are currently soliciting manuscripts addressing the topic **Rethinking Teacher Education: Providing Quality Programs During and Post Pandemic.**

In early 2020, we witnessed history as the outbreak of COVID-19 reached pandemic status. We watched as the virus and its adverse effects made their way around the globe and into our own backyards. Once-stable countries, including our own, began to struggle mightily as their healthcare systems were over-taxed and their economies were decimated by COVID-19. Almost no sector of society has been left unaffected by the pandemic—including, of course, education. As schools abruptly closed to slow the spread of the virus, students and educators—preschool through university levels—found ourselves tossed into a sea of uncertainty with little time to adjust to a new educational paradigm.

As we reflect on spring and fall 2020—and beyond—and continue to grapple with how to educate students effectively while mitigating the effects of an unpredictable public health crisis, some of the questions we teachers might ask ourselves include:

- How do we effectively engage students in online learning when they (and we) have little or no experience in this medium?

- How do we develop and nurture relationships with students at a distance?
- How do we meet the varied needs of all students—especially those with special needs—without the luxury of direct interaction?
- How do we address the issues of equity and access with online learning?
- What new pedagogical tools can we use to facilitate distance learning and how can we learn them?
- How do we advise students in an online setting?
- How do we access and leverage financial support for a major, unplanned change in our programs? What cost savings evolved at our institutions? Did they cover the added costs?
- How might lower enrollment and financial stress impact what we do?

While all teachers may find themselves struggling to maintain educational quality for all of their students, teacher educators and teacher education programs have unique concerns and challenges. As we work to prepare highly qualified teachers ready to take on the rigors of leading PK–12 classrooms, we are confronted with further questions to consider:

- How can we prepare our students to use PK–12 digital resources and do we have the resources necessary to accomplish this task?
- How can we ensure that teacher candidates are ready for student teaching if early field experience opportunities are compromised by school closures or no-visitor policies?
- How can we support student teachers who find themselves involved in distance teaching or in situations where little instruction is being provided?
- How can we supervise and assess student teachers in an online learning environment?
- What can we learn from programs that have been online for years?
- How can we reassure teacher candidates worried about fulfilling licensure requirements when we are unsure ourselves about how our state licensing boards will rule?

- How can we mentor first-year teachers whose student teaching may not have adequately prepared them for in-person classroom challenges?

Finally, additional questions surface as we contemplate the return to "normal":

- What have we learned about teaching and learning as a result of our practices during COVID-19?
- What successes can we celebrate?
- What elements of our reconfigured practice might we want to retain post-pandemic?

We look forward to reading about your insights on these or other related questions and learning from your experiences, research, and ideas, as we work to deliver high-quality teacher preparation in the midst of the pandemic and going forward. 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 18, 2021, and must follow APA guidelines, 7th Edition. Please refer to the *AILACTE Journal* Submission Guidelines and Checklist for the additional *AILACTE Journal* requirements (https://ailacte.org/AILACTE_Journal). To submit your materials, go to the Author Submission and Biography form. Once you have completed the form, there is a place for you to submit your materials (manuscript, Author Submission and Biography form, and Institutional Research Board approval (if applicable) on the online form.

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The *Journal* editors and publishers are Jackie Crawford (Jackie.crawford@simpson.edu), Professor Emerita at Simpson College, Iowa, and Elizabeth Leer (leere@stolaf.edu), Associate Professor at St. Olaf College, Minnesota.

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From the Editors

2020 has been an extremely challenging year. From the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected life and livelihoods around the globe, to the racial injustice, contentious election season, and natural disasters that have dominated headlines in the United States, the adversities of this past year have left many of us feeling weary and discouraged. As we look ahead to 2021, we find ourselves yearning for peace, financial stability and security, and the renewed ability to connect with others—*in person*. It is, perhaps, this lack of personal connection that has been toughest to navigate these last months. Both personally and professionally, most of us thrive on relationships and human interaction. While we have mastered new technological skills that allow us to carry on the work of teacher education in revised and largely distanced ways, we have not been able to interact with our students and colleagues as usual, and we feel a loss of relationship. This loss feels especially acute since many of us have found a professional home in education (and, specifically, teacher education at liberal arts institutions) because of the student relationships it affords.

Although the Call for Manuscripts for *AILACTE Journal* Volume XVII came out before the pandemic hit the United States and we were forced to rethink our practices as teacher educators, all four articles in this volume speak to some degree about the primacy of relationships in the educational enterprise. The four studies build theory and expand our understanding of effective practice—including the development relationships with students, parents, and colleagues—with the common goal of improving liberal arts teacher education programs. While they do not speak directly to the challenges of teaching in 2020*, the studies shed light on fundamental issues that can help us navigate our complex roles in any time or place.

In the first article, Amber Peacock uses the results of a survey of liberal arts teacher educators to develop a theoretical framework articulating "what liberal arts teacher educators do, what teacher candidates learn, and the enduring tension inherent in that work." The "LATE" framework emphasizes teacher well-being and social-emotional learning, themes that an

overwhelming 97.9% of participants believe are as important for teacher candidates to learn as professional, licensure-based issues. However, less than 30% of participants reported that the social-emotional needs of teachers were commensurately emphasized in their programs. Peacock suggests that embedding more social-emotional learning into the teacher education curriculum could positively impact teachers' ability to successfully navigate the challenges and tensions inherent in the profession.

Yasmin Gunpinar and Kevin Mackin also report results of a multi-institution survey, a large study involving 14 higher education institutions across three states (six of which are liberal arts colleges). Recent teacher education program completers and novice teachers one year after graduation were surveyed to identify common areas of strength and weakness in teacher preparation programs. Although both groups report feeling well-prepared overall, especially regarding creating effective learning environments and implementing instructional practices, specific areas where they indicate a desire for more professional support include meeting the needs of diverse students (i.e., needs relating to mental health, giftedness, English language learning, and IEPs), communicating productively with parents to support student learning, and incorporating digital technology into the classroom effectively.

The last two articles present case studies focusing on individual teacher preparation programs. Michelle Rupenthal and Shelly Furuness explain and provide examples of the "Recursive Loop Model" of teacher education that initially draws on the strong relationships built between students and faculty in their liberal arts teacher preparation program, then "crystallizes as [they] collectively maximize those existing relationships beyond graduation from the program." The circular motion of the loop recognizes the shared knowledge and expertise of faculty and practicing teachers/alumni, involving both groups as equal partners in conversations that enhance the teacher education context. They argue that continuing relationships with alumni improves pre-service preparation by "incorporating and amplifying practicing teachers' voices" and also supports practicing teachers by "providing ongoing professional support."

In the final article, Ronald Shultz discusses the value of providing teacher candidates with structured field experiences working directly with English language learners. Drawing on the perceptions of seven teacher candidates, Schultz explains that building meaningful relationships with ELLs and having the opportunity to practice planning and implementing supportive instructional strategies, while receiving feedback and reflecting on the experiences, lead both to greater confidence and skill in teaching ELLs.

In this especially challenging year, we would especially like to thank the many people who had an important role in the production of this journal: our authors; the members of the *AILACTE Journal* Editorial Board; Jackie McDowell, publications editor; Kathy Gann, technical editor; Alyssa Haarer, executive assistant; and Barbara Grinnell, graphic designer. We would also like to thank to members of the AILACTE Executive Committee for their support.

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

*Please see the Call for Manuscripts for the 2021 *AILACTE Journal*, a themed edition focused on teacher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. We trust that "Rethinking Teacher Education: Providing Quality Programs During and Post Pandemic" will provide a rich repository of lessons learned and ideas for practice borne out of necessity that will continue to serve our programs well after life returns to "normal."

LATE to the Party: A New Theoretical Framework of Liberal Arts Teacher Education

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Abstract

A theoretical framework is introduced that articulates the complex nature of what liberal arts teacher educators do, what teacher candidates learn, and the enduring tension inherent in that work. The researcher surveyed liberal arts teacher educators (n = 64) regarding beliefs about seven enduring tensions in education—content knowledge/pedagogical knowledge, leading/following, differentiation/standardization, theory/practice, individual needs/group needs, global issues/local issues, and professional needs/personal or social-emotional needs. The pairs consist of education topics that are potentially, but not necessarily, at odds. Participants indicated which concept in each pair they believe is more important or indicated that the concepts were equally important for teacher candidates to learn. Participants then reported which of the concepts in each pair received more time in their teacher preparation program or if the concepts received equal time. Data were analyzed to inform the development of the Liberal Arts Teacher Education (LATE) theoretical framework presented. The LATE framework includes traditional teacher knowledge (content and pedagogy) and the moral, ethical, cultural, and relational dimensions of teaching (pedagogical and professional discernment). Of the participants, 97.9% believed personal/social-emotional needs (i.e., facilitating work-life balance, strategies to avoid burnout) were as or more important for teacher candidates to learn as professional needs (i.e., licensure requirements). Yet, only 29.7% reported that the social-emotional needs of teachers got as much or more time in the program as professional needs. The LATE theoretical framework emphasizes teacher well-being and social-emotional learning. The author

recommends embedding social-emotional learning skills for teacher candidates throughout the program so teacher candidates are equipped to navigate the enduring tensions of the profession productively, persist in the field, and love their work.

Keywords: liberal arts, teacher education, pedagogy, social-emotional learning, discernment

Making a case for a liberal arts college education is challenging, in part, because its value is difficult to communicate in sound bites (Jaschik, 2017; Zinser, 2013). Training for a specific profession is traditionally at odds with common definitions of the liberal arts (Kimball, 2013), so making a case for liberal arts teacher preparation programs can be even more difficult. As a teacher educator in a small private liberal arts college, I can attest to the enduring tension between the liberal arts and teacher preparation but suggest that preprofessional teacher preparation is at its best when framed in the liberal arts from start to finish.

> The aims of a strong liberal education include: developing the intellect and the capacity for lifelong learning; shaping ethical judgment and the capacity for insight and concern for others, our habitats, and the future; increasing understanding of cultures, languages, and societies, and the connections among them; comprehending relationships between landscapes and built environments, institutional systems and conditions of populations; expanding scientific horizons and mastering common scientific literacy and technological competence; nurturing democratic and global knowledge and engagement. (Zinser, 2013)

A liberal arts education is designed to produce lifelong learners and thoughtful, culturally responsive citizens (Jaschik, 2017). These goals are surely consistent with what one would expect of an effective educator.

The purpose of this research was to develop a liberal arts teacher education (LATE) framework with merit (that is logistically sound, clear, and straightforward [Lincoln & Guba, 1980]) and worth (that represents the complexities of teacher preparation well and is useful [Lincoln & Guba, 1980]). The LATE theoretical framework can be used to (1) communicate the mission of liberal arts educator preparation programs (EPPs), (2) inform program design and instructional methods, and (3) guide future research. Having a model that demonstrates the complexities of what liberal arts teacher educators do and teacher candidates must learn could (1) facilitate recruitment of more teacher candidates to our programs, (2) improve collaboration with institutional and community partners, (3) strengthen support from college

administrators and faculty, and (4) be used in accreditation reports.

To practice what we preach, we must use theory to inform practice and guide research. Access to a common theoretical framework could also facilitate efficient collaboration among EPPs. Given the small size of many liberal arts EPPs, such cooperation is invaluable. The theoretical framework presented here articulates the complexities of what teacher educators do and what teacher candidates learn. It also acknowledges the difference between learning traditional teacher knowledge and the discernment required to apply that knowledge effectively.

Arriving at the LATE Framework

Teacher educators Schnellert, Richardson, and Cherkowski (2014) described the importance of self-study, critical reflection, and reflexivity to navigate the tensions in their work and how "narrative forms of inquiry and reflexive analysis supported them to enact their learning" (p. 233). Likewise, arriving at the LATE theoretical framework presented here was, in large part, the result of my self-study, critical reflection, and reflexity as a teacher educator. For the past three years, I have listened carefully to students and colleagues talk about their teaching experiences to better understand the complexities and nuances of teaching and teacher education to prepare educators more effectively.

This project began in July 2017, at the Wye Faculty Seminar: Citizenship in the American and Global Polity in Queens, Maryland (Aspen Institute, n.d.). In the spirit of full disclosure, I did not attend a liberal arts college. Yes, I was late to the party. Attending this seminar was my first immersive liberal arts learning experience, and I was hooked. The experience changed how I think and teach. I left the seminar committed to makeover my education classes to be more aligned with the mission and methods of the liberal arts. Realizing I had more to learn, I applied to be an Honors Fellow so that I could collaborate with faculty from other departments to redesign the introduction to the liberal arts seminar in the Honors program. This work afforded an in-depth opportunity to read, think, and explore how the teacher preparation program could leverage the benefits of a liberal arts

education to prepare more discerning teacher candidates. It was difficult, stimulating work.

Next, I redesigned my special education methods class to have a more liberal arts feel while still addressing the required preprofessional content. Previous iterations of the course emphasized a long list of pedagogical methodologies using a traditional methods textbook. That strategy seemed adequate but disappointing every semester. While we covered a great deal of material, it felt like browsing a catalog of products the shoppers may or may not ever buy. After the course makeover, I focused on the development of preservice teachers' pedagogical discernment, collaborative problem-solving skills (Wolfe, 2010), and new educator survival skills (Billingsley, Brownell, Israel, & Kamman, 2013). The objective of the redesign was to build pedagogical content knowledge *and* the discernment required to use that knowledge in practice. Instead of utilizing a traditional methods textbook, students (1) discussed philosophical texts, a veteran teacher's memoir (Hankins, 2003), and numerous student-selected texts related to education; (2) searched for current, relevant education blogs, books, and instructional resources and reported what they learned with classmates, and (3) collaboratively created an online special education toolkit they could use long after the final exam. Methodological content was embedded in a semester of collaborative and constructivist learning endeavors. Discussions and assignments were designed to foster preservice teachers' understanding of the complexities of teaching, the importance of thinking deeply about curricular decisions and instructional strategies from varied perspectives, and their responsibilities as professional educators and global citizens. Preservice teachers still learned about methods and instructional strategies, but in a more interdisciplinary way. Students engaged socially, worked collaboratively, and regularly reflected together. They learned about teaching methods with an emphasis on "generativity, active discovery, reflectivity and metacognition, cooperation, and community" (Mintrop, 2001, p. 208).

Enduring Tensions

Redesigning the methods course resulted in teacher candidates

having a better understanding of the many enduring tensions in the profession of teaching. I noticed that class discussions frequently included the phrase, "Yes, but" and paid attention to which concepts resulted in "Yes, but" (or similar) responses. For example, when discussing the importance of differentiated instruction to meet individual student needs, teacher candidates responded with "Yes, but." They wanted to know how to differentiate in an era driven by pacing guides and frequent standardized benchmark tests. The liberal arts makeover of the course seemed to work as teacher candidates demonstrated a growing understanding of the challenges and constraints they would face as teachers. No longer were my students browsing a catalog of instructional methods; instead, they were discerning how and why instructional decisions are made.

It was at this point that I developed a list of the seven conceptual pairs in Table 1. The conceptual pairs emerged over time

Table 1
Conceptual Pairs: Enduring Tensions in Education

Content knowledge	⟷	Pedagogical knowledge
Meeting needs of individual students	⟷	Meeting needs of groups of students
Differentiation–providing instruction that is modified to meet the needs of diverse learners	⟷	Standardization–providing instruction that is aligned with established standards
Global issues in education	⟷	Local issues in education
Professional needs of teachers (i.e., licensure requirements, additional professional development opportunities)	⟷	Personal and social-emotional needs of teachers (i.e., facilitating work-life balance, strategies to avoid burnout)
Learning educational theories	⟷	Clinical practice
Teaching candidates to be effective leaders	⟷	Teaching candidates to follow directives

Note: Each conceptual pair represents an enduring tension that teacher candidates must learn to navigate to be effective professional educators. The list of concepts is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather, represents a purposeful sampling of enduring tensions in the profession.

through discussions with students and colleagues about teaching that led to more "Yes, but" responses. The conceptual pairs are potentially, but not necessarily, at odds. For example, yes, teachers are called upon to be leaders in their classrooms and school community, *but* they must simultaneously follow required school protocols and administrators' mandates. While one hopes that classroom leadership naturally aligns with following school policies and protocols, there are times when teachers must advocate for change or an exception to meet students' needs. Thus, being both a leader and follower can be an enduring tension of the profession. The seven pairs were not intended to be exhaustive, but rather, represent a useful sampling of enduring tensions in the field. I believed my students needed to consider and learn to navigate these enduring tensions to be discerning educators. Having developed the list of enduring tensions through my own experiences, observations, and reflexive analysis, I wanted to explore the perspectives of other liberal arts teacher educators about these enduring tensions. I surveyed teacher educators at AILACTE institutions.

The proposed theoretical framework evolved as a result of reflection, reflexive analysis, and the survey data. Like Schnellert, et al. (2014) explained, for reflexive research-practitioners, "research and practice are continuously informing one another" (p. 235).

The survey results confirmed that liberal arts teacher educators acknowledged these enduring tensions are relevant to a LATE curriculum. Navigating these and other enduring tensions with integrity, wisdom, and empathy requires discernment; these are the moral, ethical, cultural, relational dimensions (AILACTE, n.d.) of teaching in the LATE framework.

Literature Review

Darling-Hammond and Bransford's (2005) framework for teaching and learning is provided in Figure 1 (see appendix, page 19). The framework presents a "vision of professional practice" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005) that incorporates three overlapping components of traditional teacher knowledge, including knowledge of (1) learners and learner development, (2) subject

matter and curriculum goals, and (3) teaching or pedagogy. Of course, having this knowledge does not assure teacher candidates will be able to apply it effectively in the messy and unpredictable reality of real classrooms. Darling-Hammond (2006) acknowledges "they must learn to deal with 'the problem of complexity' that is made more intense by the constantly changing nature of teaching and learning in groups" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 6).

Van Manen's (1986, 1991, 2000) writing about pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact addresses the interpersonal, moral aspects of teaching. To have pedagogical thoughtfulness is to have an insightful, empathetic way of being with students, to understand how the student is experiencing a situation and responding with care (Van Manen, 1986). It is a way of connecting that makes students feel seen, heard, respected, and understood (Van Manen, 1986). "To exercise tact means to *see* a situation calling for sensitivity, to *understand* the meaning of what is seen, to *sense the significance* of this situation, to *know how and what to do*, and to actually do something right" (Van Manen, 1991, p. 146).

Van Manen (1991) suggested that pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact cannot be taught, yet teaching it is what teacher educators are tasked to do. Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) Standard 2 specifies that each teacher preparation program assures that candidates develop the "professional dispositions necessary to demonstrate positive impact on all P–12 students' learning and development" (CAEP, 2019, p. 1). Even if " 'pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact' are unlearnable as mere behavioral principles, techniques, or methods" (Van Manen, 1991, p. 8-9), I believe these traits can be cultivated incrementally over time with purposefully designed learning experiences.

I use the term pedagogical discernment in the LATE framework. I define pedagogical discernment as the ability to read how students experience a situation and respond with empathy and wisdom so that students feel seen, heard, respected, and understood so that learning is likely. Pedagogical discernment enables one to be an insightful planner, problem-solver, and culturally responsive teacher. It encompasses Van Manen's (1986, 1991, 2000) ideas of pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact; it is the

moral, ethical, cultural, and relational application of pedagogical knowledge. In the same way one can develop critical thinking skills, I suggest that teacher candidates can increase pedagogical discernment as part of a LATE program.

I also include professional discernment in the LATE framework. Professional discernment is defined here as the ability to navigate workplace dynamics effectively—with wisdom, integrity, and collegiality. It is the ability to read how colleagues and stakeholders experience a situation,so that others feel seen, heard, respected, and understood. Professional discernment facilitates productive mediation of conflicts and progress toward goals. It makes one an insightful collaborator, problem-solver, and culturally responsive colleague. Professional discernment is the moral, ethical, cultural, relational dimension of being a professional educator. I suggest that in the same way one can develop critical thinking skills, teacher candidates can increase their professional discernment as part of a LATE program.

There is little research specifically addressing the impact of liberal arts teacher education on teacher candidate effectiveness (Mackler, 2014). Of the recent literature found, there is a tendency toward defensive posturing that may be more problematic than helpful (Kimball, 2013; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2009; Mackler, 2014). Liston et al. (2009) reported that "significant and powerful countervailing pressures exist and act against a liberal arts-based approach," including a tendency for education programs to focus too narrowly on a single, dominant educational framework that does not necessarily work well in today's public schools.

> Candidates should not be trained or molded to fit a particular educational path—at least not without their informed and educated consent. Today, however, many (certainly not all) university-based teacher candidates are being inculcated to see teaching and schooling within a dominant, progressive paradigm. Given the range of possible paths and the admixture of educational orientations that have and could exist, a rather narrow, and some would argue ineffectual, path is being taken. (Liston, et al. 2009, p. 107)

Liberal arts teacher education programs should not succumb to an overly simplified, one-size-fits-all approach. We need a

theoretical framework that articulates the benefits of LATE and can be used to design programs that prepare candidates to teach well, navigate challenges with discernment, and persist in the field because they enjoy this vital work.

Method

This project was a qualitative, exploratory study of liberal arts teacher educators' perceptions regarding the following guiding research questions. Data were analyzed to inform the development of the LATE theoretical framework presented.

1. How do liberal arts teacher educators prioritize the importance of concepts in Table 1 *(page 6)* that represent enduring tensions teacher candidates need to learn to navigate?
    a. Do they rate one concept as being more important than the other, or do they believe the concepts are equally important?
    b. Do they report that one concept gets more time and attention in their EPP, or do they believe the concepts get equal time and attention in their EPP?

Upon approval of the affiliated institutional review board, liberal arts teacher educators were solicited to participate in the study ($n = 64$). For each of the seven conceptual pairs in Table 1, participants were asked, "In your opinion, which of these is most important for teacher candidates to learn?" Participants responded by indicating which of the two concepts they believe is more important or indicated that the two concepts are equally important. After identifying which concept was more important of the two, participants were asked another question about the same conceptual pair—"In your opinion, which of these gets the most time and attention at your teacher preparation program at your institution?" Participants then indicated which concept gets more time and attention or if they believe the concepts get equal time and attention.

Participants

A purposeful, snowball sample of teacher educators from 107 AILACTE member institutions was solicited via email invitations

to the designated contact listed in the AILACTE institution membership directory. I invited the designated AILACTE contact to solicit up to three participants from their institution to complete the online survey. The contact could participate as one of the three. The link was included in the email invitation. I excluded the institution where I teach from the study. Participation was voluntary, and no identifiable information about the participant or institution was collected. I wanted respondents to answer candidly without concern that their answers might reflect negatively on their institution. The survey was open for a month, and a short reminder email was sent to the designated contact after the survey had been open for a week. The roles of participants in LATE are provided in Table 2.

Table 2
Participants

Role	Percentage	*n*=64
Teacher preparation administrators with no teaching responsibilities	7.8%	5
Teacher preparation administrators with teaching responsibilities	25%	18
Teacher preparation faculty	64.1%	41
Teacher preparation instructors	3.1%	2

There is not enough information to ascertain the response rate for survey. A total of 107 AILACTE institution liaisons were invited to invite up to three teacher educators from their institution to respond to the survey, resulting in a minimum possible N of 107 and a maximum of 321. Thus, with $n = 64$, the response rate is between 19.9% and 59.8%.

Results

Responses to the questions are provided in Table 3 *(page 12)*. Most respondents rated the concepts in every pair as being equally important for teacher candidates to learn. At least 75% of the respondents rated five of the seven conceptual pairs as being equally important for teacher candidates to learn.

Believing the concepts were equally important did not result in concepts getting equal time and attention in the EPP. Most

Table 3

Teacher Educators Report Their Perceptions of Which Concepts are More Important for Teacher Candidates to Learn and Which get More Time and Attention at their EPP

	Theory	Practice	Equal
Imp.	3.1%(*n*=2)	20.3%(*n*=13)	76.6%(*n*=49)
T&A	10.9%(*n*=7)	20.3%(*n*=13)	68.8%(*n*=44)
	Standardization	Differentiation	Equal
Imp	3.1% (*n*=2)	40.6%(*n*=26)	56.3%(*n*=36)
T&A	25.0%(*n*=16)	28.1%(*n*=18)	46.9%(*n*=30)
	Groups	Individuals	Equal
Imp.	4.7%(*n*=3)	17.2%(*n*=11)	78.1%(*n*=50)
T&A	28.1%(*n*=18)	12.5%(*n*=8)	59.4%(*n*=38)
	Global	Local	Equal
Imp	7.8% (*n*=5)	31.3%(*n*=20)	60.9%(*n*=39)
T&A	7.8% (*n*=5)	50.0%(*n*=32)	42.2%(*n*=27)
	Content	Pedagogy	Equal
Imp.	1.6%(*n*=1)	12.5%(*n*=8)	85.9%(*n*=55)
T&A	7.8%(*n*=5)	45.3%(*n*=29)	46.9%(*n*=30)
	Followers	Leaders	Equal
Imp	3.1% (*n*=2)	21.9%(*n*=14)	75.0%(*n*=48)
T&A*	19.0%(*n*=12)	49.2%(*n*=31)	31.7%(*n*=20)
	Professional	Personal/SEL	Equal
Imp.	3.1%(*n*=2)	17.2%(*n*=11)	79.7%(*n*=51)
T&A	70.3%(*n*=45)	1.6%(*n*=1)	28.1%(*n*=18)

Note: Imp=Survey Question: In your opinion, which of these is most important for teacher candidates to learn?; T&A=Survey Question: In your opinion which of these gets the most time and attention at your teacher preparation program at your institution?; Equal=Rated as equal; Theories=Learning educational theories; Practice=Clinical practice; Standardization=Providing instruction that is aligned with established standards; Differentiation=Providing differentiated instruction that is modified to meet the needs of diverse learners; Groups = Meeting needs of groups of students; Individuals = Meeting needs of individual students; Global = Global issues in education; Local = Local issues in education; Content = Content knowledge; Pedagogy = Pedagogical knowledge; Followers = Teaching candidates to follow directives; Leaders = Teaching candidates to be effective leaders; Professional = Professional needs of teachers (i.e., licensure requirements, additional professional development opportunities); Personal/SEL = Personal and social-emotional needs of teachers (i.e., facilitating work-life balance, strategies to avoid burnout)

*n = 63 for this question; n = 64 for all other questions in Table 3

respondents reported that only two pairs representing enduring tensions received equal time and attention at their EPP—education theories and clinical practice (68.8%); and meeting the needs of groups *and* individuals (59.4%). While 85.9% believed pedagogy and content were equally important, only 46.9% reported these as getting equal time and attention. Leading and following were considered equally important by 75% of participants, but only 31.7% reported that these concepts get equal time and attention.

The most striking discrepancy had to do with meeting the professional needs of teachers (i.e., licensure requirements, additional professional development opportunities) and meeting the personal and social-emotional needs of teachers (i.e., facilitating work-life balance, strategies to avoid burnout). An overwhelming majority of participants, 96.9%, believed the personal and social-emotional needs of teachers are equally important (79.7%) or more important (17.2%) than professional needs. Yet, only 29.7% of respondents reported that the personal and social-emotional needs of teachers received more time (1.6%) or equal time (28.1%) than the professional needs of teachers in their EPP.

Discussion and Framework

Initially, I envisioned the enduring tensions listed in Table 1 *(page 6)* as defining features of a new LATE framework, but my thinking evolved as I continued to read, discuss, and reflect on all that LATE is or should be. The conceptual pairs are only a sample of the enduring tensions, or "Yes, but" issues, that teaches must learn to navigate. There are many other essential concepts and skills required of teachers that do not fall into the enduring tension category. For example, pedagogically discerning teachers must know how to be culturally responsive, anti-racist educators (Hammond & Jackson, 2015). To be a culturally responsive, anti-racist educator really is an essential aspect of pedagogical and professional discernment. There is no "Yes, but" about it. Culturally responsive, anti-racist teaching must be a "Yes, period" aspect of LATE. A robust theoretical framework should account for all that teachers must know and navigate, and that is what this framework aspires to do.

While the LATE theoretical framework can be seen in Figure 4 *(page 22)*, the full model's robust nature is best explained by first examining the model's four foundational components *(see Figure 2, page 20)*. Traditional teacher knowledge includes content knowledge and pedagogy. The moral, ethical, relational dimensions of teaching include pedagogical and professional discernment. There is an enduring tension between the left and right sides of the framework—traditional teacher knowledge and the moral, ethical, and relational dimensions of teaching. These aspects can, at times, seem to be at odds. I propose there is an enduring tension between the top and bottom of the framework as well—meeting the needs of the students and meeting the needs of the school or district. Ideally, these work in tandem, but that is not always the case. High-stakes testing, budget constraints, and bureaucratic mandates required for the system are not always in the best interest of students, so the tensions must be navigated.

The framework articulates what teacher educators do in LATE and what we are training teacher candidates to do in P–12 schools. The model also articulates the knowledge and qualities teacher educators must model in an effective LATE program. Teacher candidates must acquire both traditional teacher knowledge and the moral, ethical, cultural, and relational dimensions of teaching to be effective educators. In practice, teacher candidates will utilize the knowledge and enact the qualities concurrently and iteratively in various educational settings with myriad diverse stakeholders.

Another layer of enduring tensions can be seen in Figure 3 *(page 21)*. The moral, ethical, cultural, and relational dimensions on the model's left side tend to be qualitative. Both pedagogical and professional discernment are ways of responding to complex situations in real-time. It is the interactive application of traditional teacher knowledge—a qualitative way of thinking, being, and using knowledge. Discernment can be identified as a present quality but is difficult to quantify.

Traditional teacher knowledge is more often approached quantitatively by accrediting agencies and state boards of education. The current culture of high-stakes testing in P–12, "What Works" (What Works Clearinghouse, n.d.), and accountability policies skew heavily toward quantitative approaches. Teacher education

accreditation requirements also tend to favor quantitative evidence.

Pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical discernment are focused on students' well-being. It is likely visions of student-focused teaching that attract many idealistic teacher candidates to the profession. Indeed, being an effective educator, persisting in the field, and enjoying the job requires that teachers maintain a strong focus on students' needs despite bureaucratic mandates and education politics.

Content knowledge is determined and assessed by systems—schools, accrediting agencies, and state boards of education; system-focused assessments serve as system well-being measures. Professional discernment has to do with navigating the system, and thus, is also focused on system well-being.

The complete LATE theoretical framework in Figure 4 *(page 22)* is a result of reflexive analysis over time and the survey data. The four foundational components in the LATE framework are situated in a larger circle labeled "Teacher Well-Being" and "Social-Emotional Learning," because the personal, social-emotional skills of teacher candidates were rated as being more or equally important than professional needs by 96.9% of study participants. The data suggest that AILACTE teacher educators believe developing social-emotional skills in our teacher candidates is a vital part of our job. I agree. Well-prepared teachers are well, prepared teachers. Unfortunately, it appears our beliefs are not yet reflected in the time and attention devoted to developing social-emotional well-being in our teacher candidates. Future research exploring how to develop social-emotional health in teacher candidates would be helpful. Does social-emotional health positively impact a teacher's ability to navigate enduring tensions and persist in the field? If so, we would be wise to embed it into our programs generously and as soon as possible.

Conclusion

A theory of liberal arts teacher education is needed to help us reflect on practice to determine the extent to which lessons, courses, field experiences, and programs are congruent with the liberal arts mission—that what we intend "to take place in the program is what actually occurs" (Pepper & Hare, 1999, p. 358).

Disseminating the LATE theoretical framework for critique is the next logical next step so that others can evaluate its merit and worth (Lincoln & Guba, 1980). Is it logistically sound, clear, and straightforward? Is it a useful tool? Program evaluations, course evaluations, and education research using the LATE framework are needed to answer these questions. The initial phase of this project included open-ended questions on the survey; the analysis and results of that data are beyond the scope of this article. I plan to interview LATE stakeholders in the next phase of this research. I also plan to embed more social-emotional learning throughout my courses and to research the efficacy of instructional strategies intended to develop discernment in teacher candidates.

> Liberal education is a liberating education in that it frees the mind to seek after the truth unencumbered by dogma, ideology, or preconceived notions. A liberally educated person can think for himself or herself, is both broad- and open-minded, and is, therefore, less susceptible to manipulation or prejudice…A liberal learner is an active participant and a partner in his or her own education and in the education of others, engaging in forms of inquiry that train the intellect through a focus on real-world problems that draw the learner into relationship with others (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2020, p. 9-11).

This description of the liberal arts education from the AACU's vision document summarizes the outcome desired for liberal arts teacher candidates. I hope the LATE theoretical framework will be a useful tool as we work together to develop discerning, knowledgeable, effective educators who productively navigate the enduring tensions in the profession and love their work.

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Appendix

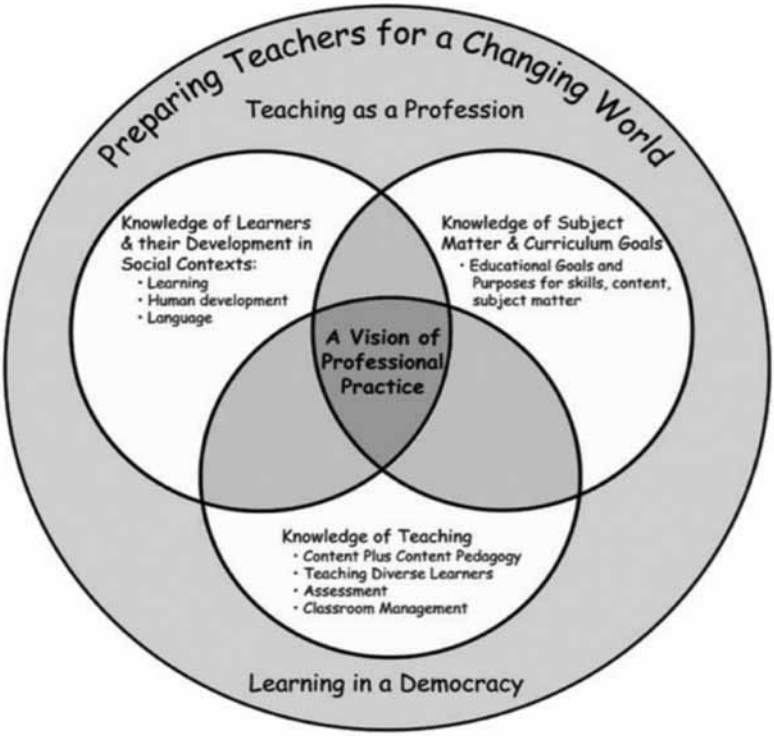

Figure 1
"Framework for Understanding Teaching and Learning" by Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005, p. 11) in Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21st-century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*(3), 300–314. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487105285962

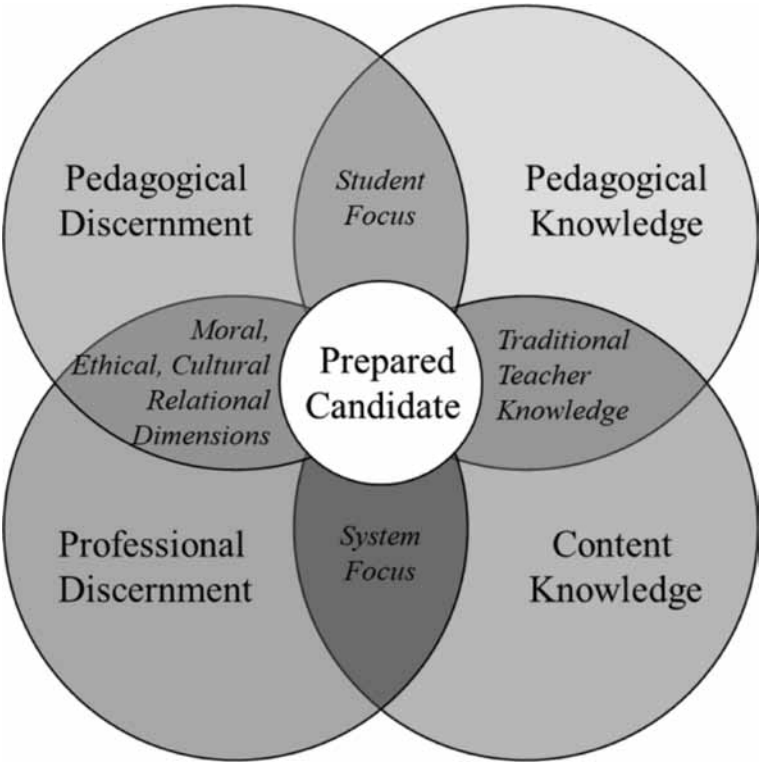

Figure 2
The four foundational components of the LATE theoretical framework include pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge (traditional teacher knowledge) on the right side and pedagogical discernment and professional discernment (the moral and interpersonal dimension of teaching) on the left side. The top components are student focused. The bottom components are system focused.

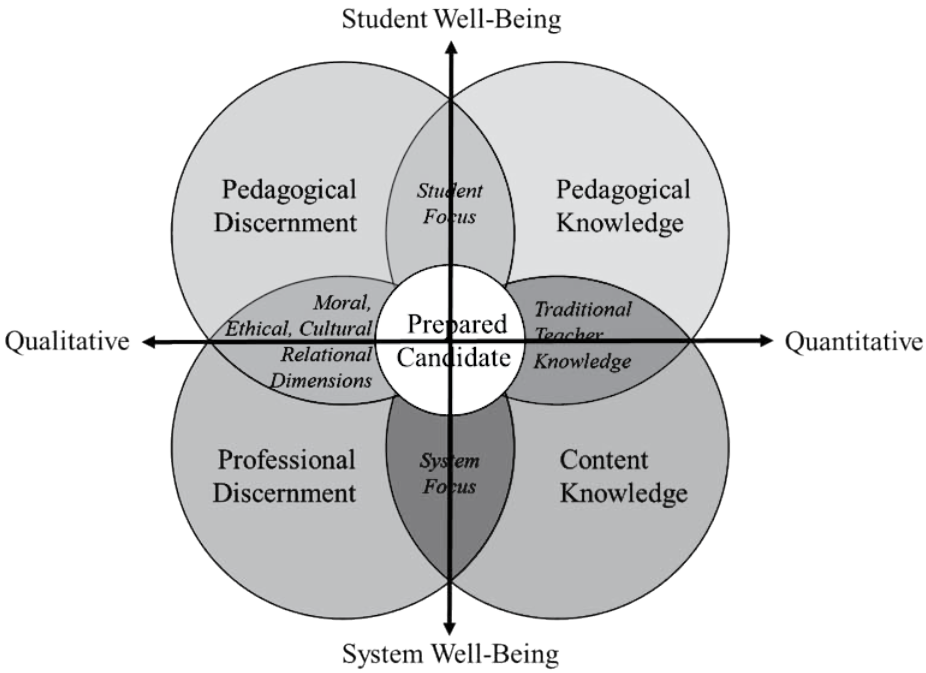

Figure 3
The moral, ethical, and relational dimensions on the left side of the model tend to be more qualitative. Traditional teacher knowledge tends to be approached quantitatively by accrediting agencies and state boards of education. Pedagogical knowledge and discernment are focused on students' well-being. Content knowledge is determined and assessed by school systems and state boards of education; it is system-focused, and assessment serves as a measure of the system's well-being. Professional discernment is also focused on system well-being.

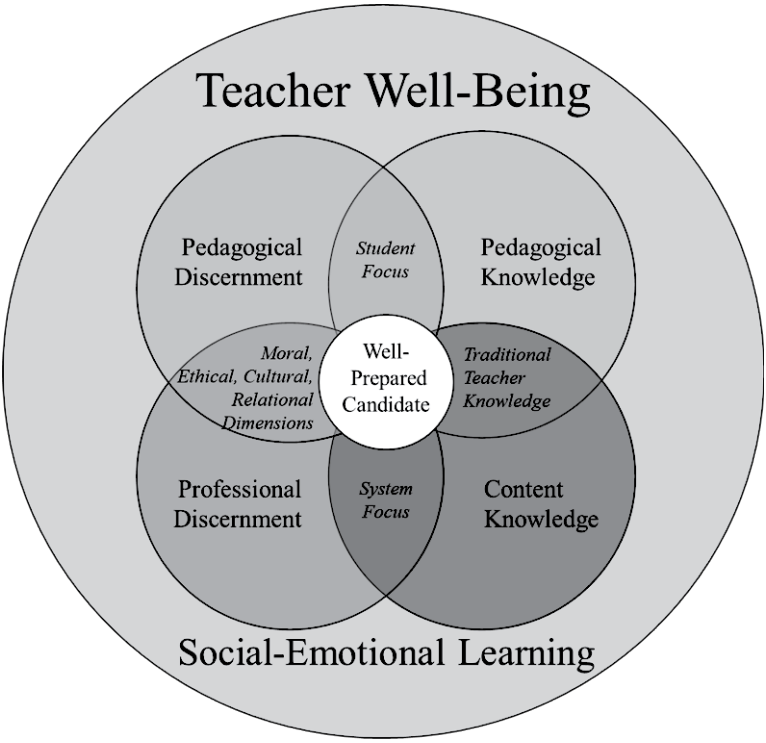

Figure 4

The four foundational components in the LATE framework are situated in a larger circle labeled "Teacher Well-Being," because the personal, social-emotional skills of teacher candidates were rated as being more or equally important than professional needs by 96.9% of study participants. A well-prepared teacher is a well, prepared teacher.

What Teacher Candidates Have to Say: Analyzing Perceptions of Program Effectiveness across 14 Universities

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify common areas of strength and weakness in teacher preparation programs based on the perceptions of teacher candidates and novice teachers from 14 higher education institutions across three states. The areas investigated included perspectives on teacher preparation related to *Instructional Practice, Diverse Learners, Learning Environment,* and *Professionalism*. The Exit Survey results of 691 Elementary and 501 Secondary Teacher Candidates and the Transition to Teaching Survey results of 306 Elementary and 283 Secondary Novice Teachers were analyzed. Results across the 14 institutions demonstrated that serving the diverse needs (Special Education, English Language Learners, Mental Health, Gifted & Talented) of learners, effective communication with parents and incorporating the effective use of digital technology are common challenges across teacher preparation programs. This study can help inform teacher preparation and teacher induction programs to better respond to the professional development needs of teacher candidates and novice teachers. Implications for the results, including this study's limitations and further research, are discussed.

Keywords: teacher education programs, diverse learners, elementary, secondary, teacher candidates, novice teachers, preservice teachers, special education, English language learners, mental health, gifted and talented, parent communication

Since the launch of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, teacher effectiveness and teacher preparation have been a focus of much political and professional discussion. In fact, there has been an international trend in teacher education that has brought "unprecedented and politicized attention to teacher preparation/certification and the policies and accountability systems that govern them and measure their effectiveness" (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015, p. 10). This has been especially true in the U.S. where there has been a call to improve teacher preparation so that all American classrooms are led by effective teachers (Cleveland, 2008). The U.S. Congress asked the National Research Council to "synthesize data and research on teacher preparation programs as well as note whether the coursework and preparatory experiences of pre-service teachers were consistent with research findings about effective practice" (Cochran-Smith, 2006, p. 20). Independent liberal arts colleges enroll over 20% of all college students (Hussar et al., 2020) and play a significant role in the preparation of effective teachers in American classrooms. All university teacher preparation programs, public and private, face similar challenges and public scrutiny as they prepare teacher candidates for the increasingly complex job of teaching.

Effective practice is clearly a desirable goal but how does a teacher candidate become an effective teacher? Research has identified teacher pedagogical content knowledge, content knowledge, and experience as key components of being an effective teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2006) and high quality teacher preparation is central to candidates gaining that important knowledge and those essential teaching skills (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). When teacher candidates are well prepared, students benefit with increased success. P–12 student achievement is highly correlated with teachers who are well prepared in teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Despite that finding, there is little research that disaggregates the experience of teachers as they prepare for and enter the teaching profession.

Although high quality teacher preparation programs have been found to be central to the development of effective teachers, research that demonstrates or evaluates the effectiveness of such programs is lacking. Since well-prepared teachers are essential to

P–12 student achievement, it is important to assess teacher candidates' perspectives about how well they were prepared. In light of the challenges associated with the recruitment, preparation and retention of teachers, it is especially important to understand the perceptions of teachers as they exit teacher preparation programs and begin their teaching careers. Thus, this study examines the perceptions of teacher candidates regarding their preparedness to teach at the end of student teaching and at the end of the first year of teaching to identify key successes and challenges faced by teacher preparation programs.

This research has two aims. First is to investigate teacher candidates' and novice teachers' perspectives on teacher preparation related to four categories foundational to teacher effectiveness: *Instructional Practice, Diverse Learners, Learning Environment,* and *Professionalism*. The second is to examine common strengths and weaknesses in teacher preparation across 14 institutions. The following research question guided this inquiry: Based on the use of common metrics assessing teacher candidates and novice teachers across 14 universities, what patterns of strengths and weaknesses can be identified?

Literature Review

Teacher education programs need to prepare effective teachers to support high quality education for K–12 students. According to Wright, Horn, and Sanders (1997), "the most important factor affecting student learning was the teacher and that the clear implication of this finding was that more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor" (p. 63). Teacher self-efficacy has been shown to positively impact a wide range of teacher behaviors and attitudes (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teachers who have a high level of self-efficacy based on their preparedness have more positive feelings towards their students and the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Teacher preparedness and self-efficacy are affected by the quality of teacher education programs (Cochran, Van Buren, & Westerfield, 2016) and teacher self-efficacy is strongly related to important outcomes, such as student achievement, teacher retention and

job satisfaction (Bandura, 1993; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Klassen & Chui, 2010; Sivri & Balci, 2015).

Universities need to collect data from their graduates on their preparedness and self-efficacy as they begin their professional life (Duncan, 2011). If teacher preparation is an important component of teacher effectiveness, then understanding the strengths and weaknesses of those programs is pivotal to improving teacher preparation and teacher self-efficacy. Studies demonstrate that teacher candidates generally report a high level of satisfaction regarding their teacher education programs and feel responsibility for their classroom (Bowsher, Sparks, & Hoyer, 2018; Cochran et al., 2016). In one study, for example, 93% of novice teachers rated their preparation from teacher education programs as proficient or exemplary (Cochran et al., 2016).

Despite overall satisfaction with teacher preparation programs, there are aspects of teaching for which teacher candidates do not feel as well prepared. Teaching is a complex and challenging job for seasoned veterans so it is no surprise that teacher candidates and novice teachers can be overwhelmed by the challenges of teaching students with diverse needs (Bowsher et al., 2018; Meister & Jenks, 2000; Melnick & Meister, 2008). Among the areas most frequently identified as especially challenging include students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), English Language Learners (ELLs), and Gifted and Talented students (Tygret, 2018). Mental Health (Merz, 2018) and Childhood Trauma (Alisic et al., 2012; Stratford et al., 2020) have also been recognized as important classroom factors for which teachers receive inadequate preparation. Additionally, novice teachers feel unprepared to effectively communicate with parents to support the needs of diverse learners (Melnick & Meister, 2008; Tygret, 2018). Added to those challenges is the fact that many categories of need overlap and students often present multiple areas of need.

English Language Learners

The number of students receiving ELL services has grown steadily over the past two decades. Almost 5 million students were classified as ELL in 2016 (deBrey et al., 2019) and over 77% of those students are Hispanic. Over a fifteen-year period

(2000-2015), the percentage of Hispanic students in public schools increased from 16% to 25% (NCES, 2019) and the percentage of Asian students increased from 3% to 5%. Nearly one in three Hispanic students and one in five Asian students receive ELL services (deBrey et al., 2019). Over 20% of public school students have a language other than English spoken in the home and many of these students struggle with speaking, reading and writing English (Aud, Fox, & KewelRamani, 2010). The challenges for ELLs are additionally impacted by poverty and race as well as a teacher quality gap (Samson & Collins, 2012).

Teacher preparation programs have not always been up to the challenge. As Gándara and Santibañez (2016) note, "Because teacher certification programs provide so little preparation for those who will teach ELLs, it's up to professional development to fill in the gaps" (p. 34). Predictably, one of the biggest challenges for teachers of ELLs is communication and it is important to note that the biggest frustration for elementary teachers are the obstacles to communicating with the parent (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). Especially relevant to teacher educators is the recent finding that only 35% of teachers felt that their pre-service program had prepared them to engage with parents of ELLs (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016).

Exceptional Learners: Gifted & Talented and Special Education Students

Inclusion is often identified as a goal for students with special needs and exceptionalities, but it is not uncommon for students and specialists to feel they are outsiders (Henley et al., 2010). Even veteran mainstream teachers often feel unprepared to deal with the array of student disabilities (Melnick & Meister, 2008) and a lack of collaborative planning time contributes to a lack of communication between the mainstream teachers and the special education teachers (Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberge, 2010). While providing time to collaborate falls on the school, initial responsibility for preparing teachers to work with exceptional learners and to collaborate with specialists rests upon the shoulders of teacher preparation programs.

Even though 13% of students in public schools receive special

education services (deBrey et al., 2019), research has shown for decades that pre-service teachers are not provided adequate preparation to address the needs of those students (Forlin, Jobling, & Carroll, 2001; Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler, 2010; Kearney & Durand, 1992; Reed & Monda-Amaya, 1995) or Gifted and Talented students (Berman, Schulz, & Weber, 2012) nor have they been trained to effectively collaborate with specialists and parents, yet that collaboration is fundamental to success for the P–12 students (Gillies, 2014). Given the fact that the challenges have been evident for at least 25 years, the lack of research on preparation of teachers to work with special education needs (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015) is cause for concern.

Mental Health

There is a growing awareness among P–12 teachers and teacher preparation programs that more attention is warranted in regards to the skills and knowledge needed to support student mental health. The statistics regarding mental health disorders and illnesses bear out the significance of the challenge. One in six children are reported to have a mental health disorder and half of them do not receive help from a mental health professional (Whitney & Peterson, 2019). It is estimated that 17.4% of children ages 2-8 present with a Mental, Behavioral, or Developmental Disorder and over 10% of children ages 3-17 are reported to have anxiety and/or depression (Ghandour et al., 2019). Nearly eight million students come to class with a mental health disorder and teachers often feel unprepared or unequipped to respond to those challenges (Merz, 2018). In a survey conducted by the Education Week Research Center (Kurtz, Lloyd, Harwin, & Blomstrom, 2019) only 29% of teachers reported that they received training related to mental health.

Related to mental health, childhood trauma is a growing area of concern for educators. More than half of the students enrolled in public schools have faced traumatic or adverse experiences and one in six struggles with complex trauma (Felitti & Anda, 2009). Since adverse childhood experiences tend to have significant long-term effects (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012), the need for training in trauma-informed instruction has become more evident.

Parent Communication

Communicating and collaborating with parents is a central tenet of effective teaching, but it often remains on the periphery of teacher preparation programs (Hiatt, 2001; Walker & Dotger, 2012). Several studies have noted the lack of focus on parent communication within teacher education (Ferrara & Ferrar, 2005; Flanigan, 2007; Hiatt, 2001) and the challenge persists into the teaching career. Meister and Melnick (2003) conducted a survey of 273 first and second year teachers for their concerns when they entered the profession and those teachers identified communication with parents as one out of four areas needing additional support and training. That finding was strengthened in a 2012 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher that identified parent communication and involvement as the top challenge identified by novice teachers (Markow & Pieters, 2012).

Summary

Teaching has always been a challenging profession but increasing expectations for student achievement across all groups of students (NCLB, 2002) and changing demographics (Aud et al., 2010; deBrey et al., 2019) have made it even more challenging. Darling-Hammond, Bransford and LePage (2005) set the bar higher for current teacher candidates to address the needs of diverse learners: "Beginning teachers today need a new perspective; one that goes beyond covering the curriculum to actually enabling learning for students who need to learn in different ways" (p. 2). Meeting the diverse needs of learners and communicating with parents in support of those learners have been monumental challenges for many novice teachers (Melnick & Meister, 2008; Tygret, 2018). The greater complexity and diversity present in today's classrooms require teacher preparation programs to dedicate more attention and a coherent approach in contrast to the superficial and fragmented efforts of the past (Mills, 2008).

Method

The Network for Excellence in Teaching (NExT), a partnership of 14 institutions of higher education (IHEs) and the Bush Foundation, aims to transform how university-based teacher

education programs prepare effective new teachers in the Midwest region. NExT has collaborated to develop and administer a set of four common surveys to measure their progress toward this goal. Teacher candidates and graduates at each of the IHEs complete three surveys: upon entry into the teacher education programs; at exit; and one year after graduation (Transition to Teaching Survey). A fourth survey is sent to the novice teacher's supervisor at the end of the first year of teaching. The Exit Survey and Transition to Teaching Survey (TTS) were the two surveys analyzed in the study.

Participants

For the Exit Survey, 691 Elementary and 501 Secondary Teacher Candidates' responses were analyzed; and for the TTS, 306 Novice Elementary and 283 Secondary Teacher responses (Middle or Junior High, High School) were analyzed. For the TTS, only those employed as teachers full time or part time in an educational setting were considered for the purpose of the study.

The racial/ethnic and gender composition of the teacher candidates did not vary widely from national averages. Almost 90% of the teacher candidates were White, 3% were Asian, 3% were African-American, 3% were Hispanic, 1% were American Indian and 1% were "other." Nearly 80% of the novice teachers were employed in traditional public schools, 9% were employed in charter schools, 6% in private schools and 4% in other educational settings.

Data Sources

Common metrics data (Exit and TTS) were analyzed for all teacher candidates and novice teachers to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement across the institutions in NExT. The Exit Survey was administered across 14 universities to assess teacher candidate perceptions of the degree to which their teacher education programs prepared them for teaching upon completion of student teaching. Among the 14 universities participating, six were independent liberal arts universities, five of which were located in an urban setting. The TTS was used to assess the same perceptions after a year of classroom teaching

experience. The 2015-16 Exit Survey and the 2016-17 TTS were used to capture the same participant responses on both surveys. Both surveys are aligned overall and are nearly identical.

There are a few minor differences in specific survey items but the content is nearly identical. An individual item on the Exit Survey for 2015-16 was changed into two items for the 2016-17 TTS and those items were excluded from this analysis. The surveys encompassed four broad areas of teacher preparation: *Instructional Practice, Diverse Learners, Learning Environment,* and *Professionalism*. Please see the Table 1 below for the total number of the items and some sample items in each broad area.

Table 1
The Total Number of the Items and Some Sample Items in Each Broad Area in Exit Survey and TTS

Broad Area	Total # of Items	Some Sample Items
Instructional Practice	21	Effectively teach subject matter. Align teaching strategies with learning goals.
Diverse Learners	9	Effectively teach students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Differentiate for gifted and talented students.
Learning Environment	9	Convey expectations for student behavior. Relate content to students' lives.
Professionalism	7	Identify opportunities for professional growth. Partner with parents and guardians to support student success.

2015-16 Exit Survey. This survey was administered to teacher education program graduates during fall 2015 and spring 2016. The Exit Survey collects information on graduates' perceptions of and satisfaction with their teacher education programs and student teaching experiences, as well as their backgrounds and future plans. The overall reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, for the Exit Survey is 0.98.

2016-17 Transition to Teaching Survey. This survey was administered to first-year teachers during the spring of 2017. The TTS collects information on recent graduates' licensure and job

status, perceptions of their teacher preparation programs, current school contexts, and personal demographics. The overall reliability, Cronbach's Alpha for the TTS is 0.98.

Data Analysis

Index analysis, which measures perceptions of survey respondents about a question relative to the average of all responses, was used in the study to allow a more detailed analysis of notable trends and differences. Common Metrics Data (Exit and TTS) were analyzed for all elementary and secondary teacher candidates and novice teachers separately to identify potential improvement areas across institutions in the network.

Initially, data was cleaned by deleting missing or invalid data. The survey responses were converted from a 1-4 Likert scale to 0-1 (dissatisfaction or satisfaction); 1 and 2 were encoded as "0"; 3 and 4 were encoded as "1." The Index for 4 broad areas (*Instructional Practice, Diverse Learners, Learning Environment,* and *Professionalism)* and individual items were calculated as shown in the following formulas:

$$\textit{Index of an Individual Item} = \frac{\textit{(Average Satisfaction Score of Individual Item)}}{\textit{(Average Satisfaction Score of All Broad Areas)}} \times 100$$

$$\textit{Index of a Broad Area} = \frac{\textit{(Average Satisfaction Score of Broad Area)}}{\textit{(Average Satisfaction Score of All Broad Areas)}} \times 100$$

An index simply shows satisfaction of an individual survey item relative to overall survey satisfaction. An index of 105 or higher is classified as high, whereas 95 or lower is classified as a low index in comparison to overall ratings. In other words, high index scores indicate candidates feel very satisfied with their preparation in a given area and low index scores indicate a lower level of satisfaction as compared to overall average.

Results

In this study, we aim to identify common areas of challenge and success in perceptions of program effectiveness across universities in NExT. The surveys encompassed four broad areas of teacher preparation: *Instructional Practice, Learning Environment,*

Diverse Learners and *Professionalism*. While overall, the teacher candidates and novice teachers exhibited a high level of satisfaction with their programs, the index analysis allowed the researchers to identify relative strengths and weaknesses.

The results indicate that the teacher candidates and novice teachers feel least prepared to address the diverse needs of learners and most prepared to create an effective learning environment (Table 2). The category of *Diverse Learners* was a low index score for elementary and secondary teacher candidates and novice teachers on both the Exit Survey and the TTS and by far the lowest score among all categories. *Learning Environment* was the highest score for elementary teachers in the Exit Survey and the TTS and a high index score for the TTS. *Learning Environment* was a high index score and the highest category score for secondary teachers in the Exit Survey and the second highest score on the TTS. There was solid uptick in scores on the TTS in comparison to the Exit Survey in the area of *Instructional Practices*, but overall results were mixed. Scores on the TTS for both elementary and secondary teachers were lower than the Exit Survey in *Professionalism*, secondary teachers had lower scores on *Learning Environment* and elementary teachers had a slight decrease in *Diverse Learners*.

Table 2

Index Scores for Broad Areas in 2015-16 Exit Survey and 2016-17 TTS for all Elementary and Secondary Teacher Candidates and Novice Teachers

	Exit	TTS
Elementary	Instructional Practice (100.2) Diverse Learners (94.7)* Learning Environment (104.7) Professionalism (100.4)	Instructional Practice (102.5) Diverse Learners (94.4)* Learning Environment (105.1)** Professionalism (98)
Secondary	Instructional Practice (101.2) Diverse Learners (90.7)* Learning Environment (106.8)** Professionalism (101.2)	Instructional Practice (104.5) Diverse Learners (91.8)* Learning Environment (103.9) Professionalism (99.8)

Note: Low index broad categories were designated by a single asterisk and high index broad categories were designated by a double asterisk.

The scores on individual items generally reflect the category scores. There are no high individual index items in the Exit and TTS across teacher candidates and novice teachers for the *Diverse Learners* and *Professionalism* broad categories, but there are four high index items in *Instructional Practice* and five high index items in the *Learning Environment* categories. The highest individual index item for all elementary and secondary teacher candidates and all novice elementary and secondary teachers is related to designing lessons with clear learning outcomes in the *Instructional Practice* category. Within that category, individuals also felt well prepared to effectively teach the subject matter, align instructional strategies with goals and standards, and engage students with subject matter from a variety of perspectives. Within the *Learning Environment* category, teacher candidates and novice teachers felt well prepared to use effective communication strategies, help students to work together, connect content to real-life, and promote student engagement. Given the low overall scores for *Diverse Learners*, it is notable that teacher candidates and novice teachers rated their preparation highly in regards to creating an environment where differences are respected." High index individual items in Exit and TTS for all elementary and secondary teacher candidates and novice teachers are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Focus of High Index Individual Items in 2015–16 Exit Survey and 2016–17 TTS for all Elementary and Secondary Teacher Candidates and Novice Teachers

Broad Categories	Survey Item Topic
Instructional Practice	Effectively teach subject matter. (108.15, 112.45)
	Align teaching strategies with learning goals. (109.4, 109.75)
	Engage students with subject matter from multiple perspectives. (105.9, 106.85)
	Design lessons with clear learning outcomes. (110.5, 114)
Learning Environment	Convey ideas and information to students. (109.9, 111.05)
	Relate content to students' lives. (107.2, 108.85)
	Coordinate students working together to learn. (109.75, 108.2)
	Create an engaging classroom environment. (107.6, 107.3)
	Foster an environment where differences are respected. (108.55, 109.55)

Note: The first number demonstrates the mean of elementary and secondary teacher candidates' scores for Exit Survey. The second number demonstrates the mean of elementary and secondary novice teachers' scores for the TTS.

Survey responses that were high or low on at least one survey but not all surveys are classified as unique. Using formative and summative assessments and accounting for students' prior knowledge are high index items in the Exit Survey for secondary teacher candidates and are high index items in the TTS for both elementary and secondary novice teachers. Regularly adjusting instructional plans to meet student needs was a high index item for elementary and secondary teachers in the TTS. Effectively responding to student behavior is a high index individual item for secondary teacher candidates in the Exit Survey. Unique high index scores for the Exit Survey and TTS follow in tables 4 and 5.

Table 4
Focus of Uniquely High Index Individual Items in 2015–16 Exit Survey

Broad Categories	Survey Item Topic
	Only Elementary
Diverse Learners	Differentiate based on socioeconomic status. (105.8)
	Only Secondary
Instructional Practice	Incorporate students' prior knowledge in planning instruction. (105.0)
	Effectively use formative and summative assessments. (107.6)
Learning Environment	Convey expectations for student behavior. (105.0)
Professionalism	Collaborate with other teachers to increase student achievement. (105.0)
	Act on peer feedback for prefessional growth. (107.1)

Table 5
Focus of Uniquely High Index Individual Items in 2016–17 TTS

Broad Categories	Survey Item Topic
	Both Elementary and Secondary
Instructional Practice	Incorporate students' prior knowledge in planning instruction. (109.5, 111.1)
	Adapt instruction to meet learner needs. (106.1, 107.6)
	Effectively use formative and summative assessments. (107.2, 112.4)
	Only Secondary
Instructional Practice	Create assessments that align with learning outcomes. (105.8)

Note: The numbers following the survey items for "Both Elementary and Secondary" demonstrate elementary and secondary teacher candidates' index respectively.

Overall, the *Diverse Learners* category has the lowest index score in the Exit Survey and TTS for both elementary and secondary. Regarding low index items, there are four individual items for the category of *Diverse Learners* and one individual item for *Professionalism* in the Exit and TTS. The lowest individual item score for all elementary and secondary teacher candidates and novice teachers is focused on differentiating based on mental health needs. Additional low individual scores were found for Gifted & Talented students, ELLs and students with IEPs. All of these individual items scored well below the cut score for low index items. Only one low index individual item did not increase between the Exit Survey and the TTS and that was the item under *Professionalism*: "Partner with parents and guardians to support student success." Low index individual items in the Exit and TTS for all elementary and secondary teacher candidates and all novice teachers are listed in Table 6.

Table 6
Focus of Low Index Individual Items in 2015–16 Exit Survey and 2016–17 TTS for all Elementary and Secondary Teacher Candidates and Novice Teachers

Broad Categories	Survey Item Topic
Diverse Learners	Differentiate for Special Education students. (82.05, 84.95) Differentiate based on mental health needs. (74.3, 75.65) Differentiate for gifted and talented students. (77.5, 84.9) Differentiate for English-language learners. (84.7, 88.45)
Professionalism	Partner with parents and guardians to support student success. (91.7, 87.3)

Note: The first number demonstrates the mean of elementary and secondary teacher candidates' scores for Exit Survey. The second number demonstrates the mean of elementary and secondary novice teacher candidates' scores for TTS.

The items related to using digital and interactive technology tools are unique low index items for both elementary and secondary teacher candidates in the Exit Survey and a low index item for elementary novice teachers in the TTS. The item focusing on involving students in self-assessment is a low index item for both elementary and secondary teacher candidates in Exit Survey and a low index item for secondary novice teachers in TTS.

Even though there are no low index items related to classroom management in the Exit Survey, in the TTS the item focusing on helping students self-regulate behavior is a low index item for both elementary and secondary novice teachers and effectively responding to student behavior is a low index item for secondary novice teachers. These findings might reflect the increased challenges of classroom management as the novice teacher assumed full responsibility for the classroom. The unique low index individual items in the Exit and TTS are listed in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7

Focus of Uniquely Low Index Individual Items in 2015–16 Exit Survey

Broad Categories	Survey Item Topic
	Both Elementary and Secondary
Instructional Practice	Involve students in self-assissment. (92.5, 87.9)
	Use digital technologies to attain learning goals. (90.1, 92.8)
	Use a variety of technologies to support student learning. (87.1, 94.4)
	Only Elementary
Instructional Practice	Access resources that help promote global awareness and understanding. (94.7)

Note: The numbers following the survey items demonstrate elementary and secondary teacher candidates' index respectively.

Table 8

Focus of Uniquely Low Index Individual Items in 2016–17 TTS

Broad Categories	Survey Item Topic
	Both Elementary and Secondary
Learning Environment	Help students self-regulate behavior. (91.8, 86.3)
	Only Elementary
Instructional Practice	Use digital technologies to attain learning goals. (93.6)
	Access resources that help promote global awareness and understanding. (93.3)
	Only Secondary
Instructional Practice	Involve students in self-assessment. (91.1))
	Promote student problem solving skills. (94.6)
Diverse Learners	Differentiate based on socioeconomic status. (90.2)
Learning Environment	Effectively respond to student behavior. (89.8)

Note: The numbers following the survey items demonstrate elementary and secondary novice teachers' index respectively.

Conclusions and Implications

This study examined common strengths and weaknesses in teacher preparation across 14 institutions including six liberal arts colleges. The results can be used to help all teacher preparation programs recognize common challenges and successes and can lead to program improvement. With a few notable exceptions, the 14 teacher preparation programs overall did especially well in the broad categories of instructional practices and learning environment.

In general, the greatest need for improvement for elementary and secondary teacher candidates and novice teachers across 14 universities is in the category of *Diverse Learners* and it includes differentiation across a variety of learner needs (mental health, ELL, G & T, IEPs/504). It should be noted that there are nine individual items within *Diverse Learners* and the four lowest item scores for the whole survey are found within this category. Students across 14 institutions felt least prepared to meet the needs of students related to mental health and trauma. Preparing teachers for meeting the needs of students who present mental health and trauma issues has emerged more recently and it is an area of limited research. Consistent with past research and despite efforts over the past decades to improve teacher preparation, beginning teachers still feel relatively unprepared to differentiate learning for their Gifted & Talented students, their ELLs and students with IEPs.

In addition, the results point to a need to focus on communication and collaboration with parents, as well as the use of technology. Parent Communication is critical to student achievement and teacher candidates and novice teachers are seeking more preparation to do this well. Even though this generation of teachers has grown up in a digital environment, they do not feel well prepared to translate those experiences into effective classroom instruction. The carryover of differentiation needs, parent communication and technology challenges into the first year of teaching reinforces the need for coordination between the teacher education programs and school district induction to ensure continued attention and professional development related to very challenging classroom needs.

Limitations

This study identified program needs based on the teacher candidates' and novice teachers' perception of their own preparation. The Exit and TTS rely on self reporting from the teacher candidates/novice teachers and interpretation of the results should reflect the limitations of that kind of data. The 14 universities that participated in the study are part of a consortium of schools focused on improving teacher preparation. All are located within three Midwestern states and they include a mix of public and private colleges, large and small. The inclusion of six private colleges in this study adds relevance and significance for independent liberal arts universities, but restrictions within the consortium did not allow for disaggregation and comparison of the survey data. Generalization beyond the 14 institutions should take into account the composition of the consortium and its focus. Comparisons between the Exit Survey and TTS should be done with caution due to the fact that the Exit Survey included all teacher candidates and the TTS data analyzed in this study only included those employed full time or part time in an educational setting.

Suggestions for Further Research

The clustering of concerns in the broad category of the *Diverse Learners* points to a need for further research. Despite decades of research, progress has been slow in preparing teacher candidates to meet the needs of students with special needs, G & T students and ELLs. Further research into the effectiveness and confidence of experienced teachers in addressing these needs is warranted.

Preparation for student needs related to mental health and trauma is an area of limited research and much more is needed to guide programs. The Common Metrics survey questions did not distinguish between mental health and trauma and having separate items may better inform teacher preparation programs. Given the complex challenges of meeting all learner needs, more research on effective teacher collaboration with specialists and paraprofessionals could benefit pre-service and in-service teachers.

Teacher candidates and novice teachers did not identify differentiating for racially and culturally diverse classrooms as an area of need, yet this is repeatedly identified within the education literature. Further research should explore this contradiction between the perception of teacher candidates and novice teachers and the needs identified by districts and the profession. This study did not disaggregate results based on race and ethnicity and it would be worthwhile to do that to examine whether non-white teacher candidates experience teacher preparation and induction differently than white teacher candidates.

Classroom management has often been identified as a major challenge for novice teachers, but it did not emerge here near the top of concerns. What did emerge was that teacher candidates feel less confident about students taking ownership of their learning (self-assessment) and behavior (self-regulation). This could be another fertile area for more research.

The surveys used in this research are available to institutions through the Network for Excellence in Teaching (NExT). Any individuals or institutions wishing to replicate or extend the study should contact NExT. For more information about the surveys and how to become an affiliate with NExT, see https://www.nexteachers.org/ and select "Contact Us".

Summary

Although teacher candidates and novice teachers feel well prepared overall, the results of this study point to specific areas of improvement across teacher preparation programs. In particular, teacher preparation programs should strive to improve the preparation of pre-service teachers related to the diverse needs of the classroom, including mental health, Gifted & Talented students, ELLs and students with IEPs. Parent communication skills and strategies and incorporating digital technology into the classroom were additional areas of need. Those areas provide opportunities for collaboration across programs, as well as opportunities for individual program improvement. They also provide direction for district staff development and teacher induction programs to aid novice teachers in areas they feel least confident.

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Appendix A
Focus of Individual Items in 2015–2016 Exit Survey and 2016–2017 TTS

Broad Category Instructional Practice: The Ability to:

.....1. Effectively teach subject matter.
.....2. Align teaching strategies with learning goals.
.....3. Engage students with subject matter from multiple perspectives.
.....4. Incorporate students' prior knowledge in planning instruction.
.....5. Develop long-range instructional plans.
.....6. Adapt instruction to meet learner needs.
.....7. Design lessons with clear learning outcomes.
.....8. Create assessments that align with learning outcomes.
.....9. Provide effective feedback.
....10. Involve students in self-assessment.
....11. Effectively use formative and summative assessments.
....12. Knowledge of reliability and validity in assessment.
....13. Analyze assessments to identify learning needs.
....14. Differentiate assessments.
....15. Use digital technologies to attain learning goals.
....16. Use a variety of technologies to support student learning.
....17. Promote critical thinking in students.
....18. Promote student problem solving skills.
....19. Relate interdisciplinary themes to subject matter.
....20. Access resources that help promote global awareness and understanding.
....21. Teach students to analyze evidence and reach a logical conclusion.

Broad Category Diverse Learners: The Ability to:

.....1. Effectively teach students from culturally diverse backgrounds.
.... 2. Differentiate across the spectrum of learning needs.
.....3. Differentiate based on student's developmental level.
.... 4. Differentiate based on socioeconomic status.
.....5. Differentiate for Special Education students.

.... 6. Differentiate based on mental health needs.
.....7. Differentiate for gifted and talented students.
.... 8. Differentiate for English-language learners.
.....9. Access resources to support students with diverse needs.

Broad Category Learning Environment: The Ability to:
.....1. Convey expectations for student behavior.
.... 2. Convey ideas and information to students.
.....3. Relate content to students' lives.
.... 4. Coordinate students working together to learn.
.....5. Create an engaging classroom environment.
.... 6. Effectively respond to student behavior.
.....7. Foster an environment where differences are respected.
.... 8. Help students self-regulate behavior.
.....9. Organize the physical environment to support learning.

Broad Category Professionalism: The Ability to:
.....1. Identify opportunities for professional growth.
.... 2. Identify professional research and resources to enhance teaching and learning.
.....3. Partner with parents and guardians to support student success.
.... 4. Collaborate with other teachers to increase student achievement.
.....5. Act on peer feedback for professional growth.
.... 6. Understand and uphold laws defining student rights and teacher responsibilities.
.....7. Advocate for all learners.

A Recursive Loop in Teacher Socialization: Extending and Improving Teacher Education Curriculum

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Abstract

This paper explores how a teacher preparation program in a liberal arts institution built upon the foundations of dialogic, relational pedagogy utilizes strong alumni connections to improve teacher education curriculum and support preservice, inservice, and teacher educators as they work to teach against the grain. Best visualized as an infinity symbol, we describe the ways our recursive mentoring loop supports ongoing, fluid collaborations between PK–12 schools and our teacher preparation program and discuss how maintaining and nurturing relationships with alumni experiencing new teacher socialization in many school contexts is mutually beneficial in supporting both preservice and inservice teacher development. We share three case studies of value-added experiences in which our alumni engaged as we reimagined the traditional temporal boundaries of teacher education. The recursive mentoring process invites each party to see how one's aspirational education philosophy can be maintained even when it might go against the grain in a given school context. These relational, dialogic spaces foster teacher agency and collaborative problem-solving in schools and spaces of higher education.

Keywords: teacher socialization, mentoring, dialogic and relational pedagogy

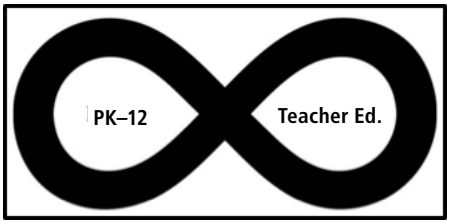
Introduction

In the fall of 2019, our College of Education at Butler University welcomed the review team for our CAEP Accreditation visit. As we underwent the self-study process and worked to document and make visible our compilation of programmatic improvements to external reviewers for this cycle, we noticed a consistent theme. Nearly all of our teacher preparation programmatic improvements were directly connected to working closely and directly with recent program alumni as they navigated the early stages of their inservice teaching careers. This pattern did not arise serendipitously; rather, the pattern reflected the intentional development of a dialogic, relational ethos within our College of Education.

Best visualized as an infinity symbol *(Figure 1*), our pedagogical approach to teaching and mentoring supports ongoing, fluid collaborations and conversations between PK–12 schools and our teacher education program. The loop is initiated in the teacher preparation program when faculty and preservice teachers establish strong relationships, and it crystallizes as we collectively maximize those existing relationships beyond graduation from the program. The recursive loop stands in contrast to unidirectional or transactional examples of teacher education programs asking graduates to give of their time or classroom space to host preservice teachers with little in return except perhaps a few professional growth points and a note of thanks. It also stands in contrast to the unidirectional, transactional examples of novice teachers participating in one-off professional development workshops hoping the experts might have a solution to a problem the teacher is trying to solve. The recursive, circular motion of a loop that holds teacher education faculty and alumni together allows for the ideas and tensions of one educational space to influence the other and vice versa. As we collaboratively explore possibilities within both spaces, we address the theory-practice gap by engaging in a process that allows theory to inform practice and practice to inform theory. Additionally, this approach invites all engaged in those relationships—preservice, inservice, and teacher educators—into personal and professional transformation as the continuous dialogue between educational spaces

encourages all educators to maintain the mindset of a novice. This novice mindset is rooted in a view of learning as critical reflection and an act of consciousness-raising (Dirx, 1998) where we are all on our way and in the process of becoming more "wide awake" teachers (Greene, 1995) immersed in creative, relational, intellectual and moral work. Taken all together, this dialogic, relational approach and the resulting recursive loop offers models for teacher education and teacher socialization that are not bound by the temporal constraints of the teacher preparation program.

Figure 1.
Recursive Loop Model



In this paper, we explore the ways this recursive loop works in our independent liberal arts setting and the ways relational, dialogic pedagogy allows us to reimagine the occupational socialization of teachers and the traditional, temporal boundaries of teacher education. We find that this model of teacher socialization empowers novice teachers, university faculty, and our current cohorts of preservice teachers to push one another further and to go against the grain as the recursive loop fosters teacher agency and collaborative problem-solving in schools and spaces of teacher education.

Context

Historically, the occupational socialization of teachers has been perceived as an isolated process and one that "washes out" the influence of teacher preparation (Britzman, 1986; Labaree, 2004; Lortie, 1975, Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). While these ideas about teacher socialization extend back several decades, the concepts embedded within the foundational literature are worthy of continued investigation given the ways the findings persist

even as schools change and sociopolitical contexts shift. One theme which remains relevant is that once preservice teachers graduate from their preparation programs and encounter tensions in their work as novice teachers, they often feel as though they are left to "sink or swim" (Britzman, 2003; Lortie, 1975). As faculty in Butler University's College of Education, we offer a different vision of teacher socialization where we utilize the relational assets of our small, independent liberal arts institution to counter the individualistic sink-or-swim binary.

We share this model for teacher socialization and examples of the recursive loop in action from our roles as agents within and beneficiaries of this recursive loop. While we are currently teacher educators within Butler University's College of Education, we both experienced the recursive loop from a variety of perspectives. Shelly is an associate professor in the College of Education, the curriculum coordinator for the college, a graduate of Butler's Masters in Effective Teaching and Leadership program, and a former middle school teacher. Michelle is an adjunct faculty member in the College of Education, a graduate of the Middle/Secondary English Education and Masters in Effective Teaching and Leadership programs, and a former middle school teacher. Over the years—in our roles as middle school teachers, graduate students, teacher educators, and researchers—we found ourselves entering the ongoing conversation around teacher socialization as we experienced and observed the ways novice teachers encounter tensions that they do not feel prepared to address or lack the support within their school context to address. As graduates and faculty of Butler's College of Education, we recognize the ways a relational, dialogic ethos fosters collaborations that support and empower novice teachers as they navigate those tensions and leads to improvements to our programs within the College of Education.

Conceptual Lens

Aligned with the core purposes of a liberal arts education, our teacher education program concerns itself with the development of the individual and of her/his critical thinking abilities in the lifelong pursuit of a personally meaningful vocational path.

The theoretical foundation driving our pedagogical approach to teacher education in our small liberal arts setting derives from dialogic, relational epistemologies, as well as systematic teacher inquiry. Coupled together, these core aspects of the recursive loop empower teachers of all levels of experience and expertise to go against the grain as they encourage collaborative problem-solving within PK–12 schools and colleges of education.

Dialogic, Relational Epistemologies

In order to create space for transformative learning to take place, our program chooses a relational, dialogic approach to pedagogy with strong ties to social, feminist epistemology and an ethic of care (Lysaker & Furuness, 2012; Noddings, 2005; Thayer-Bacon, 1997). This view of teaching and learning is grounded in the belief that all learning comes from our need for social connection and knowledge is "something people develop as they have experiences with each other and the world around them" (Thayer-Bacon, 1997, p. 245). To intentionally engage in relational, dialogic pedagogy is to act in ways that maximize the fact that we are naturally in relation with others and to be receptive and give value to others' ideas, tensions, and perceived possibilities. Implied in this approach is the belief that students' (and alumni's) knowledge and experience are equally important and brought directly into the curriculum through ongoing opportunities for dialogue.

Rather than positioning university faculty as the sole experts or privileging university-based knowledge, our relational, dialogic epistemology fosters shared meaning making between PK–12 schools and our College of Education. This approach is rooted in the understanding that power is "constructed and negotiated by all" (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002, p. 55), and it encourages the sharing of power where labels are not permanent and the relationship of the carer and cared-for shifts with context. Through this approach, mentoring becomes a two-way street. As Palmer (2018) wrote, mentoring "is a mutuality in which two people evoke the potentials in each other…. [M]entoring gives us a chance to welcome one another into a relationship that honors our vulnerability and our need for others" (p. 35). By cultivating an ethos of "power

with" through continued dialogue and care for one another, we create fluid collaborations that continue even upon a preservice teacher's graduation from the program. These relationships are what allow the recursive loop to take shape and encourage transformations across time and educational spaces.

Teacher Agency and Inquiry

Our dialogic, relational epistemology positions preservice and inservice teachers as holders, users, and producers of knowledge. This view of teacher-as-agent supports Lytle and Cochran-Smith's (1992) idea that "teachers are among those with the authority to know" (p. 447) and Craig's (2010) understanding that what teachers "reflect on, build theories about, view as significant, negotiate meanings for, and act upon automatically informs their pedagogical interactions with students" (p. 868). For these reasons, it is crucial that teachers are a part of conversations about improving education for all students—including future preservice teachers—and those conversations must be frequent, consistent and sustained over time. Again, this offers a contrast to unidirectional "conversations" where teacher preparation programs only tap into the expertise of inservice teachers to host preservice teachers' field experiences.

Since the early 1990's, teacher research advocates such as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) called for "systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers, [which] makes accessible some of the expertise of teachers and provides both the university and school communities with unique perspectives on teaching and learning" (p. 1). While "recursive loop" is the term we are using to label the theme that emerged from alumni contributing to our programmatic improvements, each of those improvements stemmed from systematic, intentional inquiry with and by teachers. Such inquiries have "particular potential for transforming the university-generated knowledge base" (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p. 465) as they attend to the relationship between theory and practice by viewing knowledge in direct relation to action. We add that such inquiries and collaborations between teachers and colleges of education also have particular potential for transforming PK–12 and teacher education curricula as the exchange of ideas

and inquiries support preservice, inservice, and teacher educators in going against the grain. We see this potential especially in the context of smaller liberal arts teacher education programs where relationships and personalization are hallmarks. If the traditional process and product of occupational socialization teaches the educator to go with the flow, then the recursive loop is particularly important to helping educators turn the tide.

"Teaching Against the Grain" in both PK–12 and Colleges of Education

When teacher socialization takes the form of an isolated, individualistic process, it often results in the reproduction of a teacher's institutional biography and apprenticeship of observation as teachers tend to replicate the familiar even though it might not be equitable, engaging, or worthwhile for their own students (Britzman, 1986; Lortie, 1975). Additionally, even when novice teachers try to put into action all they know and believe about teaching and learning out in the "real world," they are not always met with enthusiastic support, once again leading to reproduction instead of transformation. For these reasons, we adopt a critical approach to teacher socialization (Zeichner & Gore, 1990) as the relational, dialogic pedagogy we employ in our College of Education emphasizes the need for raising one's own level of personal awareness about our participation in systems and our place within those. These consciousness-raising and systemic transformations require us to collaboratively unpack and respond to the tensions our graduates experience as they assume full responsibility within classrooms of their own, as well as the tensions we continue to encounter as teacher educators.

We recognize that becoming and being a teacher is complex, intricate work that requires ongoing examination of one's beliefs and practices (Ball & Forzani, 2009). That work sometimes requires going against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Rather than falling prey to the myths that everything depends on the individual teacher and teachers are self-made (Britzman, 1986), our intentional relational, dialogic pedagogy and the resulting recursive loop supports collaborative problem solving in spaces of PK–12 and teacher education as we challenge one another

to move from the position of an "instrumental knower" who sees teaching as fixed processes of black-and-white rules and sociopolitical forces as separate from oneself to the position of a "self-authoring knower" who engages in critical reflection and seeks to understand and shape the sociopolitical forces influencing our work (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). This collaboration generates agency. These relationships, in turn, function as critical friendships in that they support us in unpacking our tensions and working to challenge and change "beliefs, practices, or assumptions which inhibit effective teaching" (Adams & Mix, 2014, p. 39). As a result, all members of these relationships are better able to teach against the grain as we continuously (re)conceptualize and transform the ways we think, know, feel, and act like teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2008).

The Recursive Loop in Practice

To illustrate the ways dialogic, relational pedagogy can lead to transformative work in PK–12 schools and colleges of education, we offer the following three case studies as examples of the recursive loop in action. These examples capture ways Butler's College of Education leverages relationships as a vital resource to improve preservice teacher education and PK–12 students' education as a challenge to the myths that suggest the teacher socialization process must happen in isolation.

As mentioned in the introduction, Butler's College of Education—which graduates approximately 40-45 elementary and 20-25 middle-secondary candidates each year—welcomed an accreditation review team in the fall of 2019. The self-study that proceeded the visit required the data collection to document programmatic improvements made between accreditation visits. The case studies offered in this paper were selected in part because the work with these teachers led to a specific documented program improvement highlighted in our CAEP review. In addition, these three models also held something else in common. Each example features a teacher who completed both her undergraduate and master's degree in our program and whose thesis work was supported by the co-author. These specific cases serve to provide illustrative support and explanation our recursive loop model.

Michelle: From Student to Teacher and Back Again (and Again)

We begin with an example of the ways the co-authors participate as agents in the recursive loop. As a first-year English language arts teacher, Michelle encountered tensions when trying to put her philosophical beliefs about teaching and learning into practice in a public middle school classroom. Her professors' intentional emphasis on relational, dialogic teaching throughout her undergraduate years created a space where Michelle felt comfortable turning back toward her existing relationships in Butler's College of Education in hopes of getting the support she desired to push back gently but firmly against a curriculum that she knew did not serve the students in her classroom. While Michelle knew this based on her teacher preparation, she was also being reminded at every turn that as a new teacher, she still had a lot to learn. Michelle was looking to go against the grain. While the initial entry point was a novice alumna reaching out to her teacher preparation program for support, the outcome took the shape of a recursive loop. The loop started with faculty supporting Michelle primarily through helping her construct a research-based rationale supporting an approach to curriculum design more aligned with her beliefs while still achieving the desired results. The loop changed direction when Michelle's very real classroom tension provided the provocation for preservice teachers and faculty to engage alongside her.

The main tension Michelle encountered as a novice teacher was the disconnect between the "teacher proof" and "college ready" curriculum that her school district used in her language arts context and her knowledge of the possibilities for teachers as creators of developmentally appropriate, relevant, and engaging curriculum. As Michelle turned toward her relationship with a former professor (and co-author)—Shelly—for support, they collectively found ways to better identify, explain, and respond to this tension.[1] Simultaneously, through this

[1]For more information, see Rupenthal, M.A., & Furuness, S. (2020). Middle school curriculum aimed at developing agents of change. *Middle School Journal, 51*(1), 5–11.

relational, dialogic work, Michelle and Shelly were able to explore other implications of this tension as it relates to how we prepare teachers.

This collaborative work built upon a decade-old relationship that began forming in 2010 when Michelle first started her teacher preparation program and Shelly was a new tenure-track faculty member led us to ask the question: Is it possible to develop a teacher education curriculum that removed the tension between accountability to academic demands and developmentally responsive practices? By co-investigating this tension, we were able to take steps to go against the grain in two different (yet interconnected) educational spaces. At the middle school level, this involved Michelle taking on the role of a teacher leader to encourage a redesign of English language arts curriculum at the school and district levels, utilizing her collaboration with Shelly as a springboard for conversations with her colleagues, as well as school and district administrators. For the teacher education curriculum, this involved making curricular changes to preservice methods courses to directly broach this tension with preservice teachers and imagining (and creating) a new space where novice teachers' tensions can be explored: a virtual professional learning community collaboratively constructed and accessible to both preservice and practicing teachers.

Amanda: Filling the Gaps between Teacher Preparation Methods Courses and Classroom Practice

The next example we offer seeks to illuminate the expansive nature of the recursive loop and the abundant possibilities for deep and wide connections between teacher preparation faculty and the alumni serving in PK–12 schools. Like co-author Michelle, Amanda is an alumna of both the undergraduate and graduate program at Butler University's College of Education. Amanda was an excellent preservice teacher and was hired directly into the district where she completed her student teaching. It is a district with which Butler University's College of Education has a formal partnership agreement for clinical experience. During her third year of teaching high school mathematics in 2015, Amanda engaged in systematic inquiry conducting her

thesis research, which co-author Shelly supervised. As part of her inquiry, Amanda developed a curriculum for a mathematics methods course based on gaps she knew existed from her own teacher preparation. In addition to hosting and mentoring a Butler preservice teacher, she used her prep period once a week to provide an hour-long workshop to all the College of Education secondary mathematics education candidates completing clinical experience in her department. The workshop curriculum focused specifically on methods for teaching complex mathematics. Her work as a practicing teacher, supported by her continued graduate studies, was instrumental in helping our program to solve a dilemma that many teacher preparation programs in small liberal arts institutions face: how to provide content-specific methods across each discipline with limited resources or limited faculty expertise in each discipline. Amanda's work represents a model of teacher leadership and teacher research that informs and drives teacher preparation curriculum. Her work supports a cycle, a recursive looping, of professional development benefiting both preservice and inservice teachers and stands as a model other small programs could implement. As she mentored preservice teachers from her alma mater where she continued to be mentored and supported, she simultaneously modeled for them how to continue professional growth and learning beyond graduation.

Amanda's willingness to explore the gaps in her preparation and to build bridges across those divides between the mathematics department of our College of Liberal Arts and the College of Education has become a blueprint. She helped us find productive, specific entry points into conversations that connect liberal arts and professional teacher preparation. Amanda's initial work in developing the mathematics-methods workshop also became the blueprint to expand those alumni-led, content-specific methods workshops. In 2016, based on this innovative work with the potential for growth, Butler University's College of Education became the first Indiana school to be invited to present at a Teach to Lead Summit hosted by the U.S. Department of Education, the goal of which is to develop and amplify the work of teacher leaders. With Amanda's model and support, Shelly partnered with alumni in the English and Social Studies departments to implement similar

workshops. This work has continued to grow as evidenced by the initial example provided in this section resulting in the creation of a virtual professional learning community. This recursive loop is expansive in that a single tension may be the impetus for the collaboration, but when the tension is addressed from a collaborative, relational space inviting more collaborators in and widening the loop becomes a safe and energizing approach to solving problems of practice. In this recursive loop where strong, supportive relationships are central, both sides can acknowledge gaps and tensions from a place of curiosity and solution-finding, not accusation or fault finding.

Rebecca: Exploring Educator Identities and Vocation Extending Beyond the Classroom

While it is possible (and joyful) to provide many more examples, this final example offers a view of the recursive loop as an extension of our broader mission as a teacher preparation program within a liberal arts tradition. That is to say, our teacher education program concerns itself with the development of the individual and of her lifelong pursuit of a personally meaningful vocational path. Just like Michelle and Amanda, Rebecca is also an alumna of both our undergraduate and graduate programs. And just as in the examples above, a tension in the classroom and relationships fostered during teacher preparation led Rebecca back to Butler's College of Education and Butler faculty back into the PK–12 classroom space occupied by a graduate. Rebecca's tension as an elementary educator teaching in a content-specific class within an intermediate school context coupled with her school's early adoption of e-learning days helped the teacher preparation program redesign a middle-school methods course to prepare preservice teachers for e-learning. That collaboration was the basis for a chapter in a textbook on teaching middle school in a virtual setting[2]. However, as life happened and her family grew, Rebecca

[2]Chapter appears in Furuness, S. (2018). Preparing teachers for the virtual middle level classroom. In B. B. Eisenbach and P. Greathouse (Eds.), *The online classroom: Resources for effective middle level virtual education.* Information Age Publishing.

decided to leave the classroom, but that didn't change her identity as a teacher. It also did not break or interrupt the recursive loop. Instead, it created the opportunity to begin a new dialogue with preservice teachers. Instead of hosting preservice teachers in her classroom, Rebecca now mentors preservice educators through her role as a guest teacher in our introductory course "Exploring Educator Identities." Rebecca shares the ways in which her teacher preparation and classroom teaching experiences have been instrumental in her successful transition to running her own wellness-coaching and consulting business. Rebecca has continued to help preservice teachers understand how teacher preparation can support them in finding teaching opportunities beyond the traditional classroom.

Rather than viewing Rebecca's departure from the classroom as a failure of teacher education in its ability to prepare teachers to persist in the classroom for an entire career life cycle, Rebecca's continued contribution to teacher education provides another tangible example to preservice teachers that navigating professional tensions in isolation is not necessary. The intentional relational, dialogic pedagogy and the resulting recursive loop supports lifelong learners as we challenge one another to continuously move toward "self-authoring knower" engaged in critical reflection. This recursive loop reveals to the preservice teacher that our relational, dialogic pedagogy is a core commitment. The relationship is not transactional or unidirectional. It is not dependent upon Rebecca being a teacher and providing a classroom to host preservice teachers in order to receive support from the faculty. The relationship is transformative. As each person in the relationship changes, so does the nature of the relationship and the needs and gifts each person brings to it. The relationship is of value by itself. The unbroken recursive loop Rebecca helps us reveal is our commitment to the relationships we are building.

Implications for Teacher Preparation

As these examples illustrate, the recursive loop between our College of Education and alumni encourages us to reimagine what is possible in a variety of educational spaces. By maximizing the ways we learn in relation to one another and honoring all

forms of experience and expertise, we are better able to teach against the grain as the continued critical friendships support educators in moments where it might be tempting to consciously or unconsciously reproduce an inequitable or ineffective status quo. This intentional pedagogical approach surfaces the real-life tensions of practicing classroom teachers and creates opportunities for preservice, inservice, and teacher education faculty to explore those tensions as a community of learners rather than in isolation. As our three case studies illustrate, the recursive loop supported novice teachers as they went against the grain to challenge ineffective K–12 curricula, design more cohesive methods coursework given structural hurdles, and address a gap in teacher preparation for digital learning. Through these collaborations, faculty and inservice teachers work as co-learners who collaboratively scaffold developmentally appropriate support for the socialization of preservice teachers. In turn, preservice teachers begin to conceptualize how they too can teach against the grain when they encounter tensions in their own teaching as they see models of educators engaged in critical reflection and enter the recursive loop themselves as graduates. When considered holistically, this recursive loop builds the capacity of educators across the board. This loop costs nothing to implement and aligns well with the relational, personalized orientation that is a strength of small independent liberal arts institutions.

This work helps us see and understand that the curriculum of teacher education, no matter how strong, by itself is incomplete. Teachers of all levels of experience and expertise encounter tensions, especially when working to create schools as they could be as opposed to simply replicating schools as they currently exist. In this high-stakes, accountability-obsessed moment of our history, this recursive loop serves as a "value-added" proposition. It gives teacher education programs opportunities to continue to support teachers' development and socialization toward a program's stated mission and vision even after graduation while also improving the curricula for future preservice teachers. It disrupts the patterns of isolation historically associated with the occupational socialization of novice teachers and offers an alternative to the "washing out" of effects of teacher preparation. Teachers should be able to count

on their preparation programs to keep a light on for them and help them navigate the tensions they encounter in the field. As writer Anne Lamont (1994) says, "Lighthouses don't go running all over an island looking for boats to save; they just stand there shining" (p. 225). Teacher preparation programs, like lighthouses, guide boats coming and going—both preservice and inservice. Without the boats, the purpose of the lighthouse is unclear; without the lighthouse, the boats have a tougher time navigating the waters. While teachers are among those with the authority to know—extremely capable producers and users of knowledge—our recursive loop model offers support as teachers work to enter new, uncomfortable territories.

We acknowledge a potential criticism of relying so heavily on the relational, dialogic framework and upon alumni to shape teacher preparation curriculum is the potential for the dialogue to become an echo chamber. While some might say that our recursive loop simply allows us to hear our own ideas reflected back to us, we argue that the cyclical motion between PK–12 settings and our College of Education makes it so that we all are ever-evolving and learning. In other words, as our alumni circle back, they bring with them new ideas and experiences gained from working alongside their students and other educators in the field. Real teacher tensions and voices are amplified and addressed. These contributions both enrich and transform our College of Education, and such transformations would not be possible without our ongoing relationships with inservice teachers.

Conclusions

While our model of a recursive loop certainly brings more joy to the work as we build and maintain our relationships with graduates, our relational, dialogic approach most importantly leads us all in becoming more "wide awake" teachers (Greene, 1995) as we support one another in critical reflection and collaborative problem-solving. It improves the quality of the experience for preservice preparation by incorporating and amplifying practicing teachers' voices and expertise, and it improves PK–12 experiences by providing ongoing professional support to novice teachers, especially in places where novice teachers may not get

mentors (or may not get mentors who share the same concerns). Ultimately, the recursive loop models lifelong learning and disrupts notions of expertise, two factors that empower teachers to not simply go with the flow, but to also go against the grain when necessary.

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Teacher Candidates' Dispositions Toward English Learners: The Impact of Field Experiences

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Abstract

This article explores the experiences of seven elementary teacher candidates and their participation in varied field experiences during the last year of their teacher preparation program in response to the question: In what ways does a one-on-one tutoring practicum with an English Learner (EL) and a semester-long student teaching experience in a linguistically diverse classroom impact the dispositions of elementary teacher candidates and their efforts to support ELs in the mainstream classroom? As is characteristic of an interpretivist approach to a collective case study inquiry, data sources included three semi-structured interviews, a tutoring portfolio, several classroom observations, and various artifacts from the student teaching experience. The study confirmed the significant value of field experiences for teacher candidates, particularly as they were given opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with the EL students, practice planning and implementing effective learning experiences, and gain increased confidence in their ability to support ELs in their learning through critical reflection, feedback, and modeling. The study revealed the benefit of cross-cultural learning and second language proficiency for enhancing the dispositions of teacher candidates in preparation for working with ELs.

Keywords: teacher education, teacher candidates, dispositions, English learners, field experiences, linguistic diversity

Introduction

"I don't know what I'd do if a new student came to my classroom and didn't know how to speak any English!" (Donna, teacher candidate). "Is it possible for teacher ed. programs to offer practicums specific to EL classrooms?" (Lacey, teacher candidate).

These teacher candidates (TCs) shared these comments after participating in a Jigsaw activity during which they had discussed with their peers some articles on the topic of supporting readers who, for various reasons, are not reading on grade level. Their evident discomfort and inexperience with relating to English learners (ELs) in the mainstream elementary classroom is representative of the perceptions of most pre-service teachers (Samson & Collins, 2012), and even the majority of in-service teachers (Ross, 2014).

In 2000, 61% of K–12 public school students were white. By 2015, this percentage dropped to 49% (NCES, Feb. 2019). The percentage of K–12 students in U.S. public schools identified as English learners in 2016 was 9.6%, up from 8.1% in 2000 (NCES, May 2019). A language other than English is spoken in the homes of more than one in five students in this country (López, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2013). This is in contrast to the relative stagnation of white monolingual teacher candidates who continue to enter the profession. According to 2016 data reports (NCES, Feb. 2019), 80% of K–12 public school teachers are white. At 13%, few teachers, regardless of ethnicity, are proficient in a language other than English (Williams, Garcia, Connally, Cook & Dancy, 2016). Even though various programs throughout the U.S. have sought to address the unique needs of ELs (Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Jimenez Hernandez, 2012; Nutta, Mokhtari, & Strebel, 2012), including those instituted by both state and federal policies, the achievement gap for this growing number of students remains stable (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016). The benefits of bilingual education are many; however, less than five percent of all ELs enroll in these programs. The others are educated in mainstream classes with minimal supports from specially trained educators (Coady, Harper & de Jong, 2011). Based on a comparative study of both pre-service and in-service teachers and their beliefs about

teaching ELs, the majority of all participants felt insufficiently prepared to teach students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Polat, 2010). Furthermore, research provides evidence that teachers' attitudes and beliefs about students can significantly impact students' academic achievement (Walker-Dalhouse, Sanders, & Dalhouse, 2009). This compels our profession to consider how we can improve teacher preparation programs (TPPs) to better prepare general classroom teachers to more effectively work with linguistically diverse students. In particular, teacher candidates need more intentional and supported interaction with ELs as part of their teacher preparation program (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

In 2010, NCATE commissioned a panel of educators to prepare a report focused on the value of clinical practice in teacher education (NRC, 2010). The panel cited additional research to suggest that field experiences have significant potential to improve teacher preparation and the learning outcomes for P–12 students (NRC, 2010). The concept of transformation, as well as formation, is key to the purposes of educator preparation.

Providing opportunities for teacher candidates to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support all students in their learning, including ELs, is at the heart of the standards for effective teaching (CCSSO, 2011). The goal of this study was to get a closer look at how field experiences, which allow a teacher candidate to work closely with an EL in the school setting, can impact the formation of these skills and dispositions. Therefore, Mezirow's Transformation Theory, or Transformative Learning Theory (TLT), provides a helpful theoretical framework as a foundation for this study (1994, 1997). Mezirow (1997) describes transformation as a change in our frames of reference, or habits of the mind, initiated by an event or series of experiences, which lead to critical reflection of the assumptions that inform our beliefs and consequently impact our behaviors. In the context of educator preparation, providing teacher candidates with field experiences that allow them to develop personal relationships with ELs can be a critical part of their formation and potential

transformation as they begin to examine their own frames of reference, previously held beliefs about ELs, develop plans to provide equitable learning environments for the ELs, and make changes to their perspectives and practices.

This view of TLT also encompasses other theoretical frameworks that are important for understanding this study: Critical Race Theory (CRT), Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, and Ethic of Care Theory. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) raised awareness of the importance of CRT by advocating for an equitable education for all students. An understanding of race and equity is critical if teacher candidates are going to examine their own beliefs, experiences, and dispositions toward ELs. Equity for ELs in the school setting includes, in part, providing increased opportunities and choices for students and their families, holding high expectations for all students, providing the necessary supports and resources, and valuing biliteracy (Tung, 2013).

An equitable learning environment for ELs requires cultural responsiveness. In order for teachers to be culturally and linguistically responsive, Villegas and Lucas (as cited in Wallace & Brand, 2012) suggest that teachers must possess the following qualities: "sociocultural awareness, having an affirming view of the students; embracing constructivist views about teaching and learning; designing instruction that builds on what students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar; and being familiar with students' prior knowledge" (p. 347). Therefore, if preservice teachers are prepared to provide an equitable learning environment in their future classrooms, a critical component of CRT, they must identify the bias in their own attitudes and experiences to make strides toward developing these aforementioned qualities.

Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) focus on linguistically responsive teaching in their explanation of five essential understandings of ELs for classroom teachers. These understandings provide a critical lens for how pre-service classroom teachers are prepared to support the language development of the ELs in their future classrooms. Linguistically responsive teachers understand the second language acquisition process. They realize that first language (L1) skill development is critical

to learning English as a second language (L2). And based on social learning theory, these teachers are keenly aware of the important role that peer interaction plays in language learning.

Although Mezirow's explanation of transformative learning led to the development of the learner's autonomous thinking, it was not his intent that this process occurs apart from a social context (Mezirow, 1997). Often the development of social relationships helps learners to examine more carefully their own beliefs, and then through dialogue they consider alternative perspectives. The ethic of care theory considers the importance of a caring relationship between the teacher candidate and the EL student and the impact that it has on each one (Noddings, 2005). Nieto (2012) shares the opinion of many others in the field who believe that, "True teaching must be accompanied by a deep level of care in order for learning to take place" (p. 29). Effective teachers not only care about their students, they care for each student in a way that seeks to meet their individual needs while considering their unique interests and abilities.

Being a caring teacher means moving beyond a personality trait, and is evidenced in deliberate actions (Goldstein, 2002). This study aimed to gain a closer look at how the development of relationship between the teacher candidates and the ELs in their field experiences impacts the formation, or transformation, of their dispositions through self-examination and changes in practice.

Literature Review

Even though the debate continues regarding the best ways to teach ELs, there is general agreement that most grade-level and content area teachers are ill-prepared to meet the needs of students in their mainstream classrooms who are emergent bilinguals (Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Samson & Collins, 2012; Shreve, 2005). They express frustration with the inability to communicate effectively with students and their parents, and they lack the materials, information, and strategies to support ELs in their classroom. Although approximately nine of ten teachers in the U.S. have ELs in their classroom, the majority have had little, if any, specific training or professional development in

this area (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Hamaan & Reeves, 2013). The vast majority does not have proficiency in a language other than English. This combination has led to an ill-prepared teaching force that is working with an increasing number of ELs in their mainstream classrooms each year (Hamaan & Reeves, 2013).

Some would argue that strategies for teaching ELs are just good teaching practice for any diverse group of students, including graphic organizers, cooperative learning, and hands-on activities (de Jong & Harper, 2005). While these considerations support learning for all students, they do not address other unique needs of ELs. Greater teaching effectiveness requires an understanding of the process of acquiring a second language; the incorporation of native language and culture as a medium for learning English and core content; understanding the difference between conversational English proficiency and academic language proficiency (García & Kleifgen, 2010); the incorporation of explicit instruction to support reading and writing development; and an understanding of students' background knowledge and experiences as impacted by their native culture (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016).

Although there is some benefit from revised coursework to help TCs prepare to work with ELs, greater results have come from participation in field experiences targeting ELs as part of their preparation (Correll, 2016; Fitts & Gross, 2012; Hutchinson, 2011; Pappamihiel, 2007). This is especially true when the teacher candidate is given the opportunity to develop a relationship with an EL student, often times dispelling the TCs' preconceived ideas about ELs as deficient students. Personal interactions with ELs can also expand and correct TC's limited or erroneous perceptions of these students as having similar backgrounds and characteristics, when in reality ELs represent a wide variety of languages, ethnicities, skill development, prior knowledge, and external factors.

Field experiences, as part of teacher preparation, vary greatly. Consideration of the opportunities that teacher candidates have to work with students in the local K–12 schools is one way to assess the quality of a teacher preparation program. While varied field

experiences can be a good indicator of a quality program, many teacher educators are quick to note that not all field experiences are created equally. In their study of the impact of field experiences on preservice teachers' attitudes toward ELs, Wiggins, Follo and Eberly (2007) pointed out that many field experiences are too brief and often relegate the teacher candidate, or practicum student, to the role of observer in the back of the room. The TC needs to have opportunities to apply what they are learning in their methods courses, while also engaging in focused reflections with the mentor teacher and course instructor, for field experiences to be effective (Daniel, 2014; Wiggins et al., 2007).

What is lacking within the literature is a more in-depth understanding of the transformative learning that takes place when a teacher candidate is given the opportunity to work with ELs and is able to apply theory to practice. Beyond completing hours for a required field experience and responding to an attitude survey regarding multicultural education (Fehr & Agnello, 2012), the field of teacher education is in need of more qualitative research that allows the participants to provide us with an insider's perspective of the value of critical reflection regarding the beliefs and dispositions that guide, or perhaps transform, their relationships with ELs (deJong, Harper, & Coady, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 2018). The purpose of the study that is the focus of this article is to add to our understanding of how TCs adjust their dispositions regarding ELs and develop an increased sense of preparedness for working with these students in the mainstream elementary classroom as a result of field experiences as a part of their preparation.

Methodology

In keeping with the purpose of this study, the methodology was characteristic of a qualitative approach to research. This took the form of a collective case study of seven elementary teacher candidates and their experiences of relating to ELs in a couple of contexts during their final year in program: first, through a one-on-one tutoring practicum as part of a larger literacy-focused field experience; and second, working with ELs over the course of the student teaching semester which involved English and content learning in a mainstream classroom. With the goal of providing

opportunity for the case study participants to reflect critically on their own knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding ELs, data sources included interview transcripts, written reflections, field observations, lesson plans, and a couple other practicum related artifacts and documents.

All data sources were coded and analyzed using a process of highlighting and sticky notes that resulted in the identification of four categorical themes: aspects of the participant's self-identity, their perspective of ELs as people and as learners, their efforts to apply strategies and techniques to support ELs in their learning, and comments related to the participant's perceived ability and comfort level when working with ELs. An additional round of selective coding (Saldaña, 2016) led to the creation of a matrix for each participant (Maxwell, 2013). Constant comparative analysis throughout the duration of the study, and triangulation of the varied data sources, provided the basis for the resulting discussion and recommendations.

Participants

Qualitative analysis provided insight into the experiences of teacher candidates as they interacted with ELs in varied educational contexts. Unlike quantitative studies that seek to include a large number of participants for the purpose of generalizing the results, the goal of this qualitative study was to delve more deeply into the thoughts and experiences of a few individuals to analyze particular themes and understandings to help inform future practice (Creswell, 2008). As mentioned previously, the purposeful sampling of participants allowed for the analysis of varied perspectives and experiences to better inform the study.

All participants completed similar coursework, including Liberal Arts requirements, elementary methods courses, one diversity course, and four previous field experiences. The 20-hour one-on-one tutoring practicum was completed simultaneously with a 40-hour practicum with a focus on literacy instruction in the regular elementary classroom.

Table 1
Characteristics of Each Participant

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Linguistic Background	Educational Background	Cross-Cultural Experiences
Lily	F	Latina	L1-Spanish L2-English	K–3 public school in El Salvador	Lived first 8 years in El Salvador; since then in U.S.
Ethan	M	White	L1-English Intermed. Spanish Beginner German	K–12 public	Lived 1 yr. in Honduras as pre-schooler. Lived and studied in Europe 3 months in college
Evelyn	F	White	L1-English Beginner Spanish and Arabic	K–8 public 9–12 private	Lived and studied in Middle East 3 months in college
Sophia	F	African-American	L1-English Intermediate Spanish	PK–2 private 3–12 public	Lived and studied in Guatemala 3 months in college
Abigail	F	White	L1-English Beginner Spanish	K–12 private	Lived and studied in Myanmar 6 weeks in college
Emma	F	Asian-American	L1-English Beginner Spanish & Arabic	K–12 public	Lived and studied in Middle East 3 months in college
Olivia	F	White	L1-English Beginner Spanish	K–12 public	Vacation in Costa Rica; Studied 3 weeks on Navajo reserve-Arizona

Thematic Findings

Four themes emerged from the collection of cases which help to understand factors that influenced the dispositions of these teacher candidates regarding ELs as identified in the primary research question that guided this study. These themes are enveloped in the importance of prior knowledge and experience of the teacher candidate, building personal relationships with the ELs, opportunities for practical application of EL strategies, and reflection and feedback regarding those experiences.

Prior Knowledge and Experience

Several factors influenced the candidates' previous perceptions of ELs, ideas for how to support ELs in their learning, and their perceived effectiveness or comfort level for applying that support: prior knowledge of, and experience with, languages other than English; having personal cross-cultural experience; and previous coursework and practical experiences with at least minimal mention of, or opportunity for, supporting ELs in the classroom setting. It became apparent during the course of this study that this theme and related subthemes had a significant impact on many of the other learning experiences that were a part of this study, as processed by each participant.

During the first interview, each participant talked about some experience with studying a second or third language for at least one year during middle or high school, as well as another semester or more in college. For Lily, this second language was English, and she served as the single participant whose first language was not English. For the other six participants, at least one of their language experiences included Spanish. Most participants described those experiences as having a minimal impact on their learning. In contrast, Lily talked at length about her experiences of learning English as a second language and the positive influence of her first ESL teacher. Throughout the study, Lily referenced Ms. Madison as someone who made learning fun, who took a personal interest in her, and who modeled effective strategies for learning English that Lily drew upon in each of her practicum experiences with ELs.

Much more profound than studying another language in the context of a U.S. school was time spent living or studying in a cross-cultural setting. For six participants, this meant spending at least six weeks in one or more other countries. Emma, Evelyn, and Sophia each provided some description during the first interview of their semester-long cross-cultural study experience. The first two spent nearly a month studying Arabic while living with a host family in Palestine, and Sophia had a similar experience studying Spanish in Guatemala. All three of them spoke of the increased value of this opportunity to learn another language in a context where that is the majority language and where they were

"forced" to practice what they learned each day with members of their host family. Each one also mentioned a range of emotions including frustration and feeling overwhelmed, to personal satisfaction when reflecting on their growth.

Building Personal Relationships

The importance of building caring relationships and creating a safe learning environment was a second theme. Each participant spoke of relationships as foundational to learning. This was evident in three particular dimensions: the impact that the relationship had on the teacher candidate's perception of ELs; the teacher candidate's perception of how the relationship affected the ELs; and the impact of the relationship on the teacher candidate's pedagogical decisions and perceived effectiveness.

In the first interview, each participant made comments that reflected their value of relationship-building when they considered their future work with ELs. Ethan mentioned the importance of building a trusting relationship with ELs during those first few days so that they are assured that everything will be okay even if it is really hard at first. He recommended building a friendship with each EL around common interests and then doing what you can to incorporate those interests into the learning experience, while also emphasizing that this is a reciprocal relationship. Sophia and Evelyn echoed this sentiment of creating a relationship as co-learners: "We're all in this space. We're all learners" (Sophia). "Let's learn together" (Evelyn).

Olivia, Evelyn, and Lily mentioned the importance of creating a safe learning environment as one way to establish a positive relationship with ELs, including setting clear expectations for how to treat one another with respect (Olivia). Other components of this are creating an environment that is welcoming and non-judgmental (Evelyn) and where students are not afraid to make mistakes (Lily). Abigail, Emma, and Sophia commented on the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment—wanting the EL students to be in the regular classroom so they can participate in activities with their peers and so they feel like an equally valuable part of the class, "not just like the new kid that doesn't understand anything" (Abigail).

Olivia and Emma acknowledged that different language backgrounds can make relationship-building challenging, requiring more effort and initiative on the part of the teacher. Emma said that it is important to help other students overcome a perceived language barrier to make their EL peers feel welcome in the classroom. Lily emphasized that building these relationships will take time, and therefore it is important to make it a priority each day.

Several participants commented on how the tutoring experience with one EL student in particular broadened some of their previous perceptions about ELs in general. Several participants imagined ELs to all be at beginning stages of English development and therefore were surprised with the amount of English that their tutees already knew, at least on a conversational level. Evelyn said, "Kelly impressed me with how good her English was," and Abigail commented on her realization that ELs "can really be anywhere on quite a broad continuum" of English proficiency, even within a particular grade level. Ethan noted this during his second interview: "My tutee didn't necessarily present himself in the same way as ELs are sometimes presented." Ethan observed his tutee in the classroom setting and noticed that there were other ELs at significantly different stages of learning English. However, he noted that some of them had significant strengths in other areas, and therefore the label "EL" shouldn't be viewed as a deficiency. He observed some students whose English skills were emerging but who were amazing in math. For him, this was a good reminder that, "Just because they don't speak fluent English doesn't mean they are any less capable." Because of this variance in language proficiency, personality, and prior knowledge, several participants concluded that it is important to see every student as a unique learner. This reinforced for Evelyn the importance of getting to know the student first before focusing on instruction.

Student teaching provided many opportunities for each participant to develop relationships with EL students. Relating to a whole classroom of students, and in some cases two or more classes of students, certainly impacts the amount of individual attention that can be given. However, nearly every student teaching evaluation included comments about the teacher candidate's

ability to develop trusting and caring relationships with the students.

Five of the seven participants commented on at least the occasional effort to affirm the native language of the ELs in their student teaching classroom. This was most comfortable for Lily who is already fluent in Spanish and who was interacting with many Latino students. Olivia tended to connect with some of her EL students over conversations about food from their native country, simultaneously learning new vocabulary in their language. Before or after school and during other non-instructional times of the day, several of the participants took advantage of the opportunity to engage in informal conversations with the ELs and other students in the class. Ethan learned a few Russian words from a couple of his fourth-graders, and Sophia talked about how the afternoon dismissal time became like a daily mini-Spanish lesson for her and some of the students.

Emma struggled more at the beginning of her kindergarten placement because she needed to learn the names and unique characteristics of two classes as part of the dual immersion program. With encouragement from her supervisor and cooperating teacher, Emma began making an intentional effort to get to school early to devote her attention to interacting informally with the students as they entered the room. Abigail noted some behavior challenges from a couple EL boys in her first-grade classroom, and focused more on relating to these students outside of instructional time so that she could build a trusting and respectful relationship with them.

By the end of student teaching, Lily and Evelyn commented that the EL students are their "favorites": Although relationship-building was sometimes challenging with these students, it was also more rewarding. Evelyn observed how the majority of her EL students had higher-than-average levels of motivation to learn while maintaining positive attitudes in the face of many personal challenges. Having a trusting relationship with students was helpful when addressing occasional conflicts between peers. Lily recounted a situation in which she was reminded of the importance of listening to what they students are feeling and experiencing, rather than jumping to conclusions about a particular incident.

Each participant commented on relationships with individual students which informed their own perceptions of ELs and how to create a caring learning environment for them in the classroom.

Not only did relationship-building result in improved attitudes, perceptions, and an overall positive learning environment, it also served as a foundation for making good instructional decisions as the participants sought to support the ELs in their learning. While reflecting on the tutoring practicum, Evelyn highlighted the importance of learning to know the student first. By finding out their interests, as well as using assessment data to determine their strengths and needs, she was able to effectively choose materials and plan activities that would work best for her tutee. She said that a similar process would be important when transitioning to student teaching and working with every student, including the ELs. Lily supported this approach when anticipating the student teaching experience. Additionally, she encouraged building collaborative relationships with the cooperating teacher, supervisors, reading specialists, and even parents so that she will be better prepared to provide the instruction that each student needs. Lily said that this is best applied when using a constructivist approach to learning, which she described as including: hands-on activities, experimentation, manipulatives, visual support, and technology.

Practical Application of EL Strategies

A third theme that emerged from the data was the importance of direct interaction with ELs that is facilitated by practicum experiences. Each of the participants said that the tutoring practicum and student teaching experiences were instrumental in helping them learn new strategies for the classroom while boosting their own confidence level. The first interview provided evidence that each of the seven participants had at least some prior knowledge of strategies and approaches that have been used effectively by many educators. Collectively, they mentioned at least 30 different ideas; several were noted by at least four of the seven participants. These included: collaborating with other staff (6), visual support (4), peer support (4), incorporating the student's first language (4), and demonstrating patience and care for

the EL student (4). Other strategies mentioned only a couple times were: repetition, use of songs and videos, supporting vocabulary development, word sorts, asking and rephrasing questions, and differentiating instruction according to the varied needs of the students in the class.

The tutoring practicum almost immediately provided opportunity for learning and applying additional strategies to support their tutees' learning. Because this practicum focused on supporting reading and writing skills, many of the strategies referenced in the tutoring portfolio and the second interview included effective pedagogy for literacy instruction for any student, not only for ELs. Some of the common applied strategies included: creating a "Word Wall" to support vocabulary development; providing students with choices when deciding on texts to read and writing prompts; using graphic organizers to help generate ideas for writing or when summarizing main ideas and events of a story; providing supports for reading such as modeling, paired reading, echo reading, and rereading of texts. Several other strategies were particularly helpful for EL students: providing a lot of visual supports by using picture books; using leveled readers to provide practice at each student's instructional level; doing word sorts and picture sorts that often included having the tutees create an illustration to support their learning of key vocabulary and sight words; and using sentence frames to guide their written responses. Although some of these strategies were likely included in previous coursework, the practical application of these approaches with ELs in the field experience allowed the TCs to gain confidence and see first-hand the impact of their efforts to supports ELs in their learning.

The student teaching experiences allowed the participants to expand and hone their skills for supporting ELs in their classrooms. Many of the participants commented on the importance of providing clear directions or instructions throughout the day in ways that would be more easily understood by those with less advanced English skills. Sophia identified several factors that guided this process in her fifth-grade classroom, especially with a group of three "newcomers" who joined their class half-way through the Spring semester. First, she gave instructions to the

whole class and then met with this group of EL students to go over them again and provided needed clarification. She began providing additional examples that could serve as a reference for these students while they worked. When possible, she paired them with another student who was also fluent in their first language.

Three participants spoke of the importance of integrating language skills into every content lesson. Lily's cooperating teacher made sure that there was a language objective next to each content objective in every lesson. Evelyn said that her cooperating teacher spent several days specifically modeling for her how to include all four language components into her small group math lessons so that students had the opportunity to practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills while they were learning about different types of polygons. Lily noted her appreciation for her first-grade cooperating teacher's classroom library. Not only did she include books representing a variety of reading levels and genres, she also intentionally included books representing different cultures and races. Lily used this strategy as well in planning her social studies unit on heroes.

Assessment of student learning was another focus for each of the participants. They mentioned the importance of pre-assessment data for helping to guide their instruction as well as for planning small groups. Emma said that in her kindergarten and second-grade placements, it was important to read test questions aloud for students while providing a lot of visual support and modeling.

Self-Reflection and Feedback

A fourth theme that emerged from the varied data sources of this study is the importance of self-reflection of the teacher candidate and feedback from others during each practical experience of working with ELs. Reflective practice is important for every aspect of teaching, and therefore it was a key component of the tutoring practicum and student teaching experiences. During each experience, the participants received feedback from a reading specialist and the course instructor for the tutoring practicum, as well as from their cooperating teacher and university supervisor during each student teaching placement. In an informal manner,

the participants received feedback from their students in the form of student engagement and academic achievement.

Each participant's self-reflection provided the opportunity to consider what was working well or what needed to be changed as they worked with their tutee and other EL students in the regular classroom. Intentional reflection allows for thoughtful implementation of instructional strategies and improved effectiveness. The participants provided written reflections within their tutoring plans after teaching each session, and then they also had opportunity to reflect orally after occasional observations.

About halfway through the practicum, Evelyn noted that she needed to make some changes. She felt like she was introducing blends too quickly, that her directions were not explicit enough, and that the one poem she had written for her tutee had too many difficult words. Based on these reflections, she made some changes to her plans for the next week. Ethan noted that in his effort to give his tutee some control or choice in his learning, it was important to find a balance. Therefore, he began to explicitly state his expectations and the parts of the session that were "non-negotiable," while providing Andrew with options to help keep him motivated and actively engaged. After one tutoring observation, Olivia commented on the temptation to make assumptions about Kevin's learning: "I really need to make sure that he understands what we are doing, rather than just assuming he does." This caused her to ask more questions of her tutee and encourage him to think aloud as he participated in the various word study activities that she planned for him.

During a particular science unit while student teaching, Abigail was intentional about supporting vocabulary development, especially for the ELs in her first-grade class. She commented on one strategy in particular that she felt worked well: "As I introduced the vocabulary cards, I would read the word, show them a picture, and then anchor it with a motion." After one of her math units on calendar skills, Emma reflected on the effectiveness of music with her kindergarteners, especially those who were non-native English speakers: "This goes to show the power of using verbal language and songs in everyday activities to help them learn important content."

After her third-grade science unit on soil, Sophia shared her reflections on the aspects of her unit that she felt were particularly effective for the ELs in this dual language classroom: the Jigsaw activity allowed students to become the "experts" while providing peer support; students learned cooperative learning skills; multi-sensory learning and project-based learning appeared to be beneficial for all of her students; and offering students choice increased their motivation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Even though educators and researchers have identified teacher preparation for working with ELs as an area of need for the last couple decades, the concern persists (Feiman-Nemser, 2018). This study affirms the value of field experiences as part of the teacher preparation program, while revealing particular considerations to help maximize the learning for future teacher candidates and their work with ELs. Attracting bilingual candidates into the profession and/or encouraging cross-cultural learning and language study can positively impact the dispositions and self-confidence of pre-service teachers as they work with ELs (Gándara & Santibannez, 2016). Having multiple and varied types of field experiences not only broadens the TC's perspective of ELs, it also provides greater opportunity for skill development and effective application of appropriate strategies. Another finding of this study reveals the importance of building meaningful relationships with EL students as part of the field experiences. Finally, the TC's learning process is enhanced when the field experiences include intentional opportunities for critical self-reflection and feedback from knowledgeable mentors (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018).

Each of the participants in this study desired to grow in their ability to effectively support EL students in the mainstream classroom, and each one progressed toward this goal. Each participant came into this study at a different point in their learning to work with ELs, and not one concluded the experience with a degree of complete confidence as they anticipated working with ELs in their future classrooms. Yet, all of them grew in their appreciation for the varied backgrounds, English language skills, and other strengths of the ELs with whom they worked during the tutoring

practicum and student teaching experiences. They gained confidence in their own abilities to support ELs even as they identified some specific aspects that require continued growth.

Through their active interaction with ELs in varied field experiences, each participant was prompted and supported in their efforts to examine their own frames of reference and previous perceptions of ELs, develop plans to provide an equitable environment for these students in the regular classroom, and make changes to their own perspectives and practices (Mezirow, 1997). Transformation, like learning to teach, is a process and it won't look the same for any two people. Rather than discussing ELs in hypothetical terms or relying only on theory, each participant in this study gained valuable experiences from having invested in the lives of the ELs in their classrooms in ways that have left them different people than they were before. By studying the experiences of pre-service teachers, as well as the mentors and EL students with whom they work, researchers can continue to inform the preparation of teacher candidates and impact teacher educators' design of coursework and field experiences that will effectively prepare them to support each student's learning.

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