The CCTE Fall 2025 Research Monograph

Published by
the California Council on Teacher Education

Containing 25 Research Articles
Based on Presentations
at the CCTE Fall 2025 Conference

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Contents

Preface

Message from the CCTE President

By Karen Escalante

I am pleased to share our *CCTE Fall 2025 Research Monograph* with the California Council on Teacher Education membership and friends. This volume highlights the work of colleagues who presented at our CCTE Fall 2025 Conference both in person and virtually. This collective research continues to honor, uphold, and celebrate the conference theme: "Who We Are, Why We Matter: Teaching and Teacher Educator Professionalism, Expertise, Advocacy, and Innovation."

This work remains critical as we navigate a complex political climate and rapidly shifting educational trends, including the rise of AI and the expansion of nontraditional educational models. I am deeply grateful to each of these authors who presented their scholarship and am honored that they have chosen to share it here in the *CCTE Fall 2025 Research Monograph*.

In Community,

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Introduction

A Light in the Darkness: Advocacy at All Educational Levels

By Marni E. Fisher & Kimiya Sohrab Maghzi

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."
—Charles Dickens (1859), *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 4

History shows us that each generation has a time of struggle, and, in light of what can seem to be the worst of times, the best also comes out as people stand up for what they believe, creating a light that carries forward out of darkness. At the CCTE Fall Conference, Kevin Kumashiro (2025) reminded us that today's darkness is not all encompassing; rather, it is rooted in five pieces of history, and this is manageable. We have the power to create change.

The *CCTE Fall 2025 Research Monograph*, which has been published during difficult times, follows the Fall 2025 CCTE Conference theme of *Who We Are, Why We Matter: Teaching and Teacher Educator Professionalism, Expertise, Advocacy, and Innovation*. Through an advocacy lens, this collection of articles based on presentations at the conference offers research, theory, and practices that support pre-service program development, K-12 leadership and teacher advocacy, developing K-12 student advocacy, and a focus on K-12 pedagogy, development, and practice. The articles are arranged in those four topic areas.

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Pre-Service Program Development

Examining pre-service program development considered what professionalism and advocacy look like for programs, professors, and candidates. This addresses equity gaps, language advocacy, program development, mentoring, an equity focus, and student-centered practices.

To begin with addressing equity gaps, Harris (2025), whose case study explains the EdPrep Data Portal, a technology intervention designed to help Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) address the persistent teacher diversity gap by overcoming data siloing. This project focused on integrating disparate candidate data into a centralized, standards-based system built on the Ed-Fi Educator Preparation Data Model (EPDM).

Also important are the needs of multilingual learners. busby and Muñoz-Muñoz's (2025) research focuses on critical language advocacy for multilingual teacher preparation. In this study, the voices of participants reflect their growth, resulting in recommendations for both "programmatic" design and advocacy development strategies, recognizing the need to connect theory and practice. Similarly, Perren notes on how cultural proficiency and multilingualism should be foundational elements of professionalism. This plays out in a deficit perspective on multilingual learners, and "teacher educators must actively challenge these deficit narratives by advocating for policies and practices that recognize and support the strengths of bilingual learners" (p. 26).

In terms of general program development, Shubb (2025) identifies how utilizing survey data gathered from pre-service teachers from within a program offers data-driven improvements that result in higher passing rates for the CalTPAs. Laney and Piker's (2025) research also focuses on program development, suggesting a student-centered approach which considers how the new Prek-3 credential will exclude current preschool teachers, who are typically more racially diverse and may not have the income to pursue credentials. There needs to be an "integrated academic, financial, and social support grounded in evidence-based student-centered practices" (p. 65). This included a workshop supporting potential students in developing their personal statements, helping to "clarify expectations, especially for first-generation applicants who may have been unfamiliar with higher education processes, as well as for those who had been away from school for a while" (p. 68).

Similarly, Rago (2025) discusses how a focus on transformative learning that is aligned with the program's vision and goals can aid in program development. This requires a focus on critical reflection in order to facilitate transformation.

Mentoring practices examine both best mentoring practices and the residency model. As such, Wallace et al.'s (2025) research discusses their findings regarding effective mentor-teacher practices, which include constructive feedback, modeling effective teaching and co-teaching, and self-care, while also identifying how the mentee experiences center the effectiveness of mentoring. Cozier et al. (2025), however, have a broader lens for building a teacher residency program that maintains

a strong educator preparation program-district partnerships while also reflecting the community. This includes recruiting strategies that represent the community.

A focus on equity also emerged. Maghzi and Fisher's (2025) workshop promotes the development of systemic equity at all educational levels, considering theoretical and practical applications, particularly in higher education. McCollum et al.'s (2025) research identified the benefits of collaborative equity problem-solving, which included collective knowledge construction, a shift in focus from compliance to care, the understanding--and questioning--of power dynamics, and developing a collective focus on the whole child. While focusing on the implications for teacher-prep education, there are suggestions that are also applicable to current K-12 educators.

Student-centered practices, as García-Ramos et al.'s research suggests, can involve aligning programs with school mission and values. This focuses on candidates as individuals to

> guide and encourage candidates to demonstrate this care and dedication to their students in their TK-12 placements and future classrooms. The candidates are challenged to adopt an approach that teaches the whole individual, with deep consideration and appreciation for their students' prior knowledge, cultural assets, previous experiences, faith, and language, at the heart of our program. (p. 102)

K-12 Leadership and Teacher Advocacy

Considering K-12 leadership and teacher advocacy offers insight into research, development, and school practices. As a result, these articles suggest a leadership framework for research, critically examine teacher behaviors, and reflect on empowerment.

Leadership research needs frameworks that align with educational leadership perspectives. Therefore, Cavallaro and Fisher's (2025) theoretical article suggests that adaptive leadership is a theoretical framework for educational leaders to analyze practices.

When examining teacher behaviors that impact students, Jefferis's (2025) research identifies how "whiteness and white hegemony operate through seemingly benevolent teacher behaviors" (p. 116). This makes it difficult for students to advocate or break hegemony while also pathologizing Black and Brown students through a deficit lens.

In terms of change, power, and empowerment, Dorner, Fisher, Nguyen-Stockbridge et al.'s (2025) research maps how leaders during difficult times reflect on change and power while noting the importance of empowering teachers. Similarly, Dorner, Fisher, Pearson et al.'s (2025) research examines teacher perspectives on Professional Learning Communities (PLC) that empower teachers.

K-12 Student Advocacy

Building K-12 students' power of advocacy and advocating for students

involves ongoing teacher education as well as explicitly teaching for students. This includes professional development that reframes assessment and reading, improving translanguaging practices, teaching students talk moves that empower, and developing programs that support students' access to higher education.

For assessment and reading, Green et al. (2025) looks at an e-Learning module that teaches educators how to identify students earlier for targeted reading strategies. "By understanding screening as an instructional tool rather than a gatekeeping mechanism, teachers are better equipped to interpret results, communicate with families, and collaborate with colleagues in designing responsive literacy instruction" (p. 142). This sets a goal of moving beyond past modes of thinking and narrow views. Foundational literacy skills need "to include the critical role of all language processes (phonological, orthographic, semantic, morphological, and syntactic) to word recognition, fluency, and skilled reading" (p. 146).

To improve language practices, Rodriguez-Mojica et al.'s (2025) study looked at how professional development for bilingual program educators can change from deficit thinking to seeing their credentialing "not as separate competencies in two languages but as a dynamic process that draws upon students' full linguistic repertoires" (p. 154). They found that teachers could then transition to integrating translanguaging practices that heal while also advocating for students. From a different angle, Lee and Zhong's (2025) study "propose a digital transformation solution to improve MLs' vocabulary acquisition and practical English application" (p. 159).

Baer's (2025) practice shares how talk moves for students to advocate for themselves. As she describes:

> Talk moves consist of sentence stems, hand gestures and other student-centered strategies to empower students to show that they agree or respectfully disagree with a peer, want to add onto another student's thinking, need clarification about something that was said, or want to take the conversation in a completely different direction (Smekens, 2018 & Chapin, et al 2022). (p. 169)

This skill building strengthens student language skills while empowering them.

For supporting students with access to higher education, Liu and Lewis's (2025) research describes the Access program developed to support students' success, which relies on "social capital, targeted support, and a school culture that normalizes help-seeking" (p. 182). To further strengthen these elements, the program recognized how "tutoring, mentoring, and personalized guidance improved students' confidence and engagement" (p. 182), promoting the success of students from diverse backgrounds.

K-12 and Beyond Methods & Development

When examining K-12 education and beyond, advocacy involves a number of aspects. Some promote integrating environmental education for pre-and in-service teachers, others focus on coaching practices that are important in both teaching and

pre-service teacher development, while others address school-wide improvement that advocates for students with dis/abilities.

Wasserman et al. (2025) focus on building environmental literacy. Their workshop offers steps for understanding the impacts of population growth, resource management, and how environmental factors are all interconnected.

To improve coaching, Rizvi's (2025) theoretical analysis of coaching strategies identifies a layering of coaching practices that creates a safe environment for learning, where the coach and mentee work as partners on improvement.

> The Ladder of Inference raises our awareness of cognitive bias, the Specificity and Objectivity Matrix grounds feedback in evidence, Coaching for Equity helps ensure our conversations are inclusive and identity affirming, and the 5D+ Rubric provides a scaffold for growth-focused dialogue. Applied together, they can make evaluation an iterative process of observation, reflection, and collaborative goal-setting. (p. 197)

Rizvi's (2025) work is important for both pre-service mentoring and K-12 teachers for ongoing educator development.

To address school-wide improvement that advocates for students with dis/abilities, Maghzi et al.'s (2025) research examines three years of change for restorative practices in one school, looking at how change takes time, and the methods for program development had to become more person-centered. Through a wider lens, Petty et al.'s (2025) research examines school change through a cross analysis of several subset-studies, identifying patterns aligning with DisCrit and Disability Studies. Furthermore,

> When examined through a prismatic lens, systemic inequities, which are rooted in racism, ableism, and entrenched educational norms, highlight how, while schools shape the experiences of students and educators, they can also unintentionally undermine the ideals of inclusion and equity. (p. 223)

These studies suggest that school improvement from within, when partnered with higher education as a critical lens, can be more effective than external mandates.

Promises of Hope

Each of these articles offers insight into *Who We Are and Why We Matter*. This is a rich collection of researchers and educators who answered when called to identify *Teaching and Teacher Educator Professionalism, Expertise, Advocacy, and Innovation*. While the world seems to darken a little more every day, we wish to remind the educational community that, as Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy (2025) promised, this is a time to remember we are stronger together, and, as Betina Hsieh (2025) shared, our stories are powerful. We are the light in the darkness. We are the promise for a brighter tomorrow.

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The EdPrep Data Portal

A Case Study in Data-Driven Equity at Azusa Pacific University

Rebekah Harris

Abstract

This case study analyzes the initial implementation of the EdPrep Data Portal, a technology intervention designed to help Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) address the persistent teacher diversity gap by overcoming data siloing. Using two Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Azusa Pacific University (APU) and the University of Houston Clear Lake (UHCL), as proof of concept partners, the project focused on integrating disparate candidate data into a centralized, standards-based system built on the Ed-Fi Educator Preparation Data Model (EPDM). The findings from an evaluation of APU's implementation demonstrate a shift in institutional culture, with faculty reporting increases in data proficiency and confidence in using disaggregated equity metrics to inform decisions. The case at APU demonstrates that the Portal supports data-driven decision making that aligns with the critical goal of increasing the teacher-student race/ethnicity match.

Introduction: Addressing Equity and the Data to Action Gap

The persistence of the pronounced racial and ethnic mismatch between the majority-minority P-12 student population and the overwhelmingly white teaching

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force represents a critical equity challenge in American education (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). A substantial body of empirical research underscores that increasing the teacher-student demographic or background match is not simply about representation, but also an important lever for improving academic and life outcomes for minority students. Studies show that students of color benefit from a same-race teacher as evidenced by reduced exclusionary discipline, higher test scores, and increased aspirations for college enrollment (Boser, 2011; Gershenson et al., 2021; Bond et al., 2015).

Educator preparation programs (EPPs) hold the primary responsibility for cultivating this diverse workforce. However, EPP efforts are often curtailed by a pervasive data-to-action gap. While programs collect vast amounts of information on candidate recruitment, performance, and persistence, this data can remain trapped in disconnected legacy systems (e.g., student information systems, assessment platforms, state licensure portals). This siloing of information can prevent EPP leaders and faculty from performing the disaggregated analysis necessary to identify and address barriers that disproportionately impact candidates of color.

This article presents a case study analyzing the development, implementation, and initial outcomes of the EdPrep Data Portal, a technology initiative developed using the Educator Preparation Data Model (EPDM) (Ed-Fi Alliance, 2024) and with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This portal was designed as a strategic response to the data-to-action gap, providing a secure, centralized, and user-friendly platform for data integration and visualization. The project leveraged two Minority Serving institutions (MSI—Azusa Pacific University (APU) and the University of Houston Clear Lake as proof of concept partners to ensure the EdPrep Data Portal is grounded in real world needs of institutions committed to preparing a diverse educator pipeline across multiple states and in differing educational policy contexts.

The following analysis begins by detailing the research-backed need for a data-driven approach to addressing the teacher diversity gap, focusing on the critical role of MSIs in this area, moving into a description of the technical foundation of the portal and its reliance on standards-based architecture, continuing by chronicling the implementation journey undertaken at APU, presenting the mixed-methods evaluation findings, and concluding with key recommendation for other EPPs considering data dashboard adoption and APU's planned next steps.

The Strategic Imperative

Today EPPs must demonstrate evidence of equitable outcomes, but this commitment is often hindered by technological and resource limitations. The two national accreditors, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) both have expectations for EPPs in this area with CAEP's Standards Workbook including

multiple areas where EPPs must disaggregate data by race/ethnicity to show no or few disparities or to have disparities identified and explained with steps to remedy them while AAQEP reviews look for evidence that support services meet candidate needs and that all candidates have access to services on an equitable basis (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2021; Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation, 2023).

Additionally, for the California context the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) has a common standard for all EPPs in the state that requires the purposeful recruitment and admission of candidates to diversify the educator pool and the provision of support, advise, and assistance to promote the successful entry and retention in the profession in a manner that supports the diversification of California's educator pool (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2023). It is one thing for an EPP to be able to produce data tables for an accreditation review or an annual report that provide the number of diverse candidates and completers. It is an entirely different thing to integrate the various data sources within and EPP to regularly use information about candidate and completer demographics to continue to improve the supports and services being provided to ensure equity of access and completion. The failure to integrate disparate data sources means that program performance metrics cannot be systematically disaggregated by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, leaving equity issues obscured.

The solution to the teacher diversity need rest substantially with MSIs. Research confirms that institutions like the two project partners, APU a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and an AANAPISI (Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution) and UHCL a HSI, are disproportionately responsible for graduating the nation's diverse teacher workforce (Ginsberg et al., 2017; Goodloe et al., 2020). Studies have highlighted that MSIs possess unique cultural and pedagogical expertise making their capacity to scale teacher preparation crucial (Gasman et al., 2017; Carver-Thomas, 2018).

However, MSIs often face significant resource limitations, including underfunding and inadequate infrastructure that can lead to shortages in basic resources like strong data systems and a lack of dedicated offices and staff for data and assessment related functions (Landen, 2001; Garcia et al., 2019; Fenwick et al., 2022). Therefore, interventions that strengthen the data infrastructure of MSIs and create opportunities for EPPs at MSIs to more accurately and holistically identify how diverse candidates are performing and where targeted supports for their continued progression into the profession might be most helpful represent a strategic investment in national educational equity.

Empirical evidence supports the premise that same-race teacher assignments produce positive, enduring effects for minority students. Studies have demonstrated that assignment to a same-race teacher significantly improved the test scores of Black students (Dee, 2004; Boser, 2011; Bond et al,, 2015; Holt et al., 2015). More recent quasi-experimental and other studies confirm that having an own-race teacher not

only increases academic achievement but also measurably reduces the probability of suspension and increases the likelihood of a minority student pursuing higher education (Egalite et al., 2018; Gershenson et al., 2017; Gershenson et al., 2021; Hart, 2020; Lindsay et al., 2017; Redding, 2019).

Faced with this strategic imperative, APU and UHCL sought to partner with a technical vendor in Crocus, LLC with financial support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to create a software tool to give EPPs at MSIs a tool that facilitates the identification of bottlenecks in their pipeline that hinder the production of these critical diverse educators so that the EPPs can take steps to address them and reduce or remove these bottlenecks increasing the flow of quality diverse educators into the field. The core needs for EPPs were clear and consistent: infrastructure for timely access, data integration of systems (linking student information systems, university assessment systems, and propriety testing company data files), and actionable visualizations for disaggregated analysis.

Architecting the EdPrep Data Portal

The EdPrep Data Portal was conceived to be a low-cost, scalable, and secure solution that strategically bypasses the typical IT infrastructure limitations and costs that many MSIs struggle with. The foundation of the portal is the Ed-Fi Educator Preparation Data Model (EPDM) (Ed-Fi Alliance, 2024), which provides a common, standardized data language for integrating information across the entire educator career continuum from admission to candidate status, to credential recommendation, to eventual hiring and retention in an educator position. This standards-based approach ensures interoperability and scalability, allowing EPPs to centralize data from disparate sources into a single Ed-Fi Operational Data Store (ODS).

The collaborative design set by APU, UHCL, and Crocus, LLC and supported by use cases developed by the Ed-Fi Alliance (Ed-Fi Alliance, 2023a; Ed-Fi Alliance, 2023b) prioritized user accessibility and equity analysis. The EdPrep Data Portal has two core features. First, the Portal allows for self-service data transformation which is a user-friendly, wizard-based interface that allows EPP staff, who are typically assessment or accreditation specialists or program directors rather than programmers or IT specialists to map their data files (e.g., course assignments, class rosters, clinical observations, state licensure exams) to the EPDM standard. This feature simplifies the data integration process and can create more control and decision making in program hands rather than in central IT or Institutional Research hands. Second, the Portal comes with out-of-the-box dashboards tailored to key EPP use cases, providing immediate insights and eliminating the need for EPPs to purchase separate, expensive business intelligence software licenses for program leaders, faculty, and staff who need access to program data (see Table 1, EdFi Portal Data Analysis Focus).

Table 1
EdFi Portal Data Analysis Focus

Use Case	*Target User & Strategic Goal*	*EPDM Data Domain*
Candidate Enrollment	EPP Leadership: To evaluate programmatic and demographic trends, including program equity by monitoring representation from recruitment through graduation.	Teacher candidate demographics & enrollment
Candidate Performance	EPP Faculty: To analyze candidates' performance on assessments and observations to analyze and identify opportunities for programmatic improvement.	Performance Evaluation & Education Organization

APU's Implementation Journey

The EdPrep Data Portal's success hinged on the collaborative partnership between the technical partner of Crocus, LLC and the EPPs to ensure the Portal addressed real-world institutional complexity and could be useful for specific credential programs at a specific EPP but that the structure was also simple enough and global enough to serve EPPs and MSIs across the United States. APU served as a vital testing and validation site, providing the necessary institutional data and providing ongoing feedback to refine the Portal's functionality.

APU undertook complex but critical pre-technical steps required for successful data system implementation. First, the EPP ensured the data that would be pulled and used in the EdPrep Data Portal would encompass programs across the educator spectrum (e.g., educational leaders, school counselors, school psychologists, teachers), to facilitate a holistic and comprehensive equity analysis, rather than limiting the focus solely to teacher candidates. This was followed by establishing clear data definitions in collaboration with program leaders and faculty. Defining terms like program completion might sound simple, but it took time looking at the data files and thinking through what to do with candidates in different scenarios (e.g., candidates who have completed all degree requirements but still have a state credential requirement outstanding).

This was a critical step for ensuring consistent meaning across departments and accurate mapping to the EPDM standard. Collaboration occurred with program leadership, program faculty, university data stewards to talk through issues that exist within APU's disparate data systems (e.g., PeopleSoft, Canvas, Watermark Student Learning and Licensure, data files from Evaluation Systems of Pearson, Praxis files from ETS). This process was essential for ensuring the validity and reliability of the data included in the Portal. Significant time and energy were focused on developing appropriate data files for ingestion into the Portal to help ensure that the data presented to faculty would be trusted and reliable.

One of the goals of the EdPrep Data Portal was that after the hard and tedious work of identifying the data and ensuring its validity and reliability, the mapping and validation processes within the Portal should be streamlined and something that any program staff or program director could do. In the development process this stage was often described as having an "easy button." The Portal allows separate files to be uploaded and for streamlined mapping to occur of the data from APU's EPP to the EPDM with some simple button clicks. The Portal then goes through a data validation process, providing the EPP with a report of where data in the files needs to be examined and updated to align with the EPDM. This simple data mapping and validation process allows APU to take files from disparate source systems into the EPPs new, secure Ed-Fi Operational Data Store (ODS). This provides the EPP with a single integrated source of truth, solving the problem of data siloing that can hinder longitudinal analysis. Once data are uploaded, mapped, and validated, data dashboards are instantly available for use by all EPP faculty and staff via a secure single sign on process using their APU credentials.

An important next step of the implementation process was focusing on faculty training and support in the use of the data dashboards and visualizations. Recognizing that EPPs must move beyond tool mechanics to data interpretation and decision making (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Davis et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). APU developed data protocols and held training webinars along with other accessible resources for faculty. This support focused not just on how to access the dashboards and select options from various dropdown menus, but also on how to use the disaggregated equity metrics to identify trends, form questions, and to start to make program decisions in areas like curriculum revision, targeted candidate support, and mentoring strategies.

The technical and pedagogical work related to the data integration and data visualizations occurred across a 24-month timeline with deployment of the dashboards and training for faculty happening toward the conclusion of the second year of work on the EdPrep Data Portal. Once the Portal was operational and time for training was allowed, the project moved toward an analysis and evaluation stage.

Early Outcomes and Future Steps

In Spring 2025 an evaluation was conducted to assess the initial implementation at APU employing a mixed-methods approach to gauge both technical success and shifts in data culture within the EPP. Successful implementation of a data dashboard is contingent on developing a robust data culture and increasing faculty data literacy (Bolhuis et al., 2019). A quantitative pre- and post- survey of program leaders and faculty who attending trainings and began using the data dashboards shows a dramatic positive shift after engaging with the portal, validating the investment in the design and focused training (See Table 2, Pre- and Post- Survey Feedback). These results demonstrate a strong increase in faculty self-efficacy and the perception of

Table 2

Pre- and Post- Survey Feedback

Indicator	*Pre-Portal Mean Score*	*Post-Portal Mean Score*	*Change*
Understanding of EPP data systems	3.25	6.88	+3.63
Comfort using data to inform programmatic decisions	3.63	6.50	+2.87
Perceived availability of needed data reports	4.43	7.38	+2.95

data availability. By providing easy-to-use, streamlined access, the EdPrep Data Portal successfully lowered the barrier to entry for data engagement, an important step in fulfilling the equity mandate.

In addition to the pre- and post- survey, focus group feedback highlighted the importance of actively working with faculty on implementation to translate data into meaningful program improvement. This aligns with improvement cycle resources developed for the EPP field by Deans for Impact (Deans for Impact, 2024). Qualitative analysis of information shared in focus groups identified a theme of improved data access leading to decreased dependency on IT staff and the Dean's Office to access data. Another very important theme from the focus groups was the shift in faculty concern from the technical challenge of accessing data to the pedagogical challenge of translating data into actionable steps. This signals a maturation in the data culture at APU moving from data quality and access to the use of data to inform decisions and continuous improvement.

The proof of concept and pilot undertaken by APU, UHCL, and Crocus LLC to develop the EdPrep Data Portal has led to clear, user-driven roadmap for future enhancements and a framework for the Portal's sustainability and scalability within APU and for consideration by others in the EPP community. The evaluation yielded five key, actionable recommendations as APU continues to enhance its used of the EdPrep Data Portal and for other EPPs considering implementation of a data dashboard.

First, prioritize user interface and readability. Based on feedback related to this area, plans are underway to ensure the use of the dashboard is not stymied by poor visualization (e.g., enabling the resizing of text areas to aid in the readability of detailed data reports). Also related to this, work is being undertaken to try to develop more descriptive labels within the dashboards (e.g., replacing "Rubric 1" with "Lesson Planning") to reduce the need for external documentation.

Second, continuation of data validation processes is important. While there is an easy button for data validation directly within the EdPrep Data Portal, the need to foster trust in the data and work with university data systems continues to

enable users to easily compare dashboard data against other data sources to verify accuracy.

Third, work is being done to ensure even stronger data disaggregation capabilities within the Portal to help allow expanded filtering capabilities for key local contexts for even more targeted analysis (e.g., being able to examine demographic performance for a particular cohort at a particular location completing via a specific pathway). A final important next step that the evaluation of the project emphasized for APU was an increased focus of professional development on working with faculty to continue to improve their comfort in using data analysis to devise concrete, measurable steps for program improvement, completing the important data-to-action cycle.

A final core objective of the EdPrep Portal was to produce a sustainable and affordable data solution. Again, the qualitative data from the focus group that included academic and data leaders showed success related to this objective with feedback that indicated that the dashboard that can be created by program staff or program directors through simple, trainable steps of pulling appropriate files from already existing data systems, uploading, mapping and validating within the EdPrep Data Portal would likely take highly, specialized IT and data specialists longer to produce under current staffing levels using other visualization products.

The EdPrep Data Portal initiative at APU is a compelling case study demonstrating that a strategically designed, standards-based data system can be an important instrument for advancing equity. But taking steps forward in tacking the complexities of data siloing and cultivating a culture of faculty data engagement, the Portal allows MSIs like APU to systematically address educator pipeline issues that obstruct the diversity of the field. The ability to disaggregate performance and persistence data by race and ethnicity is a critical part of ensuring that the funnel from recruitment to admission to candidate to completer to hired and retained educator does not turn into a sieve for future educators of color. This allows APU to move beyond statement of commitment to helping to diversify the educator profession to being able to take steps toward data-driven targeted interventions.

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Going the Extra Mile

A Call for Critical Language Advocacy in Bilingual Teacher Preparation in California Today

ash busby & Eduardo Muñoz-Muñoz

Abstract

This mixed-methods study examines how a university's bilingual teacher preparation program developed critical language awareness and advocacy dispositions among teacher candidates through innovative online coursework. As California pursues ambitious multilingual education goals while facing persistent bilingual teacher shortages, this research addresses how teacher preparation programs can transcend basic authorization requirements to develop educators with transformative consciousness.

The study analyzed experiences of 165 bilingual teacher candidates from 2020-2024 through course evaluation surveys (n=101) and focus groups with 10 program alumni. Grounded in critical pedagogy, raciolinguistics, and translanguaging theory, two consecutive online courses ran parallel to field placements, emphasizing policy agency and heteroglossic community building.

Findings reveal how teachers developed sophisticated advocacy skills, navigating workplace micropolitics while challenging linguistic hierarchies and deficit perspectives. Teacher testimonies demonstrate identity transformation and raciolinguistic resistance, enabling graduates to serve as "de facto agentic policymakers" who actively transform educational spaces for emergent bilingual communities.

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Keywords: bilingual teacher education, critical language advocacy, raciolinguistics, hybrid teacher preparation

Introduction

As California faces persistent bilingual teacher shortages while simultaneously experiencing what scholars term a "bilingual renaissance" (García & Kleyn, 2016), the research demonstrates how teacher preparation programs can transcend basic authorization requirements to develop educators with deeper meaning and broader impact than traditional credentialing provides (Gándara & Santibañez, 2016). The challenge lies in programs' ability to prepare bilingual teachers who understand their role as "de facto agentic policymakers" within their educational contexts (Palmer et al., 2019). Rather than simply implementing top-down policies, teachers must develop critical language awareness to navigate ideological tensions in schools, challenge deficit perspectives about multilingual students, and actively transform educational spaces to better serve emergent bilingual communities (Valdez et al., 2016).

This study emerged from the call to increase the number of bilingual teachers in California, while simultaneously tending to the development of their critical consciousness. Bilingüismo y Justicia, a bilingual teacher preparation program at San José State University, developed an online seminar series to support candidates' development of critical language awareness and advocacy dispositions through engagement in a heteroglossic dialogic learning community. This study sought to answer the following research question: What instructional designs and pedagogical orientations support the development of preservice bilingual teacher candidates' critical language awareness and advocacy dispositions in an online course series?

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The theoretical framework draws from three interconnected foundations: Critical Language Awareness (Fairclough, 2014) enabling examination of power relationships embodied through language; heteroglossic dialogism recognizing the social nature of knowledge construction and emphasizing spaces where multiple voices can thrive (Bakhtin, 1981); and advocacy as empowerment to move beyond awareness toward transformative action (Freire, 1970). Together, these extend toward what Venegas-Weber and Negrette (2023) term "Linguistic Ideological Clarity," enabling educators to understand language as inseparable from identity, power, and social justice.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine how online course experiences promoted heteroglossic dialogic engagement and developed critical language awareness and advocacy dispositions among 165 bilingual teacher candidates from 2020 to 2024 (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Data collection involved standardized course evaluation surveys (n = 101, 61.2% response rate) using 13 Likert-scale items addressing course content relevance, learning atmosphere, and instructor effectiveness, alongside three open-ended questions. Additionally, two

semi-structured focus groups with 10 program alumni lasting approximately 75 minutes each explored perceptions of the course's long-term impact on their current teaching practice (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Data analysis followed Saldaña's (2021) two-cycle coding methodology, with first-cycle descriptive and in vivo coding preserving participants' perspectives, followed by pattern coding organizing themes relating to criticality, dialogism, and advocacy.

Overview of Results: Teacher Voices of Advocacy in Action

Critical Sociolinguistic Awareness Through Lived Experience

Teacher testimonies revealed how the online courses provided crucial spaces for critical reflection during the "compressed" nature of credential programs (Zeichner, 2010). As one focus group participant noted, the seminar allowed space to reflect on "so much politics around educating the kids" while reaffirming their vocation: "but this is my passion and what I want to do." Instructional design incorporated reflection time that included framing to bridge the theoretical concepts to the individual sociocultural contexts of their site placements and leveraged digital collaboration tools to extend the conversation across sessions.

Laura, a program graduate, demonstrated sophisticated intersectional analysis when comparing her experiences in two different schools separated by socioeconomic divides (Crenshaw, 1991). She observed how in one affluent school, "it was cool to speak Spanish. There was a purpose there, there was more support for the teacher and for the students," contrasting this with another school where bilingual education existed primarily due to demographics rather than intentional multilingual program design. This critical awareness enabled her to recognize how "awareness of being bilingual would provide their children of these students more opportunities" in contexts where the system was deliberately designed to support multilingualism (García & Kleyn, 2016). Such critical awareness was fostered in the online courses through dialogue and analysis that situated teacher candidates and their site placements in the larger sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts.

Advocacy Through Policy Analysis and Community Engagement

The program's emphasis on policy agency manifested powerfully in teacher candidates' engagement with English Learner Advisory Committees (ELAC), as mandated by California Education Code (California Department of Education, 2020). One of the course signature assignments required students to attend two ELAC meetings and engage in collaborative analysis of caregiver engagement both prior to and during the meeting. Nancy recalled how this assignment was "eye-opening" as candidates learned about legal expectations for engaging families of multilingual students. She emphasized how the assignment pushed them to investigate accessibility: "We want you to go and find this information, do they have admission

policies, do they have these documents accessible in Spanish, Vietnamese? That really stuck with me, us physically going to look for these things."

This policy-oriented advocacy extended to special education intersections, addressing what García and Tyler (2010) identify as the disproportionate representation of emergent bilingual students in special education. The course sequence provided Kelsey, now a bilingual resource specialist, articulated her advocacy stance: "And like, this is like my personal little piece of advocacy is like, what benefits are English learners and multilingual students? Also benefits students with disabilities. And there's a huge, huge crossover in the kinds of strategies and the ways that you approach and teach them that fit all of those groups and support their needs." Kelsey demonstrates a level of awareness that moves her advocacy from a rehearsal phase practiced in coursework to in-person enactment within her local context (Warren, 2020). Instructional design created a hybrid experience that supported candidates in translating the conceptual to the practical through coursework that required them to engage in exploration and analysis of their site placements.

Identity Transformation and Raciolinguistic Resistance

Teacher testimonies revealed profound identity transformation through embodied translanguaging (Chronaki et al., 2022) and raciolinguistic perspectives (Flores & Rosa, 2015). An essential pedagogical orientation was the enactment of a translanguaging stance, which due to fewer communicative cues in an online setting, requires intentional and explicit invitation for candidates to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires. Both course instructors modeled translanguaging and instructional design centered students' historical selves in relationship to the larger sociocultural context of the region as well as their site placements. One participant reflected on the impact the learning community had on her identity as a bilingual educator, "The community that it created. There was a lot of pride, so I'm not the only one that's proud of what I do. Not only teaching but teaching in a bilingual setting." Further, Paula described how the seminar challenged monoglossic practices she encountered during student teaching: "I also learned, when I did my student teaching, at some point some teachers were very strict about not using English about using only Spanish and the seminar allowed me to see a different vision where translanguaging it totally fine... Once I did translanguaging the allowed me to gain student trust."

The program equipped teachers to challenge linguistic hierarchies and "academic language" discourse (Flores et al., 2017). One participant recalled how discussions about dialectal variation provided grounding to "reassert their heteroglossic inclusiveness" when confronting ideological clashes: "Hablamos sobre dialectos [we discussed dialects] and the different sociolinguistic contexts, academic range, y en la escuela es que no debes usar la palabra agarrar, Garra es de animal, se dice recover [and in school, you should not use the word 'grab,' etymologically related to paw in Spanish, one must say 'pick up']. But they are communicating

the idea! It is good to have theories to be able to center the experiences and validate their communication methods." The courses' explicit attention to embodying translanguaging, alongside metalinguistic narration of instructor moves and their connection to theory, provided candidates with a lens to view the language use in their site placements and challenge dominant language ideologies in action.

Confronting Systemic Contradictions

Teachers articulated sophisticated understanding of systemic contradictions they face, reflecting what Gándara and Contreras (2009) describe as the persistent gap between multilingual education rhetoric and reality. Juana described the dissonance between multilingual promises and institutional realities: "You do this presentation where you say 'when your children leave, they will be biliterate and bilingual in two languages. And then in my head, I'm like, where are the ELD books that, by law, you're supposed to provide to me so that I can have designated ELD for my students? And then the school year goes by, and it's like, what? April and I haven't gotten the books. And then when I get the books, you tell me you're going to come and observe me. So sorry." Another candidate articulates the impact this awareness has on their interactions with students, "I just felt really prepared when leaving these seminars and these conversation spaces because I was like, oh my gosh, I am seeing it play out and I feel like I'm able to navigate somewhat with some proficiency lo que esta pasando [what is happening]...Allowing students to again use their home language as a power tool to learn another language." This critical awareness enabled teachers to understand their advocacy work as occurring within "ideological and implementational spaces" (Hornberger, 2002) where they could promote transformational pedagogies while navigating system constraints.

Navigating Workplace Micropolitics Through Advocacy

Teachers demonstrated sophisticated understanding of advocacy as navigation of local micropolitics (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991). Luisa described workplace tensions while maintaining her advocacy stance: "Con mis estudiantes me va muy bien pero con mis colegas ya es otra cosa. A menudo su pensamiento es que el español puro es el único y eso [with my students I get along very well, with my coworkers it is a different matter. Often their thought is that pure Spanish is the only thing and that] brings a lot of bias toward their teaching. And I don't think they realize that bias controls the narrative that is guiding their classroom." Luisa's recognition of her colleague's enforcement of language hierarchies reflects the critical language awareness developed during the seminar. However, the role of advocacy in interrupting linguistic violence with colleagues was not a topic of the courses. While this was not explicitly addressed in the course series, one candidate shares the impact the courses' emphasis on critical language awareness and bridging theory to practice support her in navigating this tension, "Having the theory behind what we need

to say in order to bring the students' centrar sus experiencias and like validate their communication methods in a way that like somebody who maybe wasn't seeing it that way can have a different perspective as opposed to being like oh well, I don't know, if I hadn't had that background but it still maybe would make me feel uncomfortable 'well why can't they say what they need to say the way that they need to say it', but I maybe would not have that language." Supporting candidates in expanding their advocacy stances to include navigating their colleagues' reinforcement of linguistic hierarchies was identified as an area of growth for the program.

Implications for Bilingual Teacher Preparation Programs

The research demonstrates that online formats can successfully create heteroglossic learning communities that develop critical language awareness and advocacy dispositions when designed with intentional pedagogical principles (García & Wei, 2022; Paris & Alim, 2017). For bilingual teacher preparation programs seeking to transcend minimal compliance standards, several key implications emerge:

Programmatic Design Recommendations

1. **Critical Integration**: Programs should integrate critical language awareness throughout coursework rather than treating it as an add-on component, ensuring candidates develop sophisticated understanding of language as inseparable from power and identity (Fairclough, 2014; Freire, 1970).

2. C**ommunity Building**: Online formats require deliberate cultivation of heteroglossic communities through cohort models, shared linguistic experiences, and sustained contact that validates participants' full linguistic repertoires (García & Wei, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017).

2. **Bridge Theory and Practice**: Coursework must strategically connect to concurrent field placements through assignments that require candidates to apply critical frameworks to their specific teaching contexts, moving from theoretical understanding to practiced advocacy (Zeichner, 2010; Warren, 2020).

Advocacy Development Strategies

1. **Policy Agency**: Programs should include substantive engagement with educational policies, requiring candidates to analyze local implementation and identify spaces for transformative action within existing structures (Palmer et al., 2019; Hornberger, 2002).

2. **Identity Work**: Critical examination of intersectional identities and raciolinguistic perspectives enables candidates to develop resilience against linguistic violence while maintaining commitment to multilingual communities (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991).

3. **Micropolitical Navigation**: Preparation must address the reality of workplace tensions and provide strategies for maintaining advocacy stances while building coalitions within school contexts (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991).

Sustainability Considerations

Programs must balance critical consciousness development with practical preparation for system realities (Cochran-Smith, 2004). As Adriana noted in her "loving critique, "candidates need support in learning how we can be passionate without being dismissed in a system to be passionate, but making it work." While university coursework emphasizes internalizing the theoretical, the lived reality in schools presents candidates with a tension that was previously unaddressed in coursework. Supporting candidates in navigating this tension must begin during their preservice training and require ongoing mentorship and alumni networks that sustain advocacy dispositions beyond initial preparation (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

The evidence demonstrates that bilingual teacher preparation can successfully develop educators who possess both technical competence and critical consciousness necessary for transformative practice (García & Wei, 2022). However, this requires intentional program design and pedagogical orientations that move beyond state requirements toward developing teachers equipped with the linguistic ideological clarity necessary to serve as effective advocates for multilingual communities in California's evolving educational landscape.

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Modeling Professionalism and Advocacy in Teacher Education

A Cultural and Linguistic Imperative

James M. Perren

Introduction

In the current educational climate, teacher educators face increasing pressure to advocate for their profession while preparing students to become advocates themselves. This discussion aligns with the questions, 'How do we advocate for our profession?' and 'How do we develop advocacy skills in our students?' This article argues that modeling professionalism through cultural proficiency and multilingualism is a moral and pedagogical imperative. Drawing from the scholarly contributions on cultural proficiency (Lindsey & Lindsey, 2016) and research on second language acquisition (Cook, 2002; Krashen, 1982; Swain & Lapkin, 1995), cognitive development (Cummins, 2000), and sociopolitical perspectives on multilingualism (Cook, 2002; García & Wei, 2014; Phillipson, 1992), this article explores how teacher educators can lead by example to foster equity, inclusion, and advocacy in teacher preparation programs. Modeling professionalism and advocacy in teacher education is accomplished by exploring key practices for effective teacher development. This constitutes another part of the paired linguistic and cultural imperative. That terminology is borrowed from the cultural proficiency framework. Cultural proficiency scholars have accomplished a significant effort

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towards the development of work on cultural proficiency and are based in San Marcos in Southern California.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this article is to suggest a disciplinary shift in teacher education—one that positions cultural proficiency and multilingualism as foundational elements of professionalism. The objectives are to (1) demonstrate the importance of teacher educators modeling cultural proficiency and multilingualism; (2) highlight the cognitive and academic benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism, (3) address the misclassification of bilingual learners as having deficits; and (4) provide strategies for embedding advocacy into teacher preparation programs.

Significance to the Field of Teacher Education

California's diverse K-12 student population includes a significant number of English language learners (California Department of Education, 2023). Teacher educators must be equipped (and the teacher candidates they train) to understand and address the linguistic and cultural needs of these students. By modeling the behaviors and attitudes we expect from our teacher candidate students, that include engaging in second language acquisition tasks and activities and learning about cultures, we are reinforcing the values of equity and inclusion. This approach enhances the quality of teacher preparation and simultaneously empowers future educators to become advocates for their students and communities. Therefore, it is important to consider the dual role, in which teacher educators advocate for the profession and simultaneously prepare teacher candidates to become advocates. Equally important to consider is the fostering of equity and inclusion in which advocacy fosters a culture of equity and inclusion within educational institutions. Thirdly, championing diverse needs of student populations is what we hope for for our future educators. Finally, educators need to become proactive agents addressing the systemic inequities through promoting inclusive practices for their learners. For that reason, advocacy in teacher education involves not only defending the value and integrity of the teaching profession but also equipping the future educators with the skills and mindset necessary to champion the needs of diverse student populations. The current political climate demands that educators go beyond traditional teaching roles to become proactive agents of change.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations from Relevant Literature

This article is grounded in the cultural proficiency (CP) framework as presented by Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2009), and expanded on by Lindsey and Lindsey (2016). Multiple theoretical and conceptual frameworks are mentioned in this section along with relevant supporting literature since these two elements

are interdependent in the framing of this current research. There are three central frameworks: cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 2009; Lindsey & Lindsey, 2006); second language acquisition (SLA) theory (Cummins, 2000; Krashen, 1982, Swain & Lapkin, 1995), and sociopolitical perspectives on multilingualism (Cook, 2002; García & Wei, 2014; Phillipson, 1992). In their entirety, these multiple frameworks demonstrate that educators' own language learning experiences influence their ability to prepare themselves as linguistically and culturally responsive educators. Additionally, since teacher educators are involved in linguistic and cultural life-long learning, they will influence the teacher candidates with whom they work in multilingual contexts.

CP scholars define cultural proficiency as a personal and professional developmental process, enabling educators to interact across multiple cultures in a productive manner with efficiency. They envision the learning process of cultural proficiency to be a professional journey rather than a final ending point. Lindsey et al., (2009) points out that this lifelong process and experience of developing cultural proficiency involves internalizing empathy in cross-cultural teaching that includes the ability to reflect, develop humility, and utilize intentional action towards an overall concept of equity. In this way, the culture proficiency framework is foundational for the focus of this article and the perspective that teacher educators have a duty of modelling linguistic and cultural responsiveness. They can perform these tasks through their own language study as lifelong learners which requires dedicated efforts of ongoing self-reflective learning and commitment to equity. To this end, teacher educators are visible as lifelong learners and can position themselves to examine their own internal biases while working towards the dismantling of institutional inequities. This article also emphasizes the importance of a specific type of experiential understanding. In this view, learning a new language is an example of a pathway to developing empathy and authentic cross-cultural proficiency by using additional languages and understanding cultures to learn from multiple perspectives in a specific community.

For example, one study related to implementing cultural proficiency in a K12 context emphasizes CP and community engagement together. This was important in this research to understand cultural and social contexts (Flores & Domingues, 2017). Language served an important role as part of the development of solutions such as with parental engagement. This was because many parents worked as strawberry field migrant workers from Spanish-speaking backgrounds. Thus, developing effective communication with them necessitated sensitivity to language barriers and bilingual outreach. These are examples of the cultural proficiency tools such as linguistic awareness as part of valuing diversity. Since the teachers were able to show respect for and recognition of parents' linguistic assets, this is in alignment with the authors' call to "value and utilize the assets possessed by the parents" (Flores & Domingues, 2017, p. 18) which allowed trust to be built and ultimately leading to the success of this particular community and educational initiative.

Additionally, the theoretical and conceptual foundations of this article draw on SLA theory, particularly the work of Cummins (2000), Krashen (1982), and Swain and Lapkin (1995), emphasizing the cognitive and academic benefits of bilingualism. These frameworks support the argument that teacher educators must themselves be language learners to effectively prepare culturally and linguistically responsive teachers. The work by Cummins is part of a broader theory of SLA in which cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) serves as a conceptual foundation for the study of SLA. In this model, it is one of the two key aspects of language proficiency that second language learners develop. Basic interpersonal communicate skills (BICS) is the other key element in the work by Cummins (2000). This is the everyday conversational language that people use in social situations and develop somewhat quickly in life. On the other hand, CALP can take longer sometimes spanning between 5 to 7 years in a formal academic context. Furthermore, both the 'input hypothesis' and 'affective filter hypothesis' are useful SLA concepts developed by Krashen (1982). These contributions point to the role of support in a learning environment that will facilitate natural language acquisition. In these theoretical components, effective language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input just beyond their current level of proficiency. The affective filter highlights anxiety reduction and increased motivation levels for language learners to assist in developing self-confidence, thus fostering, second language proficiency. Another relevant concept is comprehensible output, an SLA theory positing that producing language promotes a language learner's ability to notice knowledge gaps (Swain & Lapkin, 1995), and in turn, facilitates fluency development. Together, what these SLA ideas reinforce is the need for teacher educators to experience language learning from a firsthand perspective in order to understand language learner needs and to be able to design equitable learning environments. These frameworks also stress the need for development of empathy and growth as an educator through the process of reflective practice; this parallels the reflective position that is essential to the cultural proficiency framework.

Other contributing conceptual constructs presented in this article are concerned with sociopolitical dimensions of multilingualism. One noteworthy element is the process of reframing the second language learner as an L2 User (Cook, 2002). In Vivian Cook's (2002) theoretical positioning, L2 Users are viewed as bilinguals and multilinguals with unique and complex linguistic repertoires. They are capable of demonstrating cognitive flexibility, metalinguistic awareness and intercultural competence beyond a typical monolingual. In this viewpoint, L2 Users are measured against monolingual norms—not as failed monolinguals. Furthermore, the historical and political context of multilingualism is outlined by additional sociopolitical linguistic scholars as related to concepts of political and economic construction and institutionalization (Phillipson, 1992). These factors are tied to linguistic imperialism and linguistic genocide as well as the domination of global financial markets. This academic content broadens the discussion beyond the ideas of cognition and academic benefits toward global and ideological sensitivities.

The implication with these contributing theoretical strands is that both cultural proficiency and the concept of bilingual advocacy require a personal and professional stance of critical consciousness. This serves to demonstrate how language hierarchies are maintained through systems of power and privilege in societies and educational institutions. The intersection of these concepts with the CP framework allows us to recognize that multilingualism is a norm and aligns with CP. The emphasis here is the high value on cultural diversity that is critical for resisting systemic educational, professional, and societal inequities. Not only does it recognize that multilingualism is not new and it has been the human norm for millennia in many human civilizations, but we can also encourage teacher educators to critique the philosophy of linguistic dominance and educational gatekeeper policies. These are characteristic of 'English only' instruction and biased testing practices. Moreover, this information facilitates moving beyond privileging English and monolingualism which corresponds to the moral dimension of cultural proficiency, i.e., equity, advocacy, and systemic change. A number of these topics are often related to the concepts of misclassification of bilingual learners in US education.

Addressing Misclassification of Bilingual Learners

One of the important challenges in education is the misclassification of bilingual learners as having psychological learning disabilities. This misclassification stems from a lack of understanding of bilingualism and perpetuates systemic inequities that hinder the academic success of multilingual students. Some of this is also connected to politics and funding. These points are reflected in literature (California Department of Education, 2019; Cevheroglu, 2023; Coveney, 2019; Hamayan et al., n.d.; Osipova & Lao, 2022; WIDA, 2025). However, research by García and Way (2014) on translanguaging reveals that bilingual students utilize their entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaning, which enhances their learning experiences. Teacher educators must actively challenge these deficit narratives by advocating for policies and practices that recognize and support the strengths of bilingual learners. This advocacy involves educating stakeholders about the cognitive benefits of bilingualism. Implementing assessment practices that accurately reflect students' abilities and creating learning environments that validate and celebrate linguistic diversity. Furthermore, by addressing misclassification, educators can ensure that bilingual students receive the support they need to thrive academically and socially. This commitment to equity is a fundamental aspect of professionalism and advocacy in teacher education.

In summary, California and other states frequently and unfortunately misclassify bilingualism as a psychological learning disability. This misclassification perpetuates systemic inequities and undermines the academic potential of multilingual students. Teacher educators must challenge these deficit narratives and advocate for policies and practices that recognize and support the strengths of bilingual learners.

Modeling Advocacy and Professionalism

Advocacy begins with modeling. Teacher educators must embody the values and practices they wish to instill in their teacher candidate students. As stated, this encompasses engaging in second language learning, participating in cultural immersion experiences, and integrating culturally responsive pedagogy into coursework. Programs should include opportunities for candidates to reflect on their cultural identities, examine systemic inequities, and develop advocacy skills. Mentorship models that emphasize advocacy and professionalism can further support this development.

Strategies for Embedding Advocacy into Teacher Preparation

Integrating advocacy into coursework as part of a teacher preparation in disciplinary shift is presented here as a four-pronged intentional proposal: curriculum design, cultural proficiency training, practical advocacy experiences, and reflective mentorship programs. The following list introduces these potential topics:

1. Integrate cultural proficiency training into all coursework.
2. Require second language acquisition (SLA) coursework and experiences.
3. Use case studies and simulations to explore advocacy scenarios.
4. Partner with community organizations to provide real-world advocacy opportunities.
5. Encourage reflective practice and critical self-examination.
6. Develop mentorship programs that emphasize advocacy and equity.

To begin with, embedding advocacy into teacher preparation programs requires intentional curriculum design that prioritizes equity and inclusion. One effective strategy is integrating CP training across all coursework. This approach ensures that students consistently engage with concepts related to diversity, equity, and advocacy throughout their educational journey as teacher candidates. Additionally, requiring coursework and experiences in SLA helps future educators develop empathy and understanding for English language learners and the difficulties of SLA; this is one of the topics identified in the literature as needing to be understood by teacher candidates as part of teacher preparation in order to increase accurate representation of classification of English language learners. The focus is to avoid misclassification of bilingualism as a learning disability and over placement into special education which is already impacted with excessive workload. In addition to the principles and foundational SLA concepts, case studies and simulations can also be used to contextualize cultural and linguistic circumstances and solutions (García & Wei, 2014; Kubota et al., 2000). One case study example is the use of a 'Shock Language Class' in Japanese (Kubota et al., 2000) to explore real-world advocacy scenarios. This will allow teacher candidate students to practice responding to challenges they may encounter in their professional lives. Moreover, partnering

with community organizations provides opportunities for students to engage in meaningful linguistic and cultural advocacy work (García & Wei, 2014).

Bridging the gap between theory and practice can encouraging reflective practice and critical self-examination. This would serve teacher candidates in developing a deeper awareness of their cultural identities and biases. Finally, mentorship programs that emphasize advocacy and equity can support students in developing the skills and confidence needed to become effective advocates. These strategies collectively foster a culture of advocacy within teacher education programs with some mentorship and reflective practice concepts and elements.

Mentorship and reflective practice are powerful tools for embedding advocacy into teacher education. Mentorship programs that focus on advocacy and equity provide students with role models who exemplify professional and inclusive teaching practices. Lindsay and Lindsay (2016) describe this moral imperative as providing equity as role models for teachers who actually visually resemble the students from specific underrepresented demographic. This effort offers an advantage because students in the K12 educational system will see role models and identify with them. They will then know that as young people in this community they fit in, and are not seen with an 'out-group, in-group' dynamic. In this way, the actual role models show and demonstrate to the students that they can aspire to these multilingual skill sets themselves in their personal and professional life in society. The position taken in this article is that not only should these role models look like the demographic, but sound like the demographic with their linguistic idiolects that they personify as individuals and professionals in the social context (Labov, 1972).

In that manner, the hope is that teacher candidates as professional teachers in the social setting we will teach and also serve as mentors through advocacy to guide students through the complexities of their educational journeys. They will complete these activities by offering support and insight as they navigate their own linguistic, cultural, personal, and professional development. Reflective practice encourages teacher candidate students to examine their cultural identities, beliefs, and experiences. Combined, they can foster self-awareness and growth. Through reflection, students can identify areas for improvement and recognize systemic inequities. They can also develop strategies for promoting equity in their own classrooms where they end up teaching after their teacher candidacy is complete. This process is essential for cultivating culturally responsive educators who are committed to social justice. By combining mentorship with reflective practice, teacher education programs create a supportive environment where students can develop the skills and mindset necessary for effective advocacy. These elements not only enhance the quality of teacher preparation but also contribute to the broader goal of transforming education into a more equitable and inclusive system.

Teacher educators must also create opportunities for students to reflect on their cultural identities by examining systemic inequities and develop advocacy skills. Hopefully these experiences prepare students to become proactive advocates for their

students and communities. The impact of modeling extends well beyond individual classrooms, contributing to a broader cultural shift within education demonstrating how the community is also an extension of the classroom and vice versa (Perren, 2010). By prioritizing advocacy and professionalism, teacher educators can lead transformative change that promotes social justice and educational equity. This call to action emphasizes the need for intentionality, reflection, and a steadfast commitment to the values that define effective and compassionate teaching.

Conclusion

The moral responsibility combined with embracing multilingualism is connected to fostering an inclusive environment. This challenges inequities and underscores what has been discussed in this article as the moral and professional responsibility of teacher educators to model advocacy and cultural proficiency. Similarly, embracing multilingualism and engaging in second language and second cultural acquisition are essential steps in understanding and supporting the diverse needs of K12 students. This commitment to equity and inclusion must be reflected in every aspect of teacher education… from curriculum design to classroom interactions. By fostering an environment that values diversity and promotes social justice, educators can empower their students to become advocates for change.

The transformation of teacher education begins with modeling and extends to the development of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices. This renewed commitment calls for educators to challenge systemic inequities, celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity, and advocate for policies that support all learners. Through intentional action and reflective practice, teacher educators can lead the way in creating a more equitable and inclusive educational system. The implications for policy and practice in California are encapsulated in the following concluding statements. California's 2025 educational policy landscape continues to emphasize multilingualism as both an equity and economic imperative. Teacher education programs must align their advocacy and professionalism models with the state's Global California 2030 initiative, which promotes biliteracy and culturally responsive teaching. Embedding cultural proficiency and multilingual advocacy within this framework ensures that teacher candidates are not only well-prepared but also positioned to lead within California's linguistically diverse classrooms.

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Bridging Educator Preparation and Practice

A Reflective and Data-Informed Approach to Curriculum Design

Aya Shhub

Abstract

This practice explores the use of data-informed revisions to curriculum and Clinical Field Assignments (CFAs) within an intern teacher credential program to enhance candidate outcomes. Faculty analyzed survey data to identify areas for improvement in CalTPA preparedness and teaching practice. Using this feedback, faculty collaboratively redesigned course content and CFAs to better align with CalTPA requirements and classroom practices. This reflective process resulted in measurable improvements in candidates self-reported CalTPA readiness and teaching practice. Furthermore, measurable improvements in CalTPA pass rates were also indicated.

Keywords: Teacher preparation, Data-informed practice, Curriculum revision, Program improvement, Clinical Field Assignments

Introduction

Findings from a 2022 WSCUC Self-Study and Academic Program Review of AIA's Intern Teacher Credential Program identified a need for Reach faculty within the AIA intern teacher credential program to update and enhance course

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curriculum/design and Clinical Field Assignments (CFAs), with a focus on strengthening connections to both teaching practice and CalTPA submission requirements. In response, this project examined the impact of those CFA and course curriculum updates on a nonprofit accredited university's teacher education program (AIA's Intern Teacher Credential Program) candidates' self-reported CalTPA preparedness and teaching practice. Survey data was collected from three cohorts: cohort A (2022-2023), cohort B (2023-2024), and cohort C (2024-2025). Table 1 provides demographic data of enrolled candidates for 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025. Faculty used annual survey results for each cohort to guide improvements to course content and CFA design. This presentation will share key program updates, their alignment with California teacher preparation standards, and findings related to CalTPA pass rates, candidate's perceived readiness for the CalTPA and their evolving classroom practice.

Clinical Field Assignment (CFA)

The Clinical Field Assignment (CFA) is a summative assessment that candidates in the program complete each unit of instruction in each course taken. The CFA is designed to support authentic application of learning in a real-world classroom setting, specifically the teacher candidate's classroom in which they are intern teachers. Each CFA is aligned with California Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) and reflects CalTPA structure (see appendix A).

Table 1
AIA Reach Intern Candidate Demographics 2022-2025

	Cohort A (N= 59)	*Cohort B (N= 67)*	*Cohort C (N= 177)*
Credential Type			
Single Subject	*n* = 43	*n* = 53	*n* = 102
Multiple Subject	*n* = 16	*n* = 14	*n* = 75
Gender			
Male	*n* = 20	*n* = 26	*n* = 68
Female	*n* = 38	*n* = 40	*n* = 104
Nonbinary	*n* = 1	*n* = 1	*n* = 4
Decline to State	*n* = 0	*n* = 0	n = 1
Race/Ethnicity			
Asian	*n* = 8	*n* = 6	*n* = 20
Black or African American	*n* = 9	*n* = 11	*n* = 22
Latin American	*n* = 21	*n* = 21	*n* = 55
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	*n* = 3	*n* = 4	*n* = 5
White	*n* = 13	*n* = 15	*n* = 43
Two or more races	*n* = 3	*n* = 6	*n* = 22
Decline to state	*n* = 2	*n* = 4	*n* = 9

Notes. cohort A (2022-2023), cohort B (2023-2024), and cohort C (2024-2025)

Purpose

The overarching purpose of each CFA is multifaceted: (1) assess a candidate's mastery of TPEs and learning goals addressed in the unit, (2) CalTPA skill practice (planning, instruction, and reflection), and (3) consistent targeted feedback and opportunities for deep self-reflection focused on analyzing each instructional choice and its impact on student learning.

Process

Each CFA includes four key elements that reflect the structure of a CalTPA cycle. First candidates will go through the planning process. They design a lesson which applies a specific focus target strategy. Candidates then implement this lesson within the classroom where they are intern teachers. This is a critical step to the CFA because it gives candidates the opportunity to see how theory translates into practice. After implementing the lesson candidates will go through a reflection where they evaluate how effective their lesson was based on two outcome variables: student engagement and learning outcomes. Candidates will also reflect on opportunities for improvement. Lastly, candidates will identify and plan next steps to refine their teaching based on what they learned from the CFA process.

Each step of the CFA process is interactive and collaborative. Candidates receive feedback from faculty at each stage of the process utilizing CFA rubrics aligned to TPEs (see appendix B). Peer feedback and self-assessment is also integrated within the process to ensure candidates are given multiple perspectives on their teaching practice. The CFA challenges candidates to implement new strategies into their teaching practice and critically reflect on its effectiveness. It serves as a bridge between coursework, classroom practice, and reflective growth. All of which will support candidates' success with the CalTPA and throughout their teaching career.

Updates and Improvements

Reach faculty working in Alternatives in Action's Intern Teacher Credential Program identified a need to update and enhance course curriculum and Clinical Field Assignments (CFAs), with an emphasis on strengthening alignment between teaching practice and CalTPA submission requirements. The update process was both systematic and data driven, guided by continuous reflection and feedback. Key steps in the improvement cycle included:

- Reviewing student survey data, including Likert-scale responses and qualitative feedback.
- Developing CFA rubrics for each course unit to align with specific CalTPA elements.
- Creating a consistent, simplified CFA template modeled after CalTPA structure.
- Designing a CFA tutorial that highlighted the relevance and classroom impact of each CFA.

- Implementing an end of semester student survey — engaging in faculty reflection making improvements based on findings — repeating the process.

This ongoing cycle of evaluation and revision supports this practice's commitment to preparing candidates for both CalTPA success and effective, reflective teaching practice.

Findings

The following section will summarize the quantitative and qualitative survey data across three years for the three intern teacher education cohorts: cohort A (2022-2023), cohort B (2023-2024), and cohort C (2024-2025). The aim is to identify the impact of this practice's cycle of engaging in reflection and making data driven curriculum improvements each semester to better align CFAs and course content with CalTPA requirements and classroom practices. It will begin by first summarizing findings related to impacts on teaching practice and end with findings related to impacts on CalTPA preparedness.

Impact on Teaching Practice

Survey data indicated a 15.04% increase between 2022 and 2025 in candidates who "strongly agree" that the CFA supported improvements in their teaching practice. With an average increase of 7.52% each year (see Figure 1). See Table 2 for a breakdown of survey responses. Qualitative data was also collected via responses to an anecdotal survey question (i.e., what was the most significant moment of learning on your teaching practice). Candidate responses were analyzed to identify

Figure 1

CFA Supported Improvemenbts in Teaching Practice

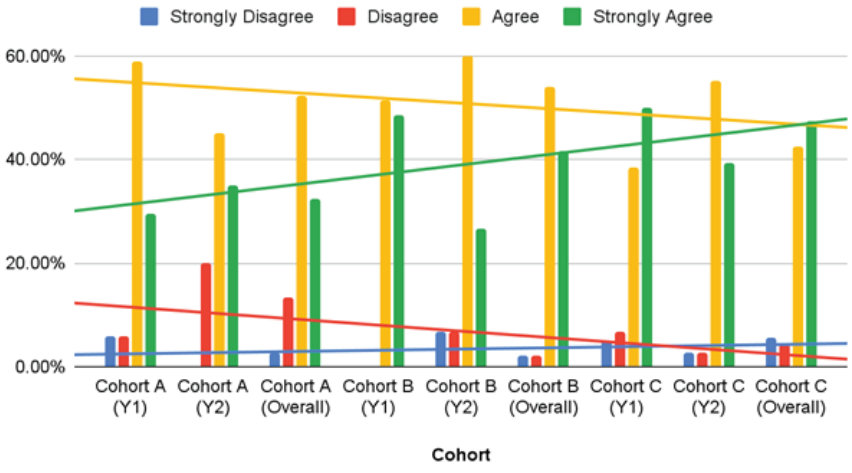


Table 2
Improve Teaching Practice

		Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
Cohort A (*N*= 37)	Year 1 (*n*=17)	5.88%	5.88%	58.82%	29.41%
	Year 2 (*n*=20)	0%	20%	45%	35%
	Overall	2.70%	13.51%	52.35%	32.43%
Cohort B (*N*=48)	Year 1 (*n*= 33)	0%	0%	51.52%	48.48%
	Year 2 (*n*= 15)	6.67%	6.67%	60%	26.67%
	Overall	2.08%	2.08%	54.17%	41.67%
Cohort C (*N*=158)	Year 1 (*n*=120)	5%	6.67%	38.33%	50%
	Year 2 *(n*=38)	2.63%	2.63%	55.26%	39.47%
	Overall	5.70%	4.43%	42.41%	47.47%

Notes: cohort A (2022-2023), cohort B (2023-2024), and cohort C (2024-2025)

the number of instances where candidates mentioned the CFA, course content (i.e., instructional strategies, behavior management, lesson planning, etc.), or multiple (i.e., CFA, course content, collaboration, guest speakers, feedback, reflection, etc.) as being the most significant moment of learning on their teaching practice.

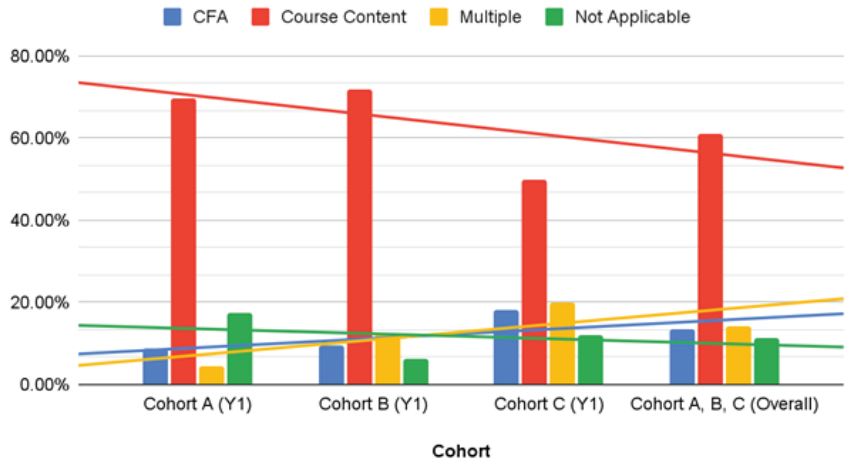
Findings indicated that course content had the largest percentage of instances reported with an average percentage of 55.48% across all cohorts (see Figure 2). The data also indicates a consistent increase in instances of CFA and instances of multiple across cohorts. Instances of CFA showed an increase from 8.70% (cohort A) to 18% (cohort B). Instances of multiple showed an increase from 4.35% (cohort A) to 20% (cohort B). These findings suggest that improvements made to the course design/curriculum and CFA each year through this practice's data-driven approach made a positive impact across various aspects of candidate learning. See Table 3 for a breakdown of the qualitative data.

Preparedness for CalTPA

Survey data indicated a 16.59% increase between cohort A and B in candidates who "strongly agree" that the course curriculum prepared them for the CalTPA (see Table 4). These survey findings align and support CalTPA first attempt pass

Figure 2

Most Significant Momdent of Learning



rates which indicated a 12% increase in cycle one pass rates and a 27% increase in cycle two pass rates between cohort A and cohort C (see Figure 4). See Table 5 for a breakdown of CalTPA pass rates.

Qualitative data was also collected via responses to an anecdotal survey question (i.e., what was the most helpful aspect of the program for CalTPA completion). Candidate responses were analyzed to identify the number of instances when the CFA was mentioned (see Figure 3). Findings indicated across cohorts A, B, and C

Table 3

Qualitative Survey Data (Most Significant Moment of Learning on Teaching Practice)

	CFA	*Course Content*	*Multiple*	*Not Applicable*
Cohort A (*N*= 23)	8.70%	69.57%	4.35%	17.39%
Cohort B (*N*= 32)	9.38%	71.88%	12.5%	6.25%
Cohort C (*N*= 50)	18%	50%	20%	12%
Cohort A, B, C (*N*=105)	13.33%	60.95%	14.29%	11.43%

Notes: cohort A (2022-2023), cohort B (2023-2024), and cohort C (2024-2025) Course content (i.e., instructional strategies, behavior management, lesson planning, etc.) ; Multiple (i.e., cfa, course content, collaboration, guest speakers, feedback, reflection, etc.) ; Not Applicable (i.e., left blank, did not answer question)

Table 4
Preparedness for CalTPA

		Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
Cohort A (*N*= 37)	Year 1 (*n*=17)	0%	0%	64.71%	35.29%
	Year 2 *(n*=20)	0%	0%	60%	40%
	Overall	0%	0%	62.16%	37.84%
Cohort B (*N*=48)	Year 1 (*n*= 33)	0%	3.03%	39.40%	57.58%
	Year 2 (*n*= 15)	0%	6.67%	53.33%	40%
	Overall	0%	4.17%	43.75%	52.08%
Cohort C (*N*=158)	Year 1 (*n*=120)	2.5%%	4.17%	36.67%	56.67%
	Year 2 (*n*=38)	0%	2.63%	50%	47.37%
	Overall	1.90%	3.80%	39.87%	54.43%

Notes: cohort A (2022-2023), cohort B (2023-2024), and cohort C (2024-2025)

Table 5
CalTPA Pass Rates (First Attempt)

	Cycle 1	*State*	*Cycle 2*	*State*
Cohort A	74%	84%	71%	88%
Cohort B	77%	89%	81%	91%
Cohort C	86%	90%	98%	92%

Notes: (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2024); cohort A (2022-2023), cohort B (2023-2024), and cohort C (2024-2025

the CFA was mentioned in 23.50% of candidate responses. Furthermore, an overall increase of 9.21% was found between cohort A and cohort B, with an average increase of 4.06% across each year. See table 6 for a breakdown of the qualitative data.

Qualitative data also highlighted a larger number of instances the CFA was mentioned in candidate responses during Year 1 (CalTPA cycle 1) across all cohorts (A, B, and C). Overall candidates mentioned the CFA 27.93% more in Year 1 (CalTPA cycle 1) than what was found in Year 2 (CalTPA cycle 2) responses. However, it is important to note there was an overall increase of 4.09% in Year 2 responses between cohort A and cohort B suggesting that improvements made to the CFA each year through this practice's data-driven approach made a positive impact.

Figure 3

CFA Mentioned as "Most Helpful Aspect" of Program for CalTPA Completion

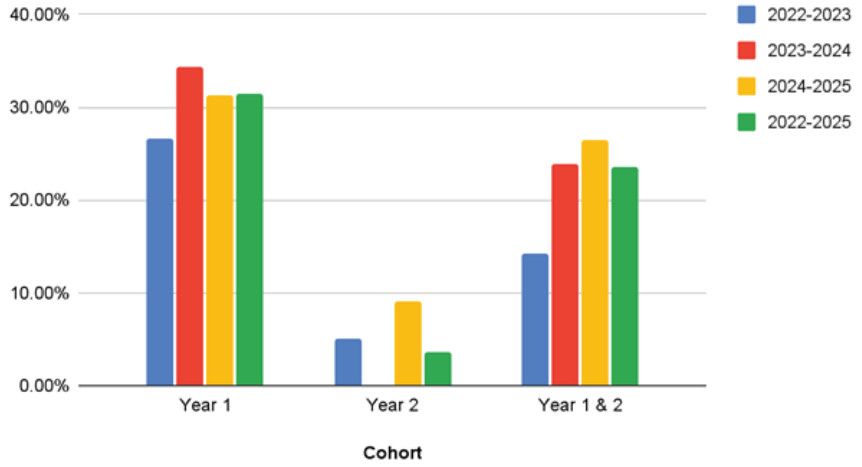
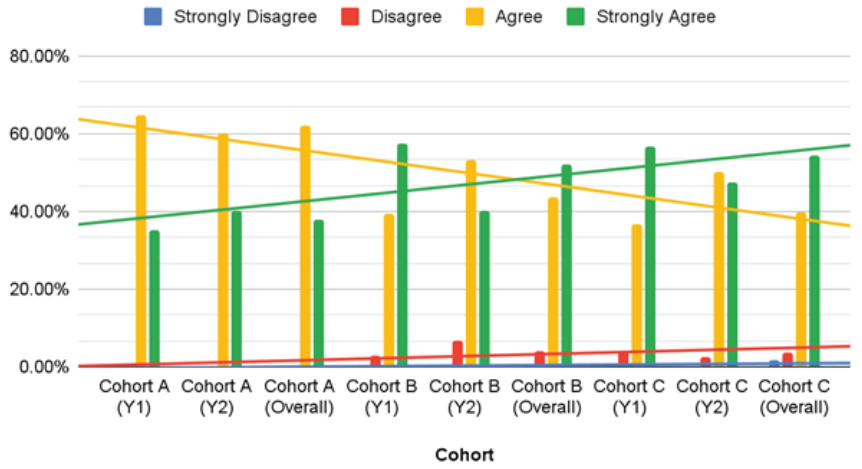


Figure 4

Preparedness for CalTPA



Significance to the Field of Teacher Education

Findings from this practice highlight that targeted data-driven curriculum and course improvements can positively impact teacher candidate's perceived CalTPA preparedness and actual CalTPA pass rates. The gains each year in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 pass rates surpassed that of the overall state. Furthermore, cohort C pass

Table 6
Qualitative Survey Data (CFA Helpful in CalTPA Completion)

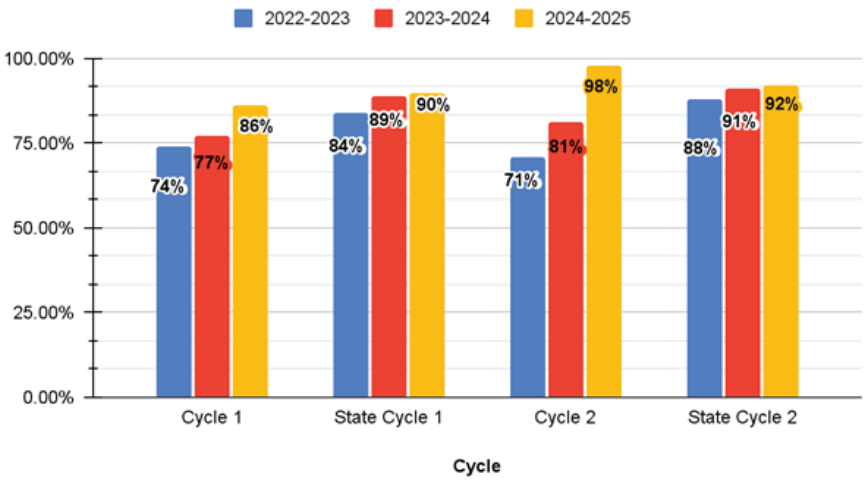
	Year 1	*Year 2*	*Overall*
Cohort A (*N*= 35)	26.67%	5%	14.29%
Cohort B (*N*= 46)	34.38%	0%	23.91%
Cohort C (*N*= 102)	31.25%	9.09%	26.47%
Cohort A, B, C (*N*= 183)	31.50%	3.57%	23.50%

Notes: cohort A (2022-2023), cohort B (2023-2024), and cohort C (2024-2025)

rates for Cycle 2 surpass the overall state pass rate by 6% (see Figure 5). This is particularly important in the current time because it supports the broader aim of addressing the teacher shortage. If candidates are able to pass the CalTPA on their first attempt it means they can get out into the field sooner. Furthermore, the financial benefits of not having to re-enroll in a program, re-register for the CalTPA, and begin working sooner break some of the barriers for traditionally underrepresented teachers in the field.

The improvements made to the CFA and course content/curriculum highlight that when there is intentionality in mirroring CalTPA requirements and addressing the everyday realities of being an educator through actionable teaching methods, improvements in teacher candidate performance and preparedness can be expected. Consideration of these practices is particularly important early into a candidate's time in a teacher education program. Findings from the qualitative data highlighted

Figure 5
CalTPA Pass Ratdes (First Attempt)



that candidates in their first year found the CFA to be especially impactful in their CalTPA preparedness. Suggesting that teacher education programs should pay particular attention to what supports are embedded early on in their program. Overall findings from this practice support not only teacher candidate growth but also the overarching goal of educator preparation: preparing a diverse and well-equipped teacher population who will engage in a reflective data driven practice to support the learning and growth of students in their classrooms.

Reference

Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2024, December). *Annual report on the Commission approved teaching and administrator performance assessments*. https://meetings.ctc.ca.gov/Document/Download/221

Appendix A
SAMPLE - Clinical Field Assignment (CFA)

Clinical Field Assignment
1.1 Classroom Culture and Community

Assignment Description

For this clinical field assignment, you will use what you've learned about your students' assets, prior experiences, and interests to plan and implement a whole class routine or activity. Regardless of the content that you teach or the routine or activity that you plan and implement, for the purposes of this assignment, you will explain the extent to which the routine or activity you implemented fostered classroom community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all learners.

To that end, for this assignment, you will identify a problem of practice in your class related to creating a positive and safe classroom culture, and then plan and implement a strategy, routine, or activity that you think will address your problem of practice. After implementing this strategy, you will collect and analyze data to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of your chosen strategy, routine, or activity.

Finally, you will determine next steps to continue to promote a positive learning environment for all students.

Part A. Background

Directions

Respond to the questions below to provide contextual information about the class you are choosing to focus on for this assignment. Define your problem of practice, summarize what the research says about promoting a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students, and pose an inquiry question.

1. Contextual Information for the Class

A. Link your Class Profile here:

B. Summarize information from the Students' Assets, Experiences, and Interests in 1-2 sentences:

2. Problem of Practice

Describe the situation related to classroom culture and community that you are attempting to address by implementing a whole class strategy, routine, or activity. Then, describe your desired outcome as a result of implementing the strategy/routine/activity that you choose.

3. Literature

What have you learned through the resources, readings, and course content of this unit about promoting a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students? Use quotes or paraphrased text from at least one resource from the unit. Include the name of the author(s), title of the text, year of publication, and/or link as relevant.

4. Inquiry

Choose a whole class strategy, routine, or activity that you plan to implement and investigate that you think will address your Problem of Practice. State it in the form of an inquiry question. Use the sentence frame below to help you formulate your question.

What impact might [routine/strategy/activity] have on [situation that you are attempting to address]?

Part B. Instructional Strategy Rationale

Directions

Respond to the questions below to describe your plan for implementing the whole class strategy, routine, or activity that you identified in your Inquiry Question.

1. Written Narrative

A. Why did you choose this particular strategy/routine/activity? How will implementing this strategy address the Problem of Practice you identified?

B. When and how will you implement this strategy/routine/activity? If applicable, include links to any resources to be used during implementation, such as links to lesson plans, handouts, or models or other examples of the strategy in use.

2. Data to Collect

C. What data will you collect to evaluate the effectiveness of your strategy? Explain why this is the most appropriate type of data to collect for the strategy/routine/activity you selected.

When will you teach this lesson? Date

Part C. Implementation

Directions

Teach and record the lesson, implementing the instructional strategy you chose. Collect data. Then, link your data in the section below.

1. Video Clip

Link your video clip (uploaded to Torsh) of you implementing the strategy or learning activity:

2. (Optional) Other Artifacts

(Optional) Link supporting data you collected when you implemented this strategy (e.g., sample student work, field notes, assessment results, etc.):

Part D. Discussion/Analysis

Directions

In seminar, you and your peers will analyze your data to brainstorm your next steps for promoting community and a positive and safe classroom culture. For this discussion protocol, assign roles. The facilitator ensures all group members adhere to the procedures and attend to the provided guiding questions. The note-taker takes notes below. The time keeper uses a timer to keep the discussion moving.

Facilitator: Note-Taker: Time Keeper:

Objective

Presenter will be able to identify an appropriate next step for promoting community and a positive and safe classroom culture by analyzing and discussing the data collected for this CFA with a group of their peers.

Procedures & Guiding Questions *Notes*

3 min. - Framing: Presenter speaks. The audience listens silently and stays muted.
Share your inquiry question.
What strategy/routine/activity did you implement in your lesson?
Why did you choose this particular strategy/routine/activity?
What was your desired outcome as a result of implementing this strategy/routine/activity?
What data did you collect to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy/routine/activity?

2 min - Clarifying Questions: Audience and presenter all come off mute and ask and answer clarifying questions.

5 min. - View Artifacts: Presenter shares the data. Peers read the data and ask additional clarifying questions, if needed.

8 min. - Audience Discussion: Audience discusses what they observe in the data and and what inferences could be drawn from the data. The presenter listens and stays muted.
What do we observe in the data?
What compelling evidence is there of the presenter implementing the planned strategy/routine/activity?
What compelling evidence, if any, is there of students meeting the desired outcome of the planned strategy/routine/activity?
In what ways did this strategy/routine/activity promote a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment?
What are some possible next steps for promoting and maintaining community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment? for all students?

1 min. - Presenter Reflection: Presenter speaks. The audience listens.
Based on your and your peers' analysis and discussion of your data, what might you do as next steps for promoting and maintaining community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students?

Part E. Reflect

Directions

Respond to the following prompts. Cite evidence from course content, the data you collected, and any other section of this CFA to support your claims. If relevant, you may also cite from previously submitted assignments from this course as well as assigned texts. If you choose to cite your own coursework, provide a link to the source directly in your response.

1. Candidate Reflection of the Lesson

A. Respond to your inquiry question. Cite information from the data you collected and/or relevant course content to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the strategy/routine/activity you implemented. A sentence frame is provided below to help you start your response.

The impact that [strategy/routine/activity] had on [situation that you are attempting to address] was…

B. What big ideas or takeaways do you have regarding implementing whole class strategies/routines/activities for promoting and maintaining community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students?

2. Application and Next Steps for Learning

A. If you were to implement this strategy/routine/activity again, what would you do the same and/or differently to promote community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students? Cite information from the data you collected and/or relevant course content to support your reasoning.

B. What would you like to try tomorrow/next week/next year as a result of this clinical field assignment? Cite information from the data you collected and/or relevant course content to support your reasoning.

Appendix B
SAMPLE - Clinical Field Assignment (CFA) Rubric

Rubric (Part 1 or 4)

Classroom Culture and Community: Background and Plan

Learning Objective:

The candidate can find, evaluate, adapt, or design classroom strategies, routines, or activities that foster a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all learners.

Missing or Incomplete (0)	*Does Not Meet Expectations (1)*	*Approaches Expectations (2)*	*Meets Expectations (3)*	*Exceeds Expectations (4)*
In Part A or B: the section is blank or incomplete.	In Part A or B: Candidate does not provide a planned strategy, routine, or activity designed to provide a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all learners.	In Part A or B: Candidate planned strategy, routine or activity is related to creating a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all learners but is not	In Part A or B: Candidate plannede strategy, routine or activity is designed to provide a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all learners and is designed	All in Meets Expectations (3) Plus In Parts & B: The candidate clearly explains how the planned strategy, routine, or activity is responsive to the assets and needs of their specific students.

Missing or Incomplete (0)	*Does Not Meet Expectations (1)*	*Approaches Expectations (2)*	*Meets Expectations (3)*	*Exceeds Expectations (4)*
		designed to address their Problems of Practice.	to address their Problems of Practice.	
	OR	OR		
	The candidate does not provide a rationale for why the planned strategy, routine, or activity is designed to address the Problem of Practice the candidate has identified.	The candidate minimally describes why the planned strategy, routine, or activity is designed to address the Problem of Practice the candidate has identified.	The candidate provides a cogent rationale for why the planned strategy, routine, or activity is designed to address the Problem of Practice the candidate has identified.	

Rubric (Part 2 or 4)

Classroom Culture and Community: Implementation

Learning Objective:

The candidate can implement whole class strategies, routines, or activities for promoting community and culture.

Missing or Incomplete (0)	*Does Not Meet Expectations (1)*	*Approaches Expectations (2)*	*Meets Expectations (3)*	*Exceeds Expectations (4)*
In Part C:	In Part C:	In Part C:	In Part C:	All in Meets Expectations (3) Plus
the section is blank or incomplete.	The candidate planned for data collection but did not collect the data.	There is evidence that the candidate implemented an activity or strategy	There is clear evidence that the candidate implemented the planned	The candidate's data collection was thouough and clearly aligned to the planned strategy, routine, or

Missing or Incomplete (0)	*Does Not Meet Expectations (1)*	*Approaches Expectations (2)*	*Meets Expectations (3)*	*Exceeds Expectations (4)*
	OR The candidate collected data that is unrelated or misaligned to their planned strategy, routine, or activity.	in their classroom but it is unclear how this strategy connects to the goal of promoting a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students. OR Candidates collected data, though the data might not clearly indicate whether or not the proposed strategy was effective to inform future action.	routine, or activity for promoting a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students. Data collected clearly indicates whether the proposed strategy was or was not effective.	activity in a way that supports a clear picture of where and how the proposed strategy was effective.

Rubric (Part 3 or 4)

Classroom Culture and Community: Reflection

Learning Objective:

The candidate can reflect on the impact of planning and implementing strategies/routines/activities that promote a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all learners, and analyze how effective the strategy/routine/activity was in supporting the whole class in fostering a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment.

Missing or Incomplete (0)	*Does Not Meet Expectations (1)*	*Approaches Expectations (2)*	*Meets Expectations (3)*	*Exceeds Expectations (4)*
In Part E1: the section is blank or incomplete.	In Part E1: The candidate does not describe the effectiveness of their strategy/ routine/activity to support the whole class in fostering a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment. OR The candidate does not cite any evidence from the data collected and relevant course content.	In Part E1: The candidate minimally describes the effectiveness of their strategy/ routine/ activity to support the whole class in fostering a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment. Candidate cites evidence from the data collected and relevant course content that is misaligned to and/or unsupportive of their reflection and analysis.	In Part E1: The candidate analyzes how effective their strategy/ routine/ activity was or was not in supporting the whole class in fostering a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment. The candidate cites evidence from the data collected and relevant course content to support their reflection and analysis.	All in Meets Expectations (3) Plus In Part E1: References to cited course readings and assignment submissions contribute to well-developed and nuanced reflections. Candidate writing reflects deep self-awareness, including awareness of the boundaries of their own understanding.

Rubric (Part 4 or 4)

Classroom Culture and Community: Application and Next Steps

Learning Objective:

The candidate can apply what they have learned in this CFA about promoting community and culture in determining next steps for instruction that will promote community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Missing or Incomplete (0)	*Does Not Meet Expectations (1)*	*Approaches Expectations (2)*	*Meets Expectations (3)*	*Exceeds Expectations (4)*
In Part E2:	In Part E2:	In Part E2:	In Part E2:	All in Meets Expectations (3) Plus:
the section is blank or incomplete.	The candidate's description of future instruction for students is not connected to promoting community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students. OR The candidate does not describe next steps for instruction that are connected to what was learned in this lesson. OR The candidate does not cite evidence from the data collected and relevant course content.	The candidate provides a vague description of future instruction for students that is partially related to promoting community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students. The candidate lists next steps for instruction that are vague or unconnected to what was learned in this lesson. Candidate cites evidence from the data collected and relevant course content that is misaligned to and/or unsupportive of their reflection and analysis.	The candidate applies what they have learned in this CFA to describe future instrucrtion that will promote community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students. The casndidate describes next steps for instruction that are clearly planned and are connected to what was learned in this lesson. The candidate cites evidence from the data collected and relevant course content to support their decisions about next steps for content learning	The candidate creates a detailed action plan for future instruction that will promote community and a positive, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all studdents. The plan breaks down larger actions into manageable next-steps and includes deadlines or timeframes for action steps. The plan may identify needed supports, anticipated barriers to success, and strategies for overcoming barriers.

Critical Reflection, Transformative Learning, and Vision Statements

David Rago

Abstract

The use of the words and phrases *transformational*, *transformation*, *transformative*, and *transformative learning* has risen. These words are often used in the vision statements of Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs). At times, the meaning of these words is unclear, possibly leaving vision statements open to interpretations by employees and the public that may not align with the authors' intention. For this paper, formal and specific definitions of transformational, transformation, and transformative were found in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online. A brief literature review was also done to show researchers' conceptual understanding of these terms and their application to education and learning. An actual student assignment and grading rubric is used to exemplify how programs and coursework may be designed to engage students in transformative learning and to demonstrate how IHEs may align programs to their vision statements.

Keywords: critical reflection, transformative learning, transformational, transformation, transformative, vision statements

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Introduction

Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) need an identity; to stand out, to emphasize their uniqueness, to signify their place in the academic community, and to align with their stakeholders' expectations. A vision statement may serve as the IHE's external communication, defining its meaning and goals (Tamassy et al., 2025) and establishing its agency and meaning in society (Tamassy et al., 2025). Once it adopts a vision statement, the IHEs need to align their policies and programs with it.

In 2001, the University of Denver, for example, included the words "public good" into its vision statement (Fretz et al., 2009). A campus dialogue ensued about what "public good works" meant and how to act on it (Fretz et al., 2009). Lately, IHEs and their colleges and schools of education have vision statements that incorporate references to change. Many include the words *transformation*, *transform*, or *transformative*, occasionally using them interchangeably. For example, National University (NU) uses the statement, "To be an inclusive and innovative university serving life-long learners who contribute to the positive transformation of society" (*About National University*). The University of California, Davis uses the phrase "Empowering Learners, Transforming Education … *Together*" (https://ue.ucdavis.edu/vision-mission-and-goals) as the university's undergraduate education vision statement. Finally, the University of California, Riverside Academic Preparation, Recruitment, &Outreach division describes a mission to "…. transform the lives of the people of California, the nation, and the world through the discovery, communication, translation, application, and preservation of knowledge—thereby enriching the state's economic, social, cultural, and environmental future" (https://apro.ucr.edu/mission-statement). Absent a definition of *transformation* (NU) and *transform* (UC, Davis; UC, Riverside), one must assume what these words mean and whether alignment exists between institutions' intentions and the design of their programs. *Transformation*, *transformative*, and *transformational* are words frequently used in different areas and sometimes interchangeably. The results of a Google search revealed that since January 2025, the words *transformation*, *transformative*, and *transformational* have been used in the areas of artificial intelligence (AI), the workforce and job market, research funding, and technology trends. *Transformative learning* is used in discussions related to the field of education. Although these words are used in different contexts, they are defined using similar terms.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online, the first recorded use of *transformation* (n) was around 1475, *transformative* (adj) in 1673, *transform* (n*)* in 1853, and *transformational* in 1894. According to Google's Ngram Viewer, there has been an uptick in the frequency of *transformation* appearing in published works from 1942 to 2022, and an increase in the use of *transformational* from 1962 to 2022. The frequent use of *transformational* in published works dipped in the 1980s but increased again around 2000 (see Figure 1). The frequency of *transformative* in published works increased from around 2002 to 2022. When

transformative learning was searched in the Ngram Viewer, it showed an increase in use from around 1985 to 2022 (see Figure 2).

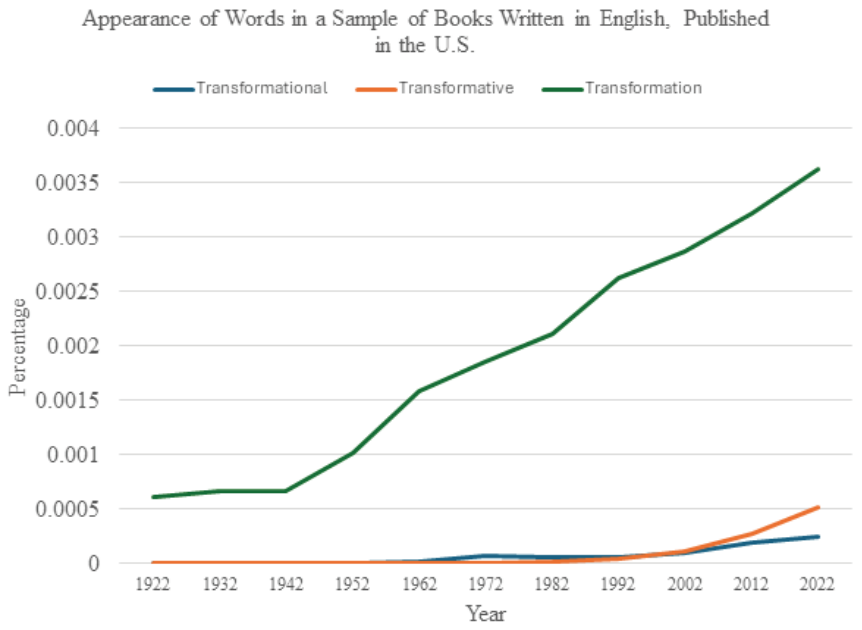
Emerging in the second half of the 20th Century, *transformative learning* is a relatively new idea in education. Data (see Figure 2) show that the phrase *transformative learning* has appeared in print more often today than in the prior century. This is a cause to understand its meaning.

The definition of *transformation*, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is "a marked change in form, nature, or appearance." *Transformational* is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "relating to or involving transformation or transformation", and *transformative* is defined as "causing a marked change in someone or something." These definitions may suggest a change or an alteration of a thing or an idea. Change, as a noun, verb, or adjective, may be the common aspect of each definition. Several researchers have also described their understanding of *transformative learning*.

Literature Review

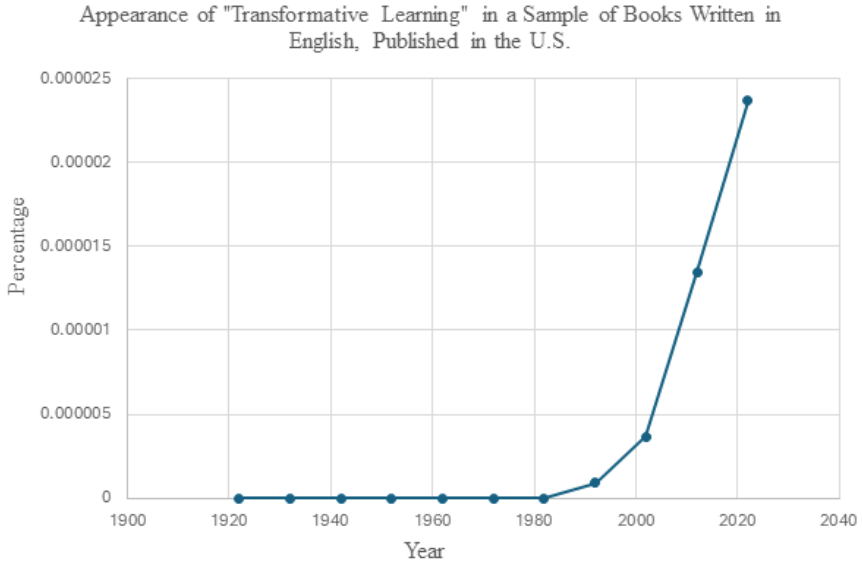
Mezirow (1991) defined *transformative learning* as "learning that transforms problematic reference patterns to make them more inclusive, distinct, reflective, open,

Figure 1



(https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=transformation%2C+transformative%2C+transformational&year_start=1800&year_end=2022&corpus=en&smoothing=3)

Figure 2



(https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=transformative+learning&year_start=1922&year_end=2022&corpus=en&smoothing=3&case_insensitive=false)

and emotionally capable of change" (in Brunnquell & Brunstein, 2018). Mezirow understood critical reflection as the core of *transformative learning* (Brunnquell & Brunstein, 2018), meaning that *transformative learning* is a shift in perspective. Later, O'Sullivan (2003) fully defined *transformative learning*.

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (O'Sullivan, 2003)

O'Sullivan (2003) explained *transformative learning* as a shift in thinking, feeling, and being in the world. He also described its influence on power, race, and gender relations. Barker (2020) defined *transformative* (transformational) *learning* similarly, while focused on its meaning in education. He wrote that "Transformational learning is an approach to education that recognizes changes in the learner's perspective and not just the acquisition of facts (p. 10).

Barker (2020) went on to say, "Transformational learning is often the pedagogy of choice for cultural awareness programs in education, native studies, language arts,

and increasingly in business and finance" (p. 8). Summarizing Anderberg's (2009) and Donnelly-Smith's (2009) thoughts, Barker (2020) also wrote that "…. leaders in higher education have been seeking ways to refocus colleges' and universities' missions around such global themes (p. 8). The themes he referred to are "…. developments in climate, communication technologies, and media platforms (p. 8).

Application

IHEs may apply a research-based understanding of *transformative learning* to program development and design that will align with their vision statements. In practice, transformative learning is triggered by critical reflection. Mezirow (1990) described critical reflection as what "occurs when we analyze and challenge the validity of our presuppositions and assess the appropriateness of our knowledge, understanding, and beliefs given our present contexts." Integrating assignments and assessments into coursework that prompts students to "analyze and challenge" (Mezirow, 1990) their assumptions and rethink their beliefs may engage them in transformative learning and reflect universities' intentions, as expressed in their vision statements. The integration of such assignments may be easy if universities follow Brookfield's (1990) three phases. These phases are 1) identifying assumptions, 2) assessing and examining assumptions in the light of actual experiences and contexts, and 3) transforming assumptions to shape future experiences and contexts (Brookfield, 1990). Table 1 shows an assignment organized around Brookfield's (1990) three phases and designed to elicit critical reflection with transformative learning in mind.

The strategies and mechanisms of critical reflection include assessment. The tool used to assess students' work related to the Table 1 assignment is displayed in Table 2.

Conclusion

Whether it is an online, hybrid, or in-person class, it is possible to design a learning environment for critical reflection and transformative learning. Bound, Seng Chee, Chow, Xinghua, & Kah Hui (2019) discussed ways to create reflective environments. Some of their ideas include letting students explore ideas, concepts, theories, and themes relevant to the course content and challenging students' thinking with open-ended questions. They also suggested helping students refine their answers rather than quickly telling them they are right or wrong, coaching them to expand and elaborate on their answers, or asking them to justify their thinking. Provide opportunities for students to respond to each other in one-to-one or small-group formats so they can challenge and build on each other's and their own thinking, and finally, allow students to get clarification (Bound, Seng Chee, Chow, Xinghua, & Kah Hui, 2019). Educator preparation programs can use a knowledge and understanding of the dictionary and conceptual definitions of t*ransformation*,

transformational, *transformative*, and *transformative learning* to design and write courses that align with university and department vision statements.

Table 1

Instructions: Review your work from the course. Identify one assignment you learned the most from. After you identify an assignment, write a short reflection (no more than 500 words) or record a 3:00-minute video reflection. 1. Before you started this course, what assumptions did you have about yourself as an Education Specialist and the Special Education field in particular? 2. After completing the assignment you identified, how have your assumptions about yourself and the Special Education field been challenged? 3. How will these challenges to your assumptions influence your future practice as an Education Specialist? 4. What Course Learning Outcome does the assignment you chose meet and why?	
Phase 1: Identifying Assumptions (Brookfield, 1990)	This assignment aligns with Brookfield's (1990) phase 1: identifying assumptions, because it directly asks students about their own assumptions about specific topics before and after completing a separate course assignment.
Phase 2: Assessing and Examining Assumptions in the Light of Actual Experiences and Contexts (Brookfield, 1990)	This assignment aligns with Brookfield's (1990) phase 2, because it requires students to reflect on their experience completing a separate course assignment and how that experience may have influenced their assumptions about themselves as Education Specialists and the Special Education field.
Phase 3: Transforming Assumptions to Shape Future Experiences and Contexts (Brookfield, 1990)	This assignment aligns with Brookfield's (1990) phase 3, because to respond to question 3, students need to consider how their assumptions changed over time and how this change will shape their future practice as an Education Specialist.

Note: This table was made by the author and includes an assignment the author wrote for an online course for adults in an Educator Preparation Program and information previously published by Brookfield (1990).

Table 2

Criteria	Transformation	Integration	Exposure	Not Achieved
Content	The assignment prompted a **major** shift in the students' perception of themselves as Education Specialists. They provided a **detailed** explanation of their choice of assignments, how they feel it reflects their learning in the course, and how it demonstrates the mastery of **one** or **more** course learning outcomes.	The assignment prompted a shift in the students' perception of themselves as Education Specialists. They provided an explanation of their choice of assignments, how they feel it reflects their learning in the course, and how it demonstrates the mastery of **one** course learning outcome.	The assignment did not prompt a shift in the students' perception of themselves as Education Specialists. They explained their choice of assignments, how they feel it reflects their learning in the course, or how it demonstrates the mastery of **one** course learning outcome.	The assignment did not prompt a shift in the students' perception of themselves as Education Specialists. They did not explain their choice of assignments, how they feel it reflects their learning in the course, and how it demonstrates the mastery of **one** course learning outcome.

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Breaking Barriers, Building Futures

Using Student-Centered Approaches to Advocate for Early Childhood Educators

Christina Laney & Ruth Piker

Abstract

California's transition to Universal Preschool created an urgent demand for a qualified Transitional Kindergarten (TK) workforce, even as most preschool educators lack accessible pathways into credentialed teaching roles. This study examines how California State University, Long Beach's (CSULB) PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Instruction Credential program uses student-centered approaches to expand access for working early educators. Grounded in research on culturally responsive and student-centered learning, the program integrates flexible evening and hybrid coursework, individualized advising, targeted financial aid support, mentorship, and recognition of prior preschool experience. Using mixed methods including application trends, survey responses, and candidate outcomes, this study finds that these supports substantially increased application completion, diversified the candidate pool, and strengthened belonging and retention. Results suggest that student-centered PK-3 pathways can address statewide TK staffing needs while promoting equity, upward mobility, and workforce stability for early childhood educators.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Student-Centered, Advocacy, Teacher Preparation

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Introduction

The PK-3 Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialist Instruction Credential is a new California state-issued credential that authorizes teachers to teach children from preschool through 3rd grade. The timing of the PK-3 credential aligns with a significant structural change in California's early learning system. In 2021, the state committed to a universal preschool initiative for all four-year-olds (and selected three-year-olds) by the 2025-26 school year (Wang et al., 2025). This expansion transforms Transitional Kindergarten (TK) into the new Universal Preschool (UPK), a district-based program housed in K-12 schools rather than in independent preschool settings (Wang et al., 2025). The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) estimated that by 2025-26, California would enroll between 291,000 and 358,000 children in TK under the new universal eligibility regime (Yun, 2022). To staff those classrooms, the state would need an additional 11,900 to 15,600 lead TK teachers and 16,000 to 19,700 assistant TK teachers (Melnick et al., 2022). By 2023-24, nearly all local education agencies (94%) are already offering TK opportunities, and 85% of these provide TK at every elementary school site (Wang et al., 2025).

The pace and scale of this growth highlight the urgent need to expand the supply of qualified educators. However, California's existing TK teacher requirements of holding a Multiple Subject teaching credential plus 24 units of ECE coursework pose significant challenges for recruitment and access for early childhood educators (Melnick et al., 2022). To help address this demand, California approved the PK-3 Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialist Instruction Credential in June 2023, enabling early educators to teach in preschool settings as well as TK and the early elementary grades up to third grade. As of summer 2025, only 11 PK-3 ECE credential programs have been approved statewide.

This systemic shift from community-based preschool settings toward district-led TK programming carries major implications for the current preschool workforce. Many current preschool teachers hold only a Child Development Teacher Permit, have completed 12 units of child development, or hold a bachelor's degree. Over 90% of preschool teachers do not hold a teaching credential (Melnick et al., 2022). Additionally, many early childhood educators typically work in settings characterized by low wages, limited or absent benefits, high turnover, and few pathways into K-12 credentialing. The early childhood workforce is significantly more racially and linguistically diverse than the TK-12 workforce, with 66% of center-based early educators identifying as people of color, compared with 39% of TK-12 teachers (Melnick et al., 2022).

Reconceptualizing preschool within TK classrooms, the qualifications and employment context change significantly, where educators now earn higher wages, have access to benefits, and participate in consistent professional development. While this provides a strong incentive for preschool teachers to pursue credentialing, many still face significant financial and structural barriers to earning a teaching credential (Melnick et al., 2022). Thus, the move toward TK represents both a promising

opportunity for career advancement and a potential barrier if adequate pathways and support are not established. Without intentional support, the shift to district-led TK risks excluding a workforce that brings essential cultural and developmental expertise to early learning settings.

Student-Centered Approaches

Student-centered learning approaches, shown to improve engagement, retention, and achievement among diverse learners, shifts the focus from instructor delivery to student experience, fostering meaningful participation and shared responsibility in the educational process (Damsa & de Lange, 2019; Weimer, 2013). In higher education, student-centered support refers to a coordinated set of strategies, resources, and practices designed around the unique needs, experiences, and goals of each learner. For first-generation and underrepresented students, research demonstrates that culturally responsive pedagogy and targeted supports mitigate systemic barriers (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Rendón, 1994). In teacher preparation programs, such approaches are essential for fostering a professional identity rooted in advocacy, especially in ECE, where undervaluation and under-compensation persist (Oyler et al., 2017; Quan et al., 2019; Whitebook et al., 2018).

Guided by these principles, the credential pathway offered by CSULB's PK-3 ECE program is intentionally designed around a student-centered framework from the ground up. The PK-3 program prioritizes recruitment of experienced preschool teachers who bring deep knowledge of young children's development, relational skills, and experience in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. Leveraging this asset pool aligns with the LPI's recommendation to draw on current early childhood educators as a key candidate pool for the expanding TK workforce (Melnick et al., 2022). The urgency of California's TK expansion makes this pathway especially timely. Many PK-3 candidates are full-time working professionals, caregivers, first-generation college students, or individuals historically excluded from traditional teacher preparation models. The PK-3 program responds to their needs through integrated academic, financial, and social supports grounded in evidence-based student-centered practices. These include embedded mentorship, individualized advising, flexible scheduling for working professionals, financial assistance, a cohort-based learning structure, and the recognition of prior preschool experience through teaching equivalencies which are all critical recommendations in building a strong teacher pipeline (Yun, 2022). Together, these strategies create an accessible and responsive pathway into the PK-3 credential.

Importantly, CSULB's PK-3 program bridges preschool teacher's existing expertise with new roles in TK and the early grades, directly addressing compensation inequities described by the LPI (Melnick et al., 2022). Transitioning into district positions offers early childhood educators higher wages, comprehensive benefits, retirement plans, and meaningful opportunities for career advancement which are

all critical improvements for a workforce that has historically faced low pay and limited mobility (Whitebook et al., 2018). Financial accessibility is another pillar of the PK-3 program's student-centered design. Since financial barriers remain a major obstacle for aspiring educators (McLean et al., 2024), the PK-3 program incorporates transparent financial aid advising, targeted scholarships, and flexible course structures. Such supports are shown to increase access and persistence for nontraditional students balancing work and academics (Perna, 2006).

Within this context, student-centered support in CSULB's PK-3 program is not a single intervention but an overarching approach that adapts institutional structures to meet students where they are, both academically and personally. It intentionally aligns academic, financial, and relational supports to ensure that candidates thrive and graduate as equity-minded early childhood educators prepared to contribute to California's evolving early learning landscape. Therefore, this study examines the effectiveness of these student-centered strategies by applying mixed quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate how they influence access, retention, belonging, financial feasibility, and advocacy skill development among PK-3 candidates.

Methodology

Participants

CSULB's PK-3 program intentionally recruits current preschool teachers, teacher assistants, and candidates who are culturally and linguistically diverse. During the admissions cycle, the CSULB PK-3 credential program received 130 applications, with 95 candidates completing all program requirements. Of these, 62 were admitted to the program. Of the admitted students, their ages range from early 20s to late 50s, and they currently work with young children. The candidates predominantly identify as Latinx, with other candidates representing African American/Black, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and White ethnic groups. In addition, a significant portion of our candidates are the first in their families to attend college.

Data Collection

Candidates were invited to participate in four events that focused on submitting a strong application, attending an academic advising session, participating in a one-on-one financial-aid meeting, and developing a sense of belonging. Before submitting the program application, the PK-3 program faculty hosted a Submitting a Successful Application event on a Saturday morning. An email about the event was sent to individuals who had expressed interest in the credential over the previous six months and to current and past graduates of the Early Childhood Education Master of Arts program. Interested applicants attended four 15-minute sessions, which offered resources for writing a strong personal statement, navigating financial aid and cost of attendance, learning about college and university student group

affiliations, and using the online application portal successfully. With only a two-week notice, 108 interested applicants RSVPed, and 55 individuals attended. The RSVP and day-of-check-in surveys requested the name and contact information of each interested applicant.

Two cohorts of 30 students were admitted to the credential program. The admitted candidates attended an advising session to review the full-time and part-time academic tracks and course offerings. The full-time track candidates would complete the program in three semesters, and the part-time track candidates would complete the program in four semesters. Candidates completed a survey indicating their preferred track and the desired start time for their courses. A third of the candidates plan to complete the credential program in three semesters, and two-thirds of the students prefer to complete the program in four semesters. Over 70% of the candidates preferred the classes to start at 7:00 pm in the evening.

During the academic advising session, candidates were informed they had to meet individually with the financial aid advisor. We aimed to provide advising opportunities for students to understand their financial aid eligibility and the cost of attendance, as well as support them in maximizing their financial aid options. The program received a generous gift from the Ballmer Group, which offered scholarships to all the candidates. The financial aid advisor reviewed each candidate's financial need and determined their eligibility for the scholarship award. All candidates received a scholarship to reduce economic barriers and reinforce their motivation to persist.

A New Student Orientation was held a couple of weeks before the start of the semester to create a sense of community and belonging among the candidates. The activities included peer meet-and-greets, introductions to faculty and advisors, and a campus tour. The main activity asked candidates to design a Vision Board Creation geared towards their future personal and professional goals and to participate in a wellness-centered discussion to start the program on a positive note. At the conclusion of the orientation, candidates completed a survey focused on their overall program goals, feedback on the orientation, demographic characteristics, perceptions of program accessibility and support, and changes in advocacy, confidence, and professional identity. Fifty-eight candidates attended the orientation and completed the survey that included both Likert-style and open-ended questions.

Results

The student-centered approaches increased the application pool, diversified the candidates, and minimized dropout rates. The program accepted 60 students into the credential, with four declining acceptances. Four candidates on the waitlist accepted admittance in their place. Of the 60 students, 31% are 41 years and older compared to the state average of 9% of individuals over 41 entering credentialing programs. Only 21% of candidates are between the ages of 20 and 25, compared to the state average of 39% of individuals between the ages of 20 and 25 entering credentialing

programs. We also notice that the ethnic and racial diversity among our candidates aligns with the ethnic composition of students across the state of California (see Table 1). Additionally, 76% of the candidates are first-generation college students. Older students with family obligations are more likely to drop out of school within the first couple of weeks of the semester; only two candidates have dropped out. We believe this is the result of offering events that help candidates submit a strong application, meet with a financial-aid advisor, develop a sense of belonging, and provide courses at times that best meet the demands of working professionals.

As the program faculty reviewed the 95 applications for the credential program, they noticed a pattern among some of the personal statements, including a similar format and structure, as well as a clear response to the application prompts, which led to higher scores on these personal statements. After the candidates had accepted admission to the program, the faculty compared attendance at the Submitting a Successful Application event with those who were admitted to the credential program. Of the 55 individuals who attended the event, 36 applied (65%) to the PK-3 program; of these 36 individuals, 28 (78%) were accepted, three (8%) were waitlisted, and five (14%) were denied admission. Comparing the personal statement rating scores of candidates who participated in the workshops with those who did not we noted a measurable improvement in personal statement scores from those who attended the workshop compared to those who did not. The hands-on guidance provided during the event helped clarify expectations, especially for first-generation applicants who may have been unfamiliar with higher education processes, as well as for those who had been away from school for a while. As a result of attending this event, candidates submitted stronger personal statements, which led to their higher acceptance rates.

The program faculty and advisor, who offered flexible course offerings, were crucial for students juggling work and family commitments. Classes use hybrid modalities and take place on weekdays in the evening, starting at 7:00 pm, and on Saturdays. Based on candidate survey feedback, they acknowledge the program's willingness to adjust and align specific tracks, course schedules, and class modalities more closely with candidates' availability. We hope that tailoring course offerings to student availability will improve course completion rates over time.

Table 1
California Ethnic Composition of Teachers, Students, and PK-3 Candidates

Ethnicity	*Latinx*	*White/ Caucasian*	*Asian American or Asian*	*African American or Black*	*American Indian*	*Two or More Races/ Ethnicities*
All Teachers	26%	54%	8%	4%	0.5%	1.3%
Students	56%	20%	13%	5%	0.4%	5%
PK-3 ECE	72%	3%	12%	7%	2%	3%

The generous scholarship award and a personalized financial aid advising session helped students realize that enrolling in the credential program was more than a pipe dream. The financial aid advisor increased students' understanding of their financial aid options and helped them understand their cost of attendance. The scholarship awards were personalized to each candidate's needs and alleviated their financial stress.

The survey feedback from the New Student Orientation demonstrates the event's success. One candidate shared how the orientation met their needs, "Yes, I was given the information I was looking for and reassured me that someone will always be there for additional support if and when it is needed." When asked what they liked the most, candidates responded, "The vision boards were such a creative way to demonstrate our potential to serve families and children." "Meeting other students and feeling a sense of belonging and purpose." "The track information, financial aid, and clinical practice information." Since the candidates understand they are supported, cared for, and not alone, we hope this motivates them to continue in the program and graduate.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that CSULB's PK-3 ECE Credential program effectively advances a student-centered approach that responds to California's rapidly expanding TK system and the associated workforce demands. As TK enrollment continues to rise, the need for a diversified and qualified educator pipeline is critical. The PK-3 program indicates that its intentionally student-centered design successfully supports working professionals, first-generation college students, and candidates historically marginalized in teacher preparation. Additionally, the strong demographic representation within the cohorts mirrors the diversity of California's ECE workforce, reinforcing the value of accessible pathways for maintaining linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity in TK classrooms that policy advocates agree is an essential component of high-quality early learning (Wang et al., 2025).

The benefits of this student-centered pathway are multifaceted, extending beyond individual candidate success to advance broader child, family, and system-level goals. For preschool educators, the PK-3 program offers meaningful upward mobility. Earning a credential enables them to teach in TK or grades K-3, provides access to higher wages and benefits, and validates their relational and pedagogical expertise, addressing long-standing inequities in compensation and career advancement (Melnick et al., 2022; Whitebook et al., 2018). For children and families, having teachers who are prepared to teach younger children supports continuity of high-quality learning environments, especially if these same educators draw from culturally, linguistically, and developmentally diverse preschool backgrounds and experiences. At the system level, as school districts increasingly reconfigure staffing and professional development models to integrate younger

children into K-12 settings, credentialing experienced preschool educators helps meet immediate staffing needs while retaining valuable workforce expertise.

Lastly, for equity and workforce stability, the PK-3 program reduces financial and structural barriers that have historically limited early educators' ability to earn credentials, thereby strengthening the early grades teaching pipeline. Collectively, student-centered PK-3 pathways offer a scalable, equity-driven strategy for preparing a diverse, well-qualified TK workforce. Future research should examine long-term credential completion, placement in TK classrooms, and how student-centered supports shape professional identity and retention over time.

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Exploring What Teacher Candidates Notice About High Quality Mentoring

Matt Wallace, Lisa Sullivan, & Nancy Tseng

Abstract

Mentor teachers (MTs) play a pivotal role in teacher preparation, shaping teacher candidates' (TCs) pedagogical practices, professional knowledge, and identities. While prior research identifies high-quality mentoring practices, less is known about how TCs experience these practices. This study examines the views of 55 TCs across three years on the high-quality mentoring practices they experienced. Findings highlight practices TCs valued most—constructive feedback, modeling effective teaching, and co-teaching. Themes also emerged within each practice, including a notable emphasis on MTs modeling equitable teaching. Results underscore the importance of centering TCs' perspectives to refine MT training and promote effective, responsive teacher preparation.

Keywords: mentor teachers, mentoring practices, teacher candidates, field practicum

Introduction

Mentor teachers (MTs) play a significant and influential role in teacher preparation. Not only do MTs provide teacher candidates (TCs) with authentic classroom teaching experiences during the field practicum, their guidance and support are

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pivotal in shaping TCs' pedagogical perspectives and practices (Carmi & Tamir, 2023), professional knowledge, and teacher identities (Ellis et al., 2020). Furthermore, MTs are a key determinant of TCs' success in the field practicum (He, 2010). It is not surprising that TCs often cite their MTs as the most important influence on their learning (Clarke et al., 2014).

Because MTs play such a significant role, it is important to understand the key skills and practices that best prepare TCs to become effective teachers. A growing body of research has identified and defined a number of such high-quality mentoring practices (e.g., Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). However, much of this literature focuses on the high-quality practices MTs should employ. For example, in their work to examine the literature on mentoring, Ellis and colleagues (2020) wrote, "The specific objective of this study was to complete a review of the contemporary literature…to highlight the important knowledge and skills a quality mentor must possess" (p. 2). Such research provides valuable insights into effective mentoring practices, but gives little attention to how TCs experience these practices.

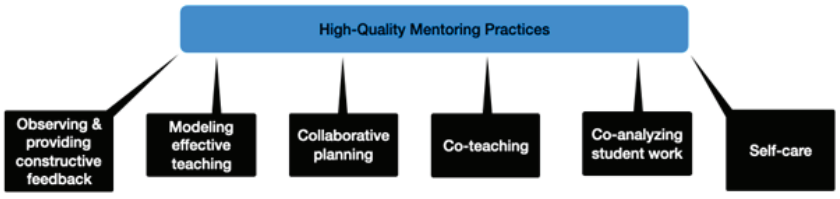
This research seeks to address this need by centering TCs' voices within mentoring practices. Specifically, the question guiding our research is: *What high quality mentoring practices do TCs notice and highlight from their year-long field experience?* If it is worth identifying the high-quality mentoring practices that MTs should use, then it is worth understanding how TCs experience such mentoring to ensure effective and responsive mentoring for all.

Conceptual Framework

In a comprehensive review of the literature, Clarke and colleagues (2014) identified 11 features of high-quality mentoring. Ellis and colleagues (2020) conducted a subsequent literature review in which seven practices were identified. Though some differences exist in the literature, there is also agreement on several practices of high-quality mentoring. These common practices are included in Figure 1, and are discussed below. The practices are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In practice, MTs can engage in several simultaneously.

Figure 1

Common High-Quality Mentoring Practices



Observing and Providing Constructive Feedback

Effective feedback requires MTs to focus on a specific aspect of teaching, use concrete evidence gathered during observations to ground discussions, employ questioning strategies that elicit TCs' thinking, and offer actionable and specific guidance which relates to practice (Clarke et al., 2014). When done regularly, such feedback supports targeted and substantive learning (Stanulis et al., 2018).

Modeling Effective Teaching

When MTs model effective teaching, they demonstrate pedagogical approaches and teaching strategies for TCs to observe and learn from (Clarke et al., 2014). In addition to instructional practices, modeling effective teaching includes non-instructional actions, interactions with colleagues and community members, processes around the complexities of teaching, and a demonstrated enthusiasm and passion for teaching. Effective modeling also requires MTs to make their thinking visible by articulating the reasoning behind their instructional decisions. Through the modeling of teaching, MTs offer their TCs important images of teaching, and facilitate connections between theory and practice (Ellis et al., 2020).

Collaborative Planning

Collaborative planning involves MTs and TCs working together to plan instruction focused on student learning. This practice goes beyond surface-level scheduling, logistics, and general classroom activities; it involves discussing instructional decisions and the reasons behind selecting certain tasks, considering students' prior knowledge and potential misconceptions, and maintaining a clear focus on student learning goals and necessary supports. Through collaborative planning, MTs prepare TCs to be independent instructional decision makers (Stanulis et al., 2018).

Co-teaching

Co-teaching involves MTs and TCs sharing instructional responsibilities. This practice often begins with TCs observing the MT, followed by a gradual shift toward more collaborative teaching in which both MT and TC assist and support one another, and finishes with TCs assuming all teaching responsibilities (Graham, 2006). For co-teaching to be successful, however, flexibility on the part of the MT is essential so that TCs can develop (not reproduce) their own ways of teaching (Clarke et al., 2014).

Co-analyzing Student Work

With this practice, MTs and TCs examine student work and assessment data together to learn about students, reflect on instruction, and adapt subsequent lessons

to support students' needs. Through this process, TCs can learn to diagnose student understanding, notice patterns in student learning, and enrich their knowledge of students. This collaborative process, furthermore, supports professional dialogue grounded in standards and student learning (Stanulis et al., 2018).

Self-Care

Beyond the pedagogy, it is important for MTs to attend to the mental health of the TCs in their care by building trusting and respectful relationships, providing ongoing emotional support, and creating a safe and nurturing environment (Ellis et al., 2020). By promoting self-care, MTs support TC learning and help develop the resilience necessary for TCs to successfully transition into the teaching profession (Haigh et al., 2006).

Methods

Data for this study consisted of TC nomination letters submitted for an annual mentorship award at a large public university in California. TCs voluntarily submitted one-page nomination letters based on broad parameters about their mentoring experiences. From 2022 - 2024 we collected 55 nominations (28 from multiple-subject and 27 from single-subject TCs) representing about 27% of total program enrollment. These letters provided us with rich and authentic accounts of TCs' perspectives on the mentoring practices they experienced during their year-long field practicum.

Qualitative analysis of the data occurred in two phases. First, we examined the data to identify any references to high-quality mentoring practices. We collectively analyzed data from one year to establish consistent coding practices. Following this calibration process, we individually coded the remaining data. Approximately 15% of this remaining data were coded by two authors to ensure consistency. When coding discrepancies occurred, we met to discuss differences and reach consensus. The second phase of analysis involved examining coded text from each high-quality practice to identify common themes across TCs' descriptions. This open-coding process allowed us to identify patterns in TCs' views of the high-quality mentoring practices they experienced.

Findings

Our analysis revealed insights into TCs views of high-quality mentoring practices, including which practices they discussed the most and how they perceived their impact (see Table 1). The high-quality practices most commonly discussed were observing and providing constructive feedback, which was mentioned in 67% of the data, as well as modeling effective teaching and co-teaching, which were included in 65% and 60% of the data respectively. Self-care was mentioned in 45% of the data, however, no other high-quality practice was mentioned in more than 40% of the data.

Observing and Providing Constructive Feedback

TCs most often discussed receiving regular constructive feedback focused on both strengths and areas for growth. As one TC wrote, "After each lesson, (MT) and I would meet and discuss what went well and what I could improve." This

Table 1
Most Frequently Mentioned High-Quality Mentoring Practices

Mentoring Practice	*Frequency*	*Common Themes*	*Illustrative Quotes*
Observing and Providing Constructive Feedback	67%	Regular Debriefs	[My MT] always debriefed after lessons often writing down notes to share with me.
		Constructive & Personalized Feedback	[My MT] gives me feedback that points out my strengths and areas to grow with advice and recommendations
Modeling Effective Teaching	65%	Relationships and Classroom Culture	[My MT] has also illuminated how to to effectively handle challenging behaviors… by digging deeper to understand and support our students' learning and social needs. Moreover, she has illustrated how to support students with patience and understanding while maintaining high expectations...
		Collaboration	[My MT] collaborates well with her colleagues. Whether they're her grade-level teammates, the reading resource specialist…[my MT] never hesitates to ask others questions…
		Educational Equity	With a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy, [my MT] fearlessly addresses social justice issues such as colonization, racism, and gender equality in the classroom
Co-Teaching	60%	Valuing Input	[My MT] always treated me like her colleague... My ideas and contributions in the classroom were consistently valued.
		Co-Teacher (not assistant)	Since day one, [my MT] has made me feel incredibly welcomed in her classroom and made sure that I am seen and treated as a teacher just as much as she is.
		Encouraging Experimentation	[My MT] encouraged me to try new things, even if it altered her typical plans or schedule.

finding is consistent with existing literature on this high-quality practice (see, for example, Clarke et al., 2014).

Modeling Effective Teaching

TCs emphasized how their MTs modeled the behind the scenes work that teachers do. This is captured in the following TC quote:

> …aside from just classroom activities, (MT) spends an insane number of hours making sure that the department she oversees is staying afloat…(attending) parent-teacher conferences, department meetings, and booster meetings are just a small list of things (MT) does… seeing this has given me a holistic view of what this job entails.

While the above finding is more consistent with extant literature (e.g., Clarke et al., 2014), less so is TCs emphasis on how MTs modeled different ways to advocate for educational equity. For example, one TC noted how their MT modeled how to "address the needs of every student...(and) create a diverse, inclusive space where all students feel welcomed and seen in the classroom." The TC continued, "With a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy, (the MT) fearlessly addresses social justice issues such as colonization, racism, and gender equality in the classroom."

Co-teaching

TCs particularly emphasized being positioned as colleagues, which helped establish their credibility in the classroom. One TC explained that their MT "introduced me as a teacher instead of a student teacher…which allowed students to show the same respect and expectations." TCs also emphasized having their ideas honored. One TC wrote that their MT "always treated me like a colleague… my ideas and contributions in the classroom were consistently valued."

TCs made various gains from their experiences working with mentors who employed these high-quality practices. One TC, for example, noted a readiness to teach: "Due to the mentorship and guidance I have received…I myself feel both confident and prepared to teach in a classroom of my own." Other TCs developed practical skills for promoting equity:

> I have learned valuable lessons about teaching such as how to…use my own expertise of the subject to generate a culturally relevant lesson for my students… (and) how to create an equitable classroom by modifying and/or creating lessons and assessments that more accurately reflect our students' knowledge…

Discussion and Implications

The findings from our study refine the field's current understanding of high-quality mentoring practices by centering the experiences of teacher candidates. More specifically, our findings indicate that TCs notice:

- How, when, and what feedback is offered
- How they are positioned and how their ideas are received
- How their MTs carry out teaching responsibilities beyond instruction, as well as outside the classroom
- When their MTs model ways to promote educational equity

We find TCs' noticings of MTs who modeled advocacy for educational equity particularly important given that TCs regularly report feeling underprepared to address the learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds (Stites et al., 2018). Our results suggest that when MTs explicitly model ways to promote equity in the classroom, such as culturally responsive practices and teaching for social justice, TCs gain valuable preparation for serving all students equitably.

Such findings offer valuable insight for teacher preparation programs' who emphasize equity-based pedagogies. They can, for example, introduce and support MTs in the practice of naming, highlighting, and explaining (Lobato et al., 2013) their advocacy and equity practices to influence what TCs notice, since MTs may not always promote an equity agenda in ways that are obvious or recognizable.

More broadly, findings from our study can be used to design materials and resources for professional development with MTs. Currently, there is a California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) 10 hour initial program orientation requirement for all MTs (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015) that requires new mentors to attend professional development that covers "effective supervision practice." Teacher preparation programs could share these results and highlight which mentoring practices TCs observed and found valuable.

As an example, in our program, we shared the findings from this study with MTs during an orientation meeting before inviting small groups to discuss the practices and share questions and ideas related to their own experiences mentoring candidates. Post-orientation meeting surveys suggest that MTs found these discussions valuable. For example, one MT stated that the discussion of "Exemplar mentor practice was inspiring." MTs also indicated that the quotes and the concrete examples in Table 1 provided them with specific examples that illustrate how these mentoring practices could be instantiated by mentors.

Finally, teacher preparation programs could design MT professional learning around mentoring practices that were mentioned less often. For example, an assignment around co-analyzing student work could be created within a course to give TCs and MTs a collaborative opportunity to review student work together and reflect on instructional decisions.

The focus of our study centered the voices of TCs, however future research could explore how MTs conceptualize and enact mentoring practices. It would be valuable to conduct interviews with MTs to gain their perspectives about mentoring practices (e.g., which ones are more challenging to enact, which ones they

are more intentional with, which ones they feel they need more support with or have questions about). Interviews with TCs could also help us gain more in depth information about which practices TCs found most impactful and investigate why certain high-quality mentoring practices were less frequently highlighted by TCs (e.g., co-analyzing student work). Finally, future research could explore ways to center equity across all high-quality practices, rather than limiting this critical work to modeling alone.

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Humanizing Teacher Residencies

Moving at the Speed of Trust to Advance Professionalism, Advocacy, and Innovation in Educator Preparation

Meghan Cosier, Cynthia Goin, Sally Hawkins, & Taylor Stratz

Abstract

In response to teacher shortages and inequities in teacher diversity and retention, Saint Mary's College of California (SMC) launched three equity-centered residencies in partnership with local school districts. These residencies provide paid, yearlong co-teaching experiences with mentor teachers engaged in ongoing professional learning with a focus on building trust-based partnerships while advancing professionalism and innovation. The model prioritized recruiting local candidates in critical need areas, addressing barriers to entry, and ensuring high-quality, LEA-connected coursework. This presentation shared examples and tools from Saint Mary's College of California's sustainable, humanizing,

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and equity-centered teacher residencies and detailed enactment strategies, mentor supports, and practices for addressing barriers that can arise in partnerships.

Keywords: teacher residencies, equity-centered preparation, advocacy, mentorship

Overview

This presentation highlighted how Saint Mary's College, in collaboration with the Thompson Policy Institute at Chapman University and district partners, designed and implemented humanizing, equity-centered teacher residency programs in partnership with three distinct districts. Through case examples, participants explored how these residencies addressed immediate staffing needs while building long-term workforce sustainability. The session showcased the integration of mentorship, coursework, and best practices to prepare teachers who are deeply connected to their communities and prepared to advocate on behalf of students and the profession. Participants also explored trust-based partnership strategies and sustainability practices, gaining adaptable ideas for strengthening equity-driven educator preparation in their own contexts.

Purpose and Objectives

Paid teacher residencies in California have gained prominence over the last five years, driven by increased state funding (Yun & Fitz, 2024) and state technical assistance opportunities, such as the California Statewide Residency Technical Assistance Center. The increased opportunities in this pathway are promising given the research that high-quality residencies lead to better prepared teachers who stay in the profession longer than teachers prepared in "traditional" pathways (Ray, 2023), and that paid residencies can lead to the recruitment of more diverse teachers that reflect the communities they serve (Rahimi, Leckie, & Janiczek Smith, 2024). However, recent reports on teacher residencies in California indicate room for improvement in sustainable residency pathways accessible to prospective teachers in the community (Hirshboeck et al., 2023). There is a clear need to continue to learn from best practices in residency implementation to support sustainable, high-quality residencies across California.

The purpose of this session was to provide tools and examples that will support the implementation of residencies at every stage. Drawing on three district-specific models, this session demonstrated how district and educator preparation program partners can collaborate to address staffing needs, prepare mentor teachers, and implement coursework that meets the needs of both teacher candidates and students. Presenters offered practical strategies for collaboration, including how to move at the speed of trust, prioritize people, and navigate conflict.

The session's learning objectives were to enable participants to identify and describe enactment strategies for implementing humanizing residencies and to explain how district–EPP partners can effectively integrate meaningful, well-con-

nected coursework. Additionally, the session aimed for participants to analyze and apply methods for building and sustaining trust-based district partnerships and to generate actionable strategies for maintaining high-quality residencies in diverse educational contexts.

Point of View

We view teacher residencies as more than staffing solutions; they are opportunities to professionalize the field, empower educators, and promote high-quality instructional practices through deep, trust-based collaboration.

Key Elements of Practice

To launch three different residencies in a limited amount of time, the district-ed prep program team, led by Saint Mary's College colleagues, Cindy Goin and Sally Hawkins, first identified their shared core values and created a strategic design that would help them achieve their residency goals.

Move at the Speed of Trust

Saint Mary's College residency directors, Goin and Hawkins, understood that trust is an essential starting point for accelerating productivity and partnership success (Covey, 2006). They needed to establish trust with their district partners in order to develop three teacher residencies essentially at the same time. By identifying shared values of integrity and competence, they created a foundation of trust upon which a superhighway of productivity effortlessly took shape. With trust as the foundation, their work became a fast lane for ideas, collaboration, and results.

Prioritizing People

In collaboration with district partners, Saint Mary's designed three distinct residency programs based on a model rooted in a deep commitment to prioritizing the residents, mentor teachers, district partners, and ultimately, the students they serve. Each partnership was established intentionally with care, focusing on nurturing relationships and connecting as people first. The residency programs began with the recruitment of local candidates who reflect the diversity of the community, removing barriers to entry such as financial constraints and program structure. Each partnership is rooted in a culture of care and respect that ensures each resident is valued and supported. Regular team check-ins, professional development, collaborative goal setting, and responsive mentorship are embedded throughout the residency year. People are prioritized by centering relationships and well-being. The program is built upon a strong foundation of trust, belonging, and professional growth, which are all essential for teacher retention and effectiveness.

Orchestrating Conflict

Inspired by Ron Heifetz's work on adaptive leadership, Saint Mary's College and district partners recognized conflict as a natural part of collaborative work, and as such, they created transparency by naming conflicts early in the development and implementation phases, framing them as opportunities for growth rather than barriers to productivity (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009). With this in mind, program leaders and mentors are trained in effective communication strategies and mentorship practices, enabling them to address misunderstandings and disagreements constructively. Structures such as mentor trainings, professional development, and team mediation support are in place to help participants navigate challenges. By addressing conflict, the residencies build resilience, deepen trust, and model the types of professional discourse expected in high-functioning teams (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009).

Conclusion

Saint Mary's College of California's teacher residency programs illustrate how intentional design, trust-based partnerships, and humanizing preparation can support successful and lasting partnerships that address staffing needs and build a diverse educator workforce. The residencies are an exemplar of best practices in building residencies. These models offer a strong framework for other educator preparation program-district partnerships.

Significance to the Field of Teacher Education

The residencies of SMC represent best practices in moving toward sustainable, high-quality teacher residencies that can be scaled in a variety of contexts without compromising quality or equity. As the state continues to invest in residency pathways, lessons from this work offer insights into long-term success. By centering relationships, putting people first, and orchestrating conflict, the model addresses the persistent challenges of teacher retention and representation while aligning with California's goals for educator preparation. In doing so, it not only strengthens individual programs but also informs the statewide vision for residencies.

Connection to Conference Theme

This presentation is closely aligned with the California Council on Teacher Education Fall 2025 Conference theme, *Who We Are, Why We Matter: Teaching and Teacher Educator Professionalism, Expertise, Advocacy, and Innovation*, by illustrating how teacher residencies can center educator professionalism and expertise, while focusing on innovative approaches to address issues in the field. Through innovative design features such as trust-based partnerships, targeted recruitment from local communities, and strategies for long-term program sustainability, this

professional practice session demonstrates an approach to teacher preparation and teacher residencies with input from educators and educator preparation at the center.

Inquiry Questions

1. How can humanizing teacher residencies be intentionally designed to prepare candidates to teach all students?

2. What partnership structures and funding strategies are most effective in sustaining high-quality teacher residencies beyond initial grant support?

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Advocating for Equity

An Equitable Mindset Workshop

Kimiya Sohrab Maghzi & Marni E. Fisher

Abstract

This interactive workshop advocates for an equity focus by integrating multiple frameworks, offering a comprehensive and layered approach that mirrors the complexity of educational systems. It begins with a foundational overview of equity, then delves into the equity lens, critical race theory, and culturally responsive teaching and learning. Each lens explores key concepts, interactive activities, and curated resources. This equips educators with the language, research, and tools needed to recognize and challenge inequities while advocating for change. The workshop concludes with practical strategies that can be adapted across educational levels, from elementary to graduate education.

Keywords: Equity, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Critical Race Theory, Prismatic Theory

Introduction

At a time when the world is attempting to increase systemic inquiry in all areas, including higher education, advocates for equity need to maintain their focus. This interactive workshop focuses on the three core elements of equity work, as outlined

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by Linton (2011). Building on this foundation, and drawing from Fisher's (2016) prismatic lens, attendees are invited to deepen their understanding by layering perspectives from equity, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (CRTL). Designed to actively engage participants, the workshop combines theoretical exploration with practical strategies for applying equity principles across educational contexts.

Key Elements of the Practice

As a practice, the hands-on workshop builds upon the foundational concepts presented in @ONE's Online Education Course on equity (Hijaz, 2022). Developed for flexible timing, the workshop can be presented in-person, online, or in a hybrid format. The workshop is designed to introduce fundamental equity concepts in education, aiming to teach advocacy for equity through anti-racist and anti-bias approaches. It begins with an introduction to equity and then explores three core perspectives: the equity lens, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and the lens of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (CRTL).

The equity portion opens with the College Equity Indicator Survey to assess attendees' awareness of systemic equity initiatives within their higher educational institution. Following this, the workshop presents Linton's (2011) three critical components of equity, alongside visual representations of equity (Fan, 2021; Lynch et al., 2020). These illustrations are contrasted with misconceptions about what equity is not, setting the stage for a discussion on the systemic barriers and challenges that contribute to the achievement gap (Hijaz, 2022; Kaupp, 2012). To emphasize the urgency of equity work, data from California's colleges (UnivSTATS, 2025) and K–12 public schools (CDE, 2024–2025) are examined.

Universal design (Rose & Meyer, 2000, 2006) must be approached with an equitable lens that ensures all students, including students in traditionally underserved populations, are supported. This perspective aligns closely with both universal design for learning as proactive (Fisher et al., in press; Rose & Meyer, 2002) and differentiated instruction as reactive (Dennis, 2020; Fisher & Maghzi, 2021; Fisher et al., in press; Kliebard, 1967; Tomlinson et al., 2003) for supporting students. However, effective implementation depends on the ability of institutions to create a comprehensive framework that embeds equity into all policies, practices, and decisions (Linton, 2011). As Linton outlines, systemic equity requires three key elements: personal commitment to equity, institutional vision and support, and consistent, equity-based daily practices. Achieving this level of transformation demands collaborative effort to create sustainable, systemic change.

Exploring the equity lens further involves examining the dangers of a single narrative (Adichie, 2009), the complexity of culture and diversity (Davis, 2005; Maghzi, 2016), and the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 2011). This aligns with Muhammad's (2020) assertion, "identity is fluid, multilayered, and relational,

and is also shaped by the social and cultural environment as well as by literacy practices" (p. 67). To close this section, attendees complete a reflection survey identifying their own dimensions of diversity and considering which aspects they share openly, are compelled to disclose, or tend to keep private.

The second framework explored is Critical Race Theory (CRT), which recognizes that racism is a common, systemic reality. Furthermore, "racism, like other forms of oppression, is not only a personal ideology based on racial prejudice but a system involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals" (Tatum, 2017, p. 87). This section invites participants to reflect on the language they use when discussing students, then deconstructs common assumptions that may hinder student success (Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, 2021). Attendees are introduced to the Harvard Implicit Association Test (Project Implicit, 2011) as a tool for uncovering personal biases. In the shorter 50-minute version of the workshop, this activity is introduced, but time is not given to do it. In the longer 115-minute version of the workshop, participants are given time to complete and reflect on this activity.

To further deepen understanding, literature on marginalization, stereotypes, and microaggressions is explored. Key findings identify:

- Historical exclusion of women, students of color, and those with disabilities (Boroson, 2017);
- The systemic nature of racism (Kendi, 2019), perpetuated by dominant cultural norms (McLaren, 2003);
- The impact of stereotypes, which can lead students to internalize limitations (Sami, n.d.);
- The psychological toll of microaggressions (Wing Sue, 2010).

Additionally, the RP Group (2011–2014a) suggests further structural and emotional barriers faced by students within educational systems.

The final section centers on Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (CRTL), acknowledging the intricate and dynamic nature of culture in shaping student identity, engagement, and academic success. This frame invites educators to consider how cultural responsiveness can empower learners and bridge opportunity gaps:

> The notion of 'cultural relevance' moves beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. Thus culturally relevant uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. The negative effects are brought about, for example, by not seeing one's history, culture, or background represented in the textbook or curriculum or by seeing that history, culture, or background distorted. Or they may result from the staffing pattern in the school (when all teachers and the principal are white and only janitors and cafeteria workers are African American for example) and from the tracking of African American students into the lowest-level classes. (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 19)

Moreover, multicultural education should be embedded throughout all areas of learning (Nieto, 2017). In alignment with this, Matthew Lynch describes culturally relevant teaching as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). The advantages of a Culturally Responsive and Trauma-Informed Learning (CRTL) approach (Hijaz, 2022) also reflect the attributes of care (Gay, 2016), which must be considered before moving into practical strategies.

When exploring practical applications, participants are encouraged to reflect on their initial interactions with students and understand the importance of first impressions (Hijaz, 2022; Pakula & Major, 2020), as well as the types of information that are critical in early communication(Pakula & Major, 2020). Following this, attendees analyze three different syllabus formats and the language used in light of the impressions they create.

To support student achievement, the workshop next introduces the RP Group's (2011–2014a) six success factors: that student is directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued. Finally, participants explore ten impactful ways educators can support student success (RP Group, 2011–2014b), contributing their own insights, experiences, and strategies. The workshop concludes with a call to action—reminding participants that achieving equity is an ongoing process that requires continual learning, reflection, and commitment to change.

Analysis of its Impact/Conclusions/Discussion

This workshop stands at the intersection of theory, practice, and policy in the ongoing pursuit of educational equity. It offers a systemic and scaffolded framework for understanding and implementing equity-driven practices in educational settings—especially higher education. It impacts the field through elevating systemic inquiry through equity, bridging research and practice, addressing digital and racial inequities, centering marginalized voices and experiences,

By situating equity within a broader call for systemic inquiry, the workshop ensures that equity is not a peripheral concern but a central analytical and pedagogical priority, which is especially important when today's political climate seeks to promote systemic inequity. Furthermore, this workshop reminds us that equity must be integrated into all areas of education reform—curriculum, policy, pedagogy, and institutional culture.

Drawing from a wide range of research, this workshop does not just dwell in theory—it translates scholarship into actionable strategies. This makes it useful for educators who need both conceptual frameworks and tools to use in educational contexts. In addition, by integrating CRT and intersectionality, this work challenges dominant narratives and centers the lived realities of historically marginalized populations—including students of color, those with disabilities, and others who face systemic oppression.

Significance to the Field of Teacher Education

Equity plays a crucial role in education, which can either reinforce or challenge systemic structures. This became particularly evident when education shifted online in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Fisher et al., 2021), highlighting how long-standing systemic inequities (Anderson, 2020; Ramos et al., 2020; Sahasranaman & Jensen, 2020) exacerbated the digital divide (Ayre, 2020). Nonetheless, research on equity is not a recent development. As Linton (2011) explains, effective equity work is grounded in three key elements:

1. the educator's personal connection with this work,
2. the institution's embrace of systemic change and progress, and
3. the professional practices the teachers and administrators implement every day. (p. 39).

This aligns with research on cultural funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 2011), and ways of understanding and interacting the world (Eisner, 2003; Macedo & Friere, 2003).

Conclusion

Ultimately, this workshop seeks to engage participants in a critical reflection in equity and the advocacy for changing systemic inequities. This is transformational rather than transactional, serving not a checklist of equity strategies, but as a call for systemic transformation. The multi-framework integration also offers a comprehensive, layered approach to equity that reflects the complexity of educational systems. In addition, the participatory and reflective design integrates an interactive structure that encourages deep engagement and personal accountability. Finally, it empowers educators through knowledge by providing educators with the language, research, and tools to challenge inequity and advocate effectively.

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Dismantling Siloed Teaching

Advocacy and Innovation in Preparing Teachers to Work with Emergent Bilingual Students with Disabilities

Marcella Cardoza McCollum, ash busby, & Eduardo Muñoz-Muñoz

Introduction: A Systemic Yet Unaddressed Issue

Across the United States, bilingual and special education are structured as separate credential pathways, producing teacher candidates who are often well-prepared in one domain but underprepared in the other. This siloed organization reinforces the very inequities it aims to resolve. For emergent bilingual students with disabilities (EBwDs)—whose identities bridge language, culture, and disability—the result is fragmented instruction and misaligned support systems.

Research has documented how categorical separations in credentialing and coursework perpetuate deficit-based ideologies about language and disability (Migliarini, 2019). Educators may view multilingualism as a barrier to learning or see disability through a decontextualized lens, detached from sociocultural realities.

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Consequently, EBwDs often experience exclusionary placement, inappropriate interventions, and limited family collaboration.

This project emerged from an acknowledgment that professional responsibility in teacher education includes disrupting those silos. As a cross-disciplinary team of bilingual educators and a bilingual speech-language pathologist, we sought to model the integration we expect of our candidates. Our inquiry explored how a justice-oriented instructional intervention—grounded in Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) and Funds of Knowledge—could equip teacher candidates to recognize intersectional identities, adopt asset-based perspectives, and advocate collaboratively for EBwDs and their families.

Guiding our work were two questions:

1. How can interdisciplinary teacher preparation models expand candidate knowledge and advocacy for emergent bilingual students with disabilities?

2. What structural and pedagogical conditions are necessary to sustain integrated, justice-oriented preparation within rigid credentialing systems?

This article presents the design, implementation, and early outcomes of our collaborative model, offering both theoretical grounding and pragmatic strategies for reimagining teacher education.

Our Compass: Conceptual Framework

Our work is informed by Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) and Funds of Knowledge, two complementary frameworks that situate language and disability within broader structures of race, culture, and power. DisCrit merges insights from Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory to illuminate how racism, ableism, and linguicism operate together in educational contexts (Annamma et al., 2012; Connor et al., 2016). This framework challenges educators to recognize that marginalization is intersectional and systemic. Rather than treating multilingualism or disability as discrete traits, DisCrit situates them within histories of racialization, segregation, and policy constraint.

Recent work extends DisCrit into multilingual contexts (Collins, 2024; Lee et al., 2024), emphasizing that language hierarchies mirror racial hierarchies and that linguistic diversity is often medicalized in ways that obscure student strengths. Through a DisCrit lens, the question becomes not how we support students with language and learning differences but how we redesign education to value the complex, intersecting identities of learners. We treat the intersection of language and disability as a structural problem rather than an individual trait—a long standing issue that Artiles, Waitoller, and Neal (2011) framed as "grappling with" the joint construction of ability and language within policy and practice regimes. This orientation positions our candidates' work not as compliance with procedures but as participation in transforming the conditions that produce inequity.

Funds of Knowledge (Alvarez, 2021; Moll et al., 1992) complements this critical stance by positioning families and communities as repositories of cultural, linguistic, and intellectual resources. It reframes parent knowledge—not as informal or supplemental—but as essential educational capital. This approach recognizes that families of emergent bilingual students hold deep expertise in navigating systems, sustaining cultural practices, and supporting multilingual identity.

Together, these frameworks create a dual mandate for teacher educators: to dismantle systemic barriers while amplifying the assets within communities. They provide a theoretical rationale for rethinking teacher preparation as relational, reflective, and interdisciplinary. By embedding DisCrit and Funds of Knowledge into coursework, supervision, and assessment, we can prepare educators to work across boundaries—linguistic, disciplinary, and institutional—to serve the whole child.

Design and Methods: Our Intervention

This study employed a qualitative design to examine preservice bilingual teacher candidates' collaborative problem-solving capacities and evolving preparedness for addressing equity issues facing EBwDs. Data collection spanned three semesters from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025 and included pre- and post-surveys, focus groups, and two instructional interventions. The findings reported here center on the second intervention: a collaborative learning experience in which bilingual teacher candidates worked together to analyze and respond to a hypothetical equity scenario involving an EBwD.

Pre- and post-surveys gathered baseline data from 82 preservice bilingual teacher candidates regarding their knowledge and readiness to serve EBwDs, which informed the development of both instructional interventions. Additionally, researchers conducted three semi-structured focus groups with ten participants to triangulate the data and serve as member checks (Creswell et al., 2007). Focus group feedback revealed candidates' desire for practical, scenario-based opportunities to apply emerging knowledge about EBwDs in collaborative contexts, which directly shaped the second intervention.

The collaborative learning intervention presented candidates with a complex, authentic scenario involving an emergent bilingual student with a disability who faced barriers to accessing appropriate educational services. Working in small groups rather than individually, candidates engaged in collective problem-solving to identify systemic inequities, propose advocacy strategies, and develop recommendations grounded in DisCrit and Funds of Knowledge frameworks. This group-based design intentionally mirrored the collaborative, interdisciplinary practice that research identifies as essential for effectively supporting EBwDs (Robertson et al., 2016). Through structured group reflection protocols, candidates were prompted to collectively examine assumptions, challenge deficit perspectives, and co-construct equity-oriented responses that centered the whole child and family voice.

Data from this collaborative intervention included group-generated written responses to the scenario, recorded group discussions, and individual reflection statements completed after the group work. The design aimed to elicit candidates' evolving knowledge and readiness for collaborative action, with iterative adaptations responding to patterns that emerged in the data.

Data analysis involved two rounds of descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2021) that identified emerging themes related to collective advocacy, collaborative problem-solving, and group-based knowledge construction. Researchers used a deductive approach by developing a codebook informed by the DisCrit and Funds of Knowledge conceptual frameworks to guide the first round of coding. The first round of descriptive coding was inductive, followed by a revision of the codebook based on additional identified themes prior to engaging in a second round of coding. This second round specifically attended to themes related to candidates' collaborative processes, including how group interactions shaped individual understanding, the nature of collective equity-oriented decision-making, and evidence of interdisciplinary thinking emerging through peer dialogue.

Findings: What Collaborative Equity Problem-Solving Yielded

The collaborative problem-solving intervention revealed substantial shifts in how preservice bilingual teacher candidates conceptualize equity, power, and professional responsibility when serving emergent bilingual students with disabilities (EBwDs). Analysis of participant responses following the group-based case study sessions illuminated four interconnected themes that align with emerging scholarship on integrated bilingual and special education teacher preparation: (1) the transformative value of collective knowledge construction, (2) tensions between compliance and care, (3) heightened awareness of power dynamics, and (4) an expanded understanding of whole-child approaches through collaboration. Together, these themes illustrate how candidates moved from procedural to relational understandings of equity, reflecting what DisCrit describes as a shift from deficit-based to systemic analyses of injustice.

Collective Knowledge Construction

Candidates emphasized that group collaboration broadened their perspectives beyond individual experience. One participant noted, "Working together made me understand that equity is not about treating everyone the same, but about giving people what they need to have the same chance to succeed." This process of co-constructing meaning mirrored the asset-oriented stance of Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), allowing candidates to draw from peers' diverse classroom and linguistic experiences to generate context-specific solutions. Through dialogue, they connected theory to practice, reframing student difference as an instructional resource rather than a barrier. This finding resonates with Martínez-Álvarez and

Chiang's (2020) emphasis on the necessity of holistic approaches that attend to the intersection of ability, language, and culture when preparing teachers for inclusive bilingual contexts, as children learning at these intersections require educators who can address multiple aspects of their identities simultaneously.

Compliance Versus Care

Across groups, candidates initially focused on procedural compliance—timelines, legal mandates, and documentation—before realizing how this orientation sidelined student and family voice. As one participant reflected, "Our group focused so much on compliance that we forgot to ask what the student actually needed or felt." This recognition marked a pivotal learning moment: candidates began questioning systems that reward procedural accuracy over human connection. Their reflections echoed DisCrit's critique of how bureaucratic mechanisms reproduce deficit views of students of color with disabilities (Annamma et al., 2012; Artiles et al., 2011).

Awareness of Power Dynamics

The case scenario's explicit focus on advocacy prompted candidates to examine the distribution of power within educational systems. They recognized that parents often feel silenced or disempowered, and that teachers can either reinforce or challenge that imbalance. One participant observed, "Some parents may be unaware of their power; we can be advocates who give them the information they need to exercise it." Others noted gaps in their own practice—such as neglecting to include the student's perspective—revealing the tension between intent and action. These reflections demonstrate growing professional consciousness aligned with DisCrit's emphasis on recognizing how racism, ableism, and linguicism operate together in educational contexts (Annamma et al., 2012; Connor et al., 2016). Candidates articulated new commitments to questioning placement decisions, advocating for bilingual services within special education, and challenging deficit narratives about EBwDs. Such advocacy-oriented professional identities are essential given research showing that EBwDs often experience exclusionary placement and limited access to home language development (Ortiz & Robertson, 2018).

Collaborative Approaches to the Whole Child

Through peer discussion, candidates expanded their concept of "the whole child" to include social, emotional, linguistic, and cultural dimensions. They shared strategies such as integrating family narratives, leveraging bilingualism as an asset, and coordinating with special education and ELD specialists. Several bilingual candidates explicitly connected their own family experiences navigating school systems to their emerging professional practice, demonstrating the power of drawing on lived experience within teacher preparation. This resonates with calls for culturally

reciprocal special education practices that honor families' expertise (Cioè-Peña, 2021). Several candidates reflected in Spanish, connecting their linguistic identities to their professional roles—an enactment of Funds of Knowledge and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). By linking personal and communal experiences, candidates moved from generic inclusion rhetoric to situated, equity-driven practice. This holistic perspective aligns with calls in the literature for teacher preparation programs to develop comprehensive coursework and field experiences that assist predominantly monolingual and monocultural teacher workforces in developing multicultural and bilingual competencies (Martínez-Álvarez & Chiang, 2020; Wang & Woolf, 2015).

Across all themes, collaboration served as a catalyst for transformation. Candidates moved from surface-level awareness to nuanced, context-specific understandings of how inequities manifest across systems. They articulated advocacy as collective rather than individual work, and families as co-constructors rather than recipients of educational decisions. These developments align with integrated preparation models that emphasize mediation, agency, and collectivity as essential constructs for inclusive bilingual education (Martínez-Álvarez, 2020; Robertson et al., 2016; Artiles, 2020). At the same time, participants identified enduring barriers: credentialing silos, rigid assessment systems, and institutional cultures that compartmentalize bilingual and special education expertise. Even as candidates reimagined practice, they recognized that sustainable change requires structural transformation. The intervention thus revealed both the promise and the precarity of justice-oriented teacher preparation within existing credentialing systems. These structural constraints mirror national patterns in which only approximately 15 programs nationwide prepare teachers for bilingual classrooms serving students with disabilities (Martínez-Álvarez & Chiang, 2020).

Zeroing-in: Implications for Teacher Preparation

For teacher preparation programs, these findings suggest several actionable pathways. First, programs must create intentional spaces for cross-disciplinary collaboration between bilingual and special education faculty. Joint course design, co-teaching arrangements, and shared supervision of field placements can model the integration expected of candidates (Robertson et al., 2016). Such structural integration communicates to candidates that serving EBwDs is not the responsibility of specialized teachers alone but rather a shared professional obligation requiring coordinated expertise. Programs might establish collaborative teaching teams that bring together faculty with complementary knowledge bases, ensuring that candidates encounter integrated perspectives throughout their preparation rather than in isolated courses.

Second, pedagogical approaches should prioritize reflection on power, positioning, and intersectionality rather than merely adding content about EBwDs to

existing courses. The case study methodology employed here proved particularly valuable in surfacing candidates' tacit assumptions and supporting collaborative sense-making. Creating structured opportunities for candidates to examine authentic scenarios through frameworks like DisCrit and Funds of Knowledge moves preparation beyond technical skill acquisition toward critical consciousness development. Programs should design reflective protocols that prompt candidates to interrogate their own positioning, examine how systems distribute power, and consider how students and families experience educational institutions.

Third, programs should leverage candidates' lived experiences as resources rather than deficits. Bilingual candidates, particularly those with experience navigating schools as emergent bilinguals or family members of individuals with disabilities, bring essential perspectives that enrich collective learning. Creating structures for candidates to share and theorize these experiences honors funds of knowledge while avoiding tokenization. This might include structured testimonios, community asset mapping activities, or family interview projects that position personal and community knowledge as legitimate sources of professional expertise. Programs must balance validation of lived experience with critical analysis, helping candidates connect personal narratives to broader systemic patterns.

Finally, faculty must engage in policy advocacy alongside curricular redesign. Sustainable integration of bilingual and special education preparation requires challenging siloed certification structures, misaligned assessment systems, and institutional hiring practices that reproduce categorical separations (Martínez-Álvarez & Chiang, 2020). This includes advocating for dual certification pathways, integrated performance assessments that evaluate candidates' capacity to serve students with intersecting identities, and hiring practices that value interdisciplinary expertise. Preparing teachers to see and support the whole child demands both relational, justice-oriented pedagogy and structural transformation of teacher education systems. Without systemic change, individual program innovations remain vulnerable to institutional pressures that prioritize efficiency and specialization over integration and equity.

Conclusion: A Final Word on Much-Needed EBWD Equity

The integrated preparation model expanded candidates' capacity to see and support the whole child, shifting their base of understanding from generic knowledge to more nuanced, context-specific knowledge of emergent bilingual students with disabilities. It fostered a stronger sense of professional agency and advocacy, encouraging candidates to see themselves as active partners in advancing equity. The approach also elevated caregivers' voices as essential contributors to educational planning, positioning families as co-constructors of knowledge. Finally, it demonstrated that interdisciplinary collaboration is both possible and impactful, even within the rigid structures of existing credentialing systems.

Yet the study also exposed systemic constraints. Rigid credential pathways, fragmented assessment systems, and the persistent division between departments, including lack of cross-departmental funding streams. The de-siloed model expanded candidates' capacity to see and support the whole child, moving them beyond categorical thinking toward relational, inclusive practice. Faculty collaboration fostered professional growth but also revealed systemic constraints that require policy-level advocacy. Sustainable integration of bilingual and special education in teacher preparation will require both curricular redesign and structural change. Teacher educators and programs must advocate for credentialing pathways that reflect the intersectional realities of the students our graduates will serve, ensuring that preparation models honor the linguistic, cultural, and learning diversity that characterizes contemporary classrooms.

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Staying the Course

Centering Our Approach to Preservice Education on the Mission

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Abstract

As institutions of higher education, and preservice education programs in particular, are increasingly questioned for the value of their work in preparing the next generation of educators, one program at a faith-based institution sees beyond the noise to center its work on the program's mission. This paper employs a transformative learning theory analysis to examine the work involved in revising the program's mission to become the foundation and guiding framework from which the educator preparation program bases its approach. Furthermore, the authors argue that the faith-based mission calls its preservice educators to stand firm in their convictions, preparing teacher candidates who meet the diverse needs of all students across California's public schools.

Keywords: program mission, faith-based institute of higher education, transformative learning theory

Background

As institutions of higher education grapple with the demands of the moment,

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regarding higher education as a value-added investment, "Americans largely continue to believe in the value of a college education," even as they navigate recently issued federal guidelines (Nguyen, Sawyer, & Cheche, 2025). While private faith-based institutions also navigate the same waters, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities recently stated that the federal government's Compact for Academic Excellence was "government control of a university's basic and necessary freedoms" (Christianity Today, 2025). Currently, private, faith-based, and public institutions of higher education in the US are under scrutiny regarding their admission policies, research funding, and hiring practices (PBS NewsHour, 2025; Inside Higher Ed, 2025; The Guardian, 2025).

When it comes to examining the interest and value of education majors, Coursera listed education majors as the ninth among the top ten college majors for students (July 20, 2025). This is not surprising for teacher educators, as teachers, and the education profession in general, have been under scrutiny in the United States for many decades, especially since the release of the infamous report, "A Nation at Risk" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). While there have been some promising highlights in the field, especially since schools reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic, persistent criticism of schools and the role teachers play in shaping student outcomes continues (NPR, 2025).

Criticism that focuses on student outcomes solely based on standardized test scores often blames school systems for their inability to restore students to their pre-pandemic level of success. Educator preparation programs have not escaped this criticism, as society questions their effectiveness in preparing teachers for today's demands (Berge, 1992). The recent demands at the federal level have further challenged educator preparation programs to continue supporting the professional development of future teachers. It is this increased criticism that has sparked further debate on how states like California can continue to stay committed to long-standing standards that guide preservice programs on multiculturalism, multilingualism, Ethnic Studies, and other Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

It is within this current context that the question arises of how teacher educators can continue to stay the course, given the pressures that challenge their work and identity as teacher educators. This paper presents a transformative analysis of how one group of preservice educators at a private faith-based institution centers their work on the program's mission, reminding us of *who we are and why we matter*.

Theoretical Framework

As it becomes increasingly challenging for teacher educators to sustain the same level of motivation and enthusiasm in light of low enrollment, rising program costs, and the realities of what new teachers face in the field, a critical analysis of how to maintain their commitment is needed. Thus, this paper employs a transformative learning theory approach to examine an educator preparation program through

critical reflection, ongoing dialogue, and opportunities to discuss and explore the challenges and strengths of our work, as well as its significance (Mezirow, 1997). Furthermore, we argue that this framework, combined with an advocacy approach towards teacher education, helps us think through how to best prepare candidates for the challenges in schools today.

Critical to this approach has been how we have centered our work on the program's mission, which was recently revised and holds three essential tenets as follows:

- *A learning community committed to the education of the whole individual.*
- *Committed to praxis - linking theory to practice and reflection.*
- *Engaged in improving the educational opportunities for all students, specifically the marginalized and underserved.*

Figure 1 illustrates the ten phases of Transformative Learning, as outlined in Mezirow's (1978) theory, and the process by which the authors of this paper engaged in self-examination and critical assessment, phases two and three, during the rewriting of the mission for the preservice education program.

The mission of the educator preparation program brings the focus back to the humanity of teaching candidates in the program and the students they, in turn, encounter in the field. The mission of our program is to equip teaching candidates to demonstrate love and care for *all* their students. Through the impactful teaching strategies that are research-based, such as social and emotional learning, trauma-informed care practices, and culturally responsive pedagogy, to name a few.

Furthermore, the educator preparation program emphasizes seeing all our candidates as fellow beings first and as developing teachers next. The faculty internalize this mission and model it through their own teaching practices, which guide and encourage candidates to demonstrate this care and dedication to their students in their TK-12 placements and future classrooms. The candidates are challenged to adopt an approach that teaches the whole individual, with deep consideration and appreciation for their students' prior knowledge, cultural assets, previous experiences, faith, and language, at the heart of our program, following in the footsteps of Christ, who modeled love for all in his everyday teachings.

The authors of this paper assert that their work and calling to prepare the next generation of teachers is not only based on our own training, identity, and commitment to the profession, but also on what it means to be a preservice educator at a faith-based institution of higher education. Wrestling with the question of being a Christian educator or an educator who is Christian, the authors of this paper turn to their faith in one who was referred to foremost as a rabbi. As followers of Christ, the authors recognize that being a teacher is expressing His love to all, and that teaching is an act of love, one born out of deep concern for humanity and unwavering compassion for their fellow [being] (Sales, 2020).

Implications

As the new academic year is upon us, we are thinking hard about how to show up for the new cohort of preservice teacher candidates who are eager and ready to take on teaching as a profession. How will we as teacher educators show up

Figure 1

Mezirow's 10 Phases, and the Phases the Authors Utilized to Adopt a New Mission

and stay the course? The authors believe that centering our practice and approach on the educator preparation mission from our faith-based institution will keep us focused. Furthermore, they claim that the mission expects us to live up to its fulfillment beyond the negative noise. Therefore, while educator preparation programs, institutes of higher education, and schools will continue to face many challenges, the opportunity to hold steadfast to a mission at a faith-based institute of higher education will allow this set of preservice educators to bring their advocacy and expertise to the teacher candidates and model for them how they, too, can bring that approach to their students.

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Adaptive Leadership in a Theoretical Framework

Jeremy F. Cavallaro & Marni E. Fisher

Abstract

This article proposes adaptive leadership as a theoretical framework for educational leaders engaging in academic research. Furthermore, adaptive leadership creates a space that aligns with the educational needs for advocacy during troubled times. The empowerment of educators in a system laboring under authoritarian demands pushes back against the banking system. The human-centric focus shifts away from applications of neoliberal and marketing practices in education. Finally, the protection of voices pushes back against limitations on DEI while ensuring that non-dominant perspectives are valued.

Keywords: adaptive leadership, theoretical framework, leadership research

Introduction

Educational leadership research requires theoretical frameworks that align with the lived experiences and guiding philosophies of school leaders. Among the many frameworks available, adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 1994) offers a particularly compelling lens for educational leaders examining how to navigate complexity, uncertainty, and change. In this case, for a doctoral researcher who is also a school

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founder and leader, this framework resonates deeply with both personal leadership practice and scholarly inquiry. By engaging prismatic inquiry (Fisher, 2016) to explore the alignment between adaptive leadership theory and educational practice, this theoretical study seeks to illustrate how adaptive leadership can serve as a robust theoretical framework for an educational leader examining the school setting and teacher practices.

Central Problem

An educational leader doing research needs a theoretical framework that aligns with theories of leadership. In this instance, adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 1994) is a foundational part of one school leader's identity, worldview, transformational leadership style, and research lens. Therefore, a case can be made to use adaptive leadership and a theoretical framework for educational leader research. As Heifetz and Laurie (2003) noted: "instead of looking for saviours, we should be looking for leaders who can move us to face the problems for which there are no simple, painless solutions—the challenges that require us to learn new ways" (para. 4). Adaptive leadership suggests an effective lens for educational leaders during difficult times while also recognizing the dynamic and challenging environment that exists within education.

Modes of Inquiry

Prismatic inquiry (Fisher, 2016) was engaged to test how this lens aligned with one particular educational research's perspective. Prismatic theory tests information in alignment with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic theory, searching for points of convergence and mapping a phenomenon in order to deterritorialize arborescent paradigms. It also actively searches for academic change that is socially just while also looking for what is hidden or unseen (Fisher, 2013).

Examining adaptive leadership as a theoretical framework started through a series of discussions, testing the theory dialogically ([Bakhtin]/Volosino, 1976; Anderson & Herr, 1999; Anderson et al., 1996; Bakhtin, 1981). Additional literature was explored, identifying how adaptive leadership is a theoretically sound lens for educational leadership, particularly within this leader's school (Cavallaro et al., in press). Finally, observations of the school, examining the school's flexibility during COVID (Fisher et al., 2021), and the ongoing engagement in effective professional learning communities within the school in alignment with adaptive leadership (McDonald et al, in press) aligned with the theory. This prompted additional discussions, again testing the dialogic validity ([Bakhtin]/Volosino, 1976; Anderson & Herr, 1999; Anderson et al., 1996; Bakhtin, 1981) of adaptive leadership as a lens for educational leadership research.

Findings

Adaptive Leadership, a practical leadership theory crafted by Marty Linsky and Ronald Heifetz (2017), encompasses a complex process that facilitates adaptive changes within social systems (Heifetz, 1994; Kuluski et al., 2021; Northhouse, 2019). Every social system or organization faces inherent challenges or shifts, and adaptive leaders employ specific behaviors to support their organizations, navigate obstacles, and flourish amid change (Heifetz, 1994; Kuluski et al., 2021; Northhouse, 2019). This capacity to thrive during change makes adaptive leadership a compelling perspective for analyzing education. For instance, kindergarten through 12th-grade classrooms often confront numerous challenges, and a highly effective teacher's ability to adapt, evolve, and succeed in such a dynamic, complex environment exemplifies adaptive leadership.

Get on the Balcony

Heifetz and Laurie (1997) emphasized that leaders must "get on the balcony" (p. 124), enabling them to observe holistic system patterns rather than become overwhelmed by system complexity. Adaptive leadership entails understanding the larger picture while also managing chaos at the ground level. When challenges surface, an adaptive leader adopts a bird's eye view—carefully observing the situation and contemplating possible courses of action:

> Achieving a balcony perspective means taking yourself out of the dance, in your mind, even if only for a moment. The only way you can gain both a clearer view of reality and some perspective on the bigger picture is by distancing yourself from the fray. (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017, p. 53)

From the balcony, the adaptive leader must also interpret what they are seeing and decide on interventions. This includes interpreting what is unseen:

> The activity of interpreting might be understood as listening for the "song beneath the words". The idea is to make your interpretations as accurate as possible by considering the widest possible array of sensory information. In addition to noticing what people are saying and doing explicitly, watch for body language and emotion, and notice what is not being said. (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009, p. 34)

This perspective-taking is essential for problem-solving, guiding the leader to categorize issues as either technical or adaptive (Heifetz & Laurie, 2003; Northhouse, 2019).

Mobilizing the Team

Heifetz and Laurie (2003) outline five essential steps for mobilizing a team to undertake adaptive work. These steps include: (1) identifying adaptive challenges, (2) managing distress by regulating the amount of change introduced, (3) "maintain disciplined attention" (sec. 3) while concentrating on the core issues, (4) "give the

work back to the people" (sec. 4) while ensuring a safe environment that allows the team to navigate conflict, and (5) protect the voices below—such as unpopular or minority perspectives—while supporting "architects and explorers" (sec. 5).

Identifying Adaptive Challenges

When problem-solving, the adaptive leader breaks down the challenge into two major categories, technical and adaptive (Heifetz & Laurie, 2003; Northhouse, 2019).

> Technical problems reside in the head; solving them requires an appeal to the mind, to logic, and to intellect. Adaptive challenges lie in the stomach and the heart. To solve them, we must change people's values, beliefs, habits, ways of working or ways of life. (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004, p. 35)

While many adaptive challenges involve technical components, technical fixes alone often do not address the core adaptive issues (Northhouse, 2019). Furthermore, some challenges combine both technical and adaptive problems, requiring a combined solution (Heifetz et al., 2004).

An additional key aspect of adaptive leadership related to effective instruction is involving others in the solution process.

> So, taking the work off your own shoulders is necessary but not sufficient. You must also put it in the right place, where it can be addressed by the relevant parties. Sometimes this is within one faction; other times this means getting different factions within the organization to work on the problem together. (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017, p. 128)

This principle is particularly relevant in educational settings, where fostering effective professional learning communities enhances collective responsibility and problem-solving (Eaker & Keating, 2012).

Regulate Distress

Once the type of challenge has been identified, it becomes the adaptive leader's responsibility to regulate distress by maintaining a holding environment (Northhouse, 2019). The leader must also "sequence and pace the work," while directing the team, providing protection, offering guidance, managing conflict, and shaping norms (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997, p. 127). Merely claiming an open-door policy is insufficient; the leader must actively foster a space that is both productive and safe for all participants to engage in adaptive work.

A crucial aspect of this process is recognizing the importance of distress in creating disequilibrium, which is necessary for change to occur (Leigh, 2002). Furthermore, "without some degree of social stress, the impetus to do adaptive work will be absent. Yet the level of discomfort cannot be too great, or the group will shun the work entirely" (Leigh, 2002, p. 140). To avoid overwhelming team members, it is important to balance the tension between change and distress.

Sustaining Attention

Part of the complexity of a team is a multiplicity of viewpoints, which can promote disagreement and the avoidance of conflicting perspectives (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Teams need a safe space for adaptive conversations that reflect on challenges while planning ahead, alignment conversations that discuss resistance while sharing concerns, and courageous conversations that correct behaviors (Kuluski et al., 2021).

There is also a need to observe the "big picture" while also considering the complexities underlying issues (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). This is followed by interpreting observed behaviors (Heifetz et al., 2009; Kuluski et al., 2021), including facial expressions and body language that suggest unspoken or hidden elements (Kuluski et al., 2021).

The leader may need to intervene, considering that any proposed steps may also need to adapt over time (Kuluski et al., 2021). Finally, the shared purpose should connect to any interventions while also considering needed resources (Kuluski et al., 2021).

Empowering the Team

As noted, Heifetz and Laurie (2003) suggest that the adaptive leader "give the work back to the people" (sec. 4), empowering them to problem solve and navigate conflict. This supports a person-centered approach (Kuluski et al., 2021), which breaks from the banking model of education (Freire, 1970/2005) while focusing on the individual in ways that question systemic inequities.

Protecting Voices

Mobilizing the team requires protecting the unpopular or "minority" voices (Heifetz & Laurie, 2003), which may be ensuring that all voices are heard, including those who do not agree with the majority. However, advocacy would also consider that, in order to address systemic inequity (Linton, 1998), this also means protecting the voices and perspectives of those who have been historically marginalized and silenced, ensuring that perspectives reflecting cultural variability and differences of ability are included.

Discussion

Adaptive leadership builds on a layered system of theoretical foundations (Heifetz, 1994; Northhouse, 2019), suggesting that, since education involves wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1972), adaptive solutions are needed (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; 2003). Educational challenges can be technical, adaptive, or combined, requiring adaptive approaches to develop effective solutions (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Effective adaptive leadership mobilizes schools as well as families and communities to address difficult issues.

Applying adaptive leadership concepts as a theoretical lens for viewing classroom instruction can highlight the significant leadership behaviors of both educational leaders and highly effective teachers. By examining teachers' balcony behaviors, their observation-to-action processes, and their delegation of work, we gain valuable insights into their adaptive leadership qualities. Furthermore, as a theoretical lens, adaptive leadership focuses on the flexible, adaptive aspects of teaching in a dynamic environment, moving away from the once-size-fits-all cookie cutter curriculums and recognizing how teachers build a universal design for learning that encompasses and adapts to support the needs of all students. Further research into these aspects could significantly inform teacher preparation, mentoring, and professional development, enhancing the understanding of teachers as adaptive leaders in educational settings.

Conclusion

Adaptive leadership provides an essential framework for understanding how educational leaders confront the multifaceted and evolving challenges of modern schooling. By emphasizing reflection, collaboration, and empowerment, it equips leaders to interpret complex situations, balance distress and progress, and mobilize teams toward meaningful change. Through the lens of adaptive leadership, educational research can better capture the fluid, human-centered work of leading schools in times of uncertainty as well as acting as a lens for examining teaching practices within the dynamics of today's classroom. Moreover, by situating adaptive leadership within the broader context of prismatic inquiry and socially just scholarship, this framework supports a vision of education that is responsive, inclusive, and transformative. In doing so, it not only offers a theoretical and practical foundation for leaders and researchers striving to create adaptive, equitable learning communities, but also can serve as a lens to examine educational practices and teaching.

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"It's Not My Place"

Internalized Norms of Whiteness in Early Childhood Educator Teacher Preparation

Janice Chan Jefferis

Abstract

This qualitative case study examined experiences of 10 current and former students in an early childhood education teacher preparation program (ECETPP) at a Latine-serving southern California community college. Valencia's deficit thinking framework explicated how deficit thinking about Black and Brown children and families pervades ECE preparation programming, perpetuating poor outcomes and chronic academic failure. Three themes emerged that demonstrated ways norms of white hegemony shaped future ECEs' preparatory experiences, underpreparing future ECEs to effectively facilitate conversations about race and racism in preschool classrooms, thereby maintaining systemic inequities in early childhood education. Implications include intensifying efforts to transform teacher preparation through policy and advocacy to ensure ECEs are prepared to disrupt white hegemony in the ECE classroom.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in the submitted article are my own and not an official position of El Camino College.

Keywords: Early Childhood Educator; Internalized Whiteness; Early Childhood Teacher Education; Teacher Preparation; Niceness; White Womanhood.

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Introduction

Extant research shows that young Black and Brown children (as young as 3 years old) are often racially profiled as "trouble-makers," "aggressive," and "threatening" by their teachers (Essian & Wood, 2022). Black boys in particular face racial profiling and punitive punishment compared to White peers (Gilliam et al., 2016). Teachers often perceive black children as lacking self-regulation and academic potential (Bomer et al., 2008; Delpit, 1995) and attribute behavioral issues to cultural deficits rather than systemic factors (Ford & King, 2014; Valencia, 1997; Valencia & Black, 2002). Consequently, Black and Brown children are at risk of developing a negative Academic Self-concept (ASC) nurturing the belief that they do not belong in school (Ford, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Therefore, Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) serving Black and Brown children have a duty to create responsive, racially affirming early childhood learning environments to foster positive self-identity and ASC for academic achievement (Neblett et al., 2009).

At the heart of early childhood education are the teachers. ECEs play a profound, direct socializing role, impressing evaluative ideas about the child's sense of self germane to race, gender, ability/disability, and positional status. The younger the child, the more profound the impact (Pesu et al., 2016; Verschueren et al., 2012). According to Zero to Three (2022), attachment figures (including early childhood educators) are essential to the development of executive functioning skills and social–emotional capacities for successful academic learning, such as positive ASC and self-esteem, which are both critical for self-actualization. This especially resonates for Black and Brown children (Cokley, 2002; Dweck, 1986,1999; Neblett et al., 2009; Wright & Ford, 2017). Deficit thinking impedes early childhood educators' (ECEs) ability to work effectively with Black and Brown children and families (Ford, 2012; Wright & Ford, 2016). Therefore, ECEs of Black and Brown children must also operate from the consciousness that Black and Brown children do not experience life in America and childhood the same way that privileged White and White-passing children do (Anderson et al., 2021; Baderin, 2022). The perdurable emotional and psychological effect of systemic racism on Black and Brown people demands ECEs to teach through a culturally responsive, anti-racist lens that affirms students' racialized identities (Delpit, 1995; Marcelo & Yates, 2019; Wright & Ford, 2016). To better understand ways deficit thinking of Black and Brown children persists in the early childhood education classroom, it is imperative that researchers explore how much of teachers' deficit perspective is shaped, reified, reinforced, or challenged by preparatory experiences in ECETPPs.

Methods

This study used a qualitative case study approach using a demographic questionnaire and 60-minute one-on-one interviews of 10 current and former students

recruited from an ECETPP at a Latine-serving southern California community college. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways are White womanhood and niceness reinforced or challenged within ECETPPs?

2. How do early childhood education students describe their preparatory experiences in ECETPPs to work effectively with Black and Brown children?

3. In what ways do themes of asset-based, neutral, and/or deficit thinking with respect to Black and Brown children emerge in ECETPP curriculum content and instruction?

Relevant Literature

Research reveals how whiteness and white hegemony operate through seemingly benevolent teacher behaviors (Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Low, 2009). The cultural norms of white womanhood—a privileged social identity and status white women enjoy because of their whiteness and cisgender heteronormative identity emphasizing behaviors of politeness, compliance, and conflict avoidance—become translated into classroom expectations that marginalize children who do not conform to these white-centered behavioral standards (Hays, 1996; Hayes & Juarez, 2012). Hays's characterization of white mothers is rooted in the ideation of womanhood as synonymous with child rearing that became established in the second half of the 19th century and constitutes the role of ECEs as we know it today: women fulfilling their destined role as "mothers" based on their "superior moral virtue" as classroom teachers (Hays, 1996, p. 30). Related to white womanhood is educational "niceness". Through sociocultural norms, early childhood teachers are socialized to adopt the ideals of white womanhood, treating these racialized and gendered traits as universal standards of professionalism. Educational niceness specifically functions as a mechanism of white hegemony and is mechanically practiced in classrooms to ensure social and political neutrality (Egéa-Kuehne, 1996; Baptiste, 2008; Bissonnette, 2016). Baptiste (2008) defines this construct as "a practice predicated on the belief that it is possible and desirable for educators to share their views with each other without imposing their will and opinions upon each other" (p. 6, as cited in Bissonnette, 2016, p. 13). Educational niceness and political neutrality in educational settings is particularly insidious as they operate under the guise of colorblind pedagogy while perpetuating structural inequalities that systematically disadvantage students from non-dominant cultural backgrounds (Cheruvu et al., 2015).

Previous research has asserted that whiteness is inculcated during the critical period of childhood, which makes detachment from a white hegemonic worldview challenging in adulthood and, for many white people, threatening (Devine & Sharp, 2009; Kumar et al., 2015; Rios & Stanton, 2011; Verkuyten, 2014). Imposing neutrality maintains white hegemonic power by "muffling critique and challenging conflict that

can lead to change" (Haviland, 2008, p. 47). Studies demonstrate that this practice is often taught to ECETPP students through the rhetoric of colorblindness (i.e. "I don't see color") especially when working particularly with "diverse" groups of children (De'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Delpit, 2005). The literature demonstrates that by maintaining a colorblind approach, teacher preparation programs groom preservice educators to believe that "political neutrality and niceness help to ensure 'educational effectiveness'" (Bissonnette, 2016, p. 154), promoting the notion that teachers should not teach from social, political, economic, or race perspectives that might cause contention in the classroom.

Ford et al. (2000), Garcia et al. (2004), Hollins (1996), Ladson-Billings (2016), Sharma et al. (2014), Valencia and Black (2002), Valencia (1997), and Verkuyten (2014) demonstrated that many teachers pathologize Black and Brown students through a meritocratic, individualistic deficit lens—stereotyping them as "less than" or lazy and attributing their academic struggles to a perceived lack of motivation, tenacity, determination, and grit. The effects of deficit-oriented teacher thinking "can be especially detrimental during the formative years, a period when the groundwork is being laid for optimal cognitive growth and development" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.5).

The white teacher participants in Picower's (2009) study operationalized their whiteness to explain their own success. Picower studied eight White preservice teachers in a New York multicultural education course, exploring how early socialization influenced their views on race and diversity. Using her unique positionality as a white woman, Picower probed for honest and candid responses, revealing deeply problematic narratives and internalization of whiteness. For instance, one white preservice teacher used her whiteness to justify how meritocracy and the "bootstrap" mentality resulted in her family's success:

> Like when my dad came here to America, he had a lot of struggle. He started working when he was 10 years old, and he didn't know a word of English. He pulled himself up and he worked hard. He doesn't now go back to the people who wouldn't give him a job … he got over it. (Picower, 2009, p. 201)

Given the uniformity of participants' responses, it is reasonable to infer that these preservice teachers would reproduce those ideological beliefs in practice. In this way, teachers' deficit thinking is expressed as the default (Sue et al., 2007).

Despite efforts to integrate culturally relevant pedagogy into teacher preparation programs, Black and Brown children continue to face disproportionate suspensions and lower academic outcomes—reflecting the superficial focus on cultural recognition rather than a critical engagement with systemic racism in ECETPPs (De'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Delpit, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In their mixed-methods research study, De'Haem and Griswold (2017) aimed to investigate how one teacher preparation program at a 4-year university prepared their 1st-year student teachers to work with diverse students and families from urban communities in a

course called "Child, Family, School, and Community." Through the collection of interviews and survey responses from several focus groups of university program professors and student teachers, De'Haem and Griswold's (2017) findings showed that although program instructors stressed the importance of preparing student teachers to work effectively with families from diverse backgrounds, the student teachers reported misalignment between program goals and the actual content in their child, family, and community course. Specifically, the researchers found that whiteness was a pervasive disposition and invisible norm reflected in the student teachers' responses, which showed how the patterns modeled by program instructors' were reproduced. The authors concluded, "[Students] simply accepted in its entirety the white middle-class view of parents and schools as the norm and do not question its validity for families from different economic and/or cultural backgrounds" (De'Haem & Griswold, 2017, p. 103).

Teachers' deficit thinking goes largely unchallenged in teacher preparation programs because of its inextricable ties to American identity (Clycq et al., 2013). Given the critical nature of early childhood development, it is important to understand how and why deficit narratives are common in teacher practice.

Theoretical Framework

This study used Richard Valencia's (1997) Deficit-orientation framework to examine how Early Childhood Education Teacher Preparation Programs (ECETPPs) may inadvertently perpetuate deficit thinking about Black and Brown children. This study applied four of Valencia's six tenets of deficit thinking: Victim-blaming, Pseudoscience, Oppression and Educability. Valencia's framework, originally designed to challenge and delegitimize deficit thinking perspectives, serve as both an analytical lens and method for critiquing existing literature related to this educational problem.

Results

Three key themes emerged from this study. First, both ECETPP students and the program upheld standards of whiteness, with internalized norms of white womanhood pervasive in participants' responses and shaping their teaching dispositions toward children and families of color through educational niceness and social-emotional nurturing roles. Second, race evasiveness emerged as a prevalent deflection mechanism when topics of race or racism arose, with participants talking around issues or giving racist perpetrators the benefit of the doubt without naming racism. Third, participants were underprepared to critically address racism or engage children in conversations about racial issues, with ECETPP experiences predisposing them to evade race conversations and avoid challenging white hegemony.

Internalized Norms of White Womanhood and Educational Niceness

Using Hays's (1996) framing of white motherhood in early childhood education, white women are depicted as moral protectors of young children—loving, patient, nurturing guides who stand "as a moral counterpart to the corruption of the outside world" (p. 30). White womanhood norms were observed in many participants' responses, regardless of their racial/ethnic identity. The protector, nurturer, guide, and helper role were central to participants' identity. Many described children's communities or homes as unsafe places with negative influences. Participants "Rachel" and "Sara" emphasized keeping children safe and protected. As Rachel explained, "They're [the children] not always safe, especially in downtown. We have so much responsibility to keep them safe and protected." Elements of white psychology were observed in participants' responses to race and racism topics, including color-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), white centeredness, white innocence assumptions, entitlement, and "white expectations of racial comfort" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 5). Such behaviors included dismissing racism topics and granting individuals absolution or "benefit of the doubt" for racist behaviors to maintain harmony and avoid conflict. Responding to a hypothetical vignette of racio-linguistic racism, "Jessica", a 28-year-old Latina ECE, used niceness to excuse the teacher's racist comments by attributing them to lack of classroom support and collaboration:

> I know there is teachers out there that do that, you know, they like to talk … so I [would] actually confront it, you know, and then try to help them. You know, we're here as a team. And if you ever need me to communicate something to a parent, or you need something to tell a parent, like I'm here to speak Spanish for you if you need me to. I know it's hard and I wouldn't try to come out to be rude or anything, but I'm here to support good teachers.

For Jessica, the problem was not that teachers made racist comments, but that the family needed a translator. This deflection technique illustrates how niceness disregards race as a factor in racist incidents and minimizes racism, thereby "obscur[ing] the true cause of racial disparities by insisting upon a race-neutral explanation" (Glazer & Liebow, 2020, p. 11). Jessica's response demonstrates internalized norms of whiteness. Within white psychology and color-blindness ideology, deflection reveals two beliefs: that racism is in the past, and that discussing race threatens the utopian view that race is irrelevant. Jessica acknowledged the racist undertones but avoided describing the comments as racist. Jessica also reinforced that even when teachers say something problematic, their words do not undermine their goodness and that preserving that image matters more than confronting racism: "You know, we're here as one … you need to work together and come together and help each other out."

Race Evasiveness

In being nice, many of the participants avoided confronting racism as well as discomfort and tension when presented with a scenario of racism. A compelling example of race evasiveness was provided by Rachel, a 38-year-old white woman who compared the vignette of raciolinguist racism to a personal past experience. She described an encounter when she was misunderstood by a listener and detailed how her message was taken out of context:

> Sometimes we say stuff, and we don't, we don't hear ourselves. We just know that we said it, and we don't hear the way that we said it out loud, like, we sound angry, like, sometimes I say something and people are like, "Hey, you just sounded mad," and I was like, "I didn't mean to be mad. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to come off that way … I'm so sorry I came off that way," like, I'm just [Rachel pauses for 3 seconds] there's other stuff going on.

Rather than attuning to the child's experience of racio-linguistic racism in the vignette, Rachel described her own pain and appeared to empathize with the teacher (perpetrator). Rachel seemed to imply that the teacher's comments were taken out of context and didn't mean what they said: "I just kind of apologize because I didn't hear myself say the things that I said until after somebody brought it up. So yeah, I would just address it individually." This attitude that the teacher's comments should not be taken personally ignores their racist nature. Bonnie, a Black ECE, demonstrated perhaps the most striking example of race evasiveness and internalized norms of white womanhood when asked to share a past scenario of racism in the classroom. At first, she claimed never encountering classroom racism. After recollecting, she described a hypothetical incident involving children excluding a Black child:

> There's a group of children that were playing and they have different races and I wonder which of those children might get excluded … and that a particular child may be a child of color and they got excluded or whatever and instead [emphasis added] of making it a racial thing, I find myself saying, "Wait, wait a minute, you [the child] don't have to just play with that child"… and because I, especially as a person of color, I can make it a racial thing. You know, I say, "Wait a minute, why does the two white children don't want the black one to play?" You know, I can make it a racial thing, but instead [emphasis added] of going there, I just let them know that they have options. There's other children to play with, right?

In her example, Bonnie twice mentioned choosing not to make the situation about race, reiterating a widely embraced belief that represents a hallmark of race evasiveness appearing in almost every participant interview: color-blindness. A color-blind mentality allows individuals to invalidate and deny racial discrimination as cause. Particularly consequential is Bonnie's apparent wish to ignore racism as a factor in exclusion. For young Black children, this race evasiveness from a Black woman can be especially dangerous: Their experiences with racist incidents are

often ignored or framed in nonracist terms, and they may lack language to explain themselves or trusting adults who believe them.

Underpreparedness for Having Race-based Conversations in the Classroom

Participants reported confidence in guiding children's emotions but felt uncertain and apprehensive about leading conversations on race or racism. Many didn't consider race and racism arising in preschool classrooms. There was distinct ambiguity when asked how they'd guide critical race conversations with children. Some reported never confronting classroom racism and had trouble recalling racist events or determining if incidents were racist. "Mary" recalled, "Hmmm. [6 second pause] You know, I'm not sure if this would be considered racism, but…." Amy shared: "So, I have not come across, um, a situation like that [racism] …yeah, I guess I haven't really thought through how I would have that conversation." This confusion about what constitutes racist interaction explained why participants felt unsure facilitating racism conversations, perceiving racism as tangible, overt behavior, not implicit.

Conclusion and Implications

The implications of this study expose the pervasive influence of white hegemony in ECETPPs, revealing how ECEs emerge fundamentally underprepared to engage in meaningful conversations about race-based incidents and systemic racism, perpetuating harmful deficit perspectives that undermine the academic achievement and developmental outcomes of Black and Brown children. The institutional commitment to political neutrality and educational niceness is a barrier to authentic transformation, avoiding critical examination of racist structures and teaching practices. This research becomes increasingly vital in the current sociopolitical climate, where organized attacks on educational equity initiatives and diversity programs threaten to further entrench systemic inequalities within teacher preparation and classroom practice. The study's findings underscore the urgent necessity to reform teacher preparation programs that genuinely center antiracist pedagogy and culturally sustaining practices. As educational institutions face mounting pressure to abandon equity-focused initiatives, this research serves as a call-to-action for stakeholders to intensify efforts to transform teacher preparation through policy and advocacy to ensure ECEs are prepared to disrupt white hegemony in the ECE classroom.

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Prismatic Narratives

The Focus of Leadership Advocacy in Difficult Times

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Abstract

Focusing on the leadership perspectives during times of significant change

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can involve either an adherence to previous patterns, which fails to manage the liminality of complex times, or an adaptive approach that is flexible enough to ride the waves of change. This study takes a prismatic look at six educational leaders and their focus during difficult times. Narrative themes address each leader's personal learning, the essential nature of change in education, and viewpoints on power.

Keywords: Adaptive Leadership, Narrative Inquiry, Prismatic Inquiry

Introduction

Focusing on the leadership perspectives during times of significant change can involve either an adherence to previous patterns, which fails to manage the liminality of complex times, or an adaptive approach that is flexible enough to ride the waves of change. This study takes a prismatic look at six educational leaders and their focus during difficult times.

Purpose/Objectives

This study emerged out of a K-8 school's self-study. The school invited a research team to work with them on documenting their focus on change. The purpose of this particular subset-study was to look at the perspectives of school leaders in context with external school leaders. In order to explore how leaders advocate for change during troubled times, this study asks leaders how they navigate both challenges and change through adaptive leadership, professional learning communities, and equitable, inclusive practices.

Relevant Literature

Examining leadership during difficult times suggests the need for adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 1994). Developed by Roland Heifetz (1994), adaptive leadership that manages change while supporting the educational community (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; 2003). This type of leadership supports adaptive change constructed through situational challenges (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; 2003). This is a democratic role (Noble & Kniffin, 2021), since solutions are developed out of the team collective (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Adaptive leadership recognized that tame problems (Rittel & Webber, 1972) align with technical problems that are easily solved (Heifetz & Laurie, 1994; 2003). The wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1972) associated with education, however, require either an adaptive or combined approach to solve difficult problems (Heifetz et al., 2004; Heifetz & Laurie, 1994; Heifetz 2003; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Historically, most educational crises are politically contrived (Pinar, 2012), but today's education is under political attack, requiring advocacy for traditionally minoritized students.

Adaptive leadership is designed to address complexity (Heifetz et al., 2004). Furthermore, it is theoretically conceptualized out of several approaches: biology (Northhouse,

2019), systems (Arena and Uhl-Bien, 2016), psychotherapy (Anchor, 2011; Heifetz, 1994; Northhouse, 2019), and service orientation (Greenleaf, 1970/2003).

There are several key aspects of adaptive leadership. First, the need to "get on the balcony" (Heifetz and Laurie, 1997, p. 124) seeks to see the whole picture while managing complex change. Second, the team is mobilized through: (1) recognizing adaptive challenges (Heifetz & Laurie, 2003), (2) retaining focus (Heifetz & Laurie, 2003), (3) creating a safe space for the team to manage conflict (Heifetz & Laurie, 2003; Leigh, 2002), and (5) ensuring that all voices are heard, including minority and unpopular voices as well as "architects and explorers" (Heifetz & Laurie, 2003, sec. 5). This includes valuing a person-centered approach (Kuluski, 2021) while understanding the local context (Gallagher, 2009). Collaboration is central (Woolard, 2018).

Adaptive leadership has proven effective in troubled times (de Yarza et al., 2023; Dunn, 2020; Goode et al., 2021; Kerfoot, 2009; Lateef et al., 2022; Stasel, 2020), when managing technological changes (Kowch, 2013), social unrest (Essawi, 2012; Sunderman et al., 2020). It has also been utilized for supporting youth leadership (Klau, 2006), medicine (Lateef et al., 2022), the military (Sliwa, 2009), community engagement (Stephenson, 2011), corporate models (Korengel, 2019), and mental health care (Cogan et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Prismatic inquiry (Fisher, 2016), grounded in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic theory, is not about retracing established paths but about mapping phenomena in ways that open new possibilities. This approach works to deterritorialize dominant paradigms (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and disrupt hegemonic structures (Fisher et al., 2022), creating space for multiplicity and transformation.

Central to prismatic narrative inquiry is collaboration: weaving together perspectives from different educational levels, disciplines, and lived experiences (Achieng Evensen et al., 2017). Rather than privileging a single truth, it layers researcher–participant narratives around a shared theme, illuminating diverse ways of seeing and knowing (Fisher, Dorner et al., 2021).

This process: maps rather than traces (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987); disrupts hierarchical paradigms through deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987); embraces liminal spaces of transition and change (Fisher, 2016); welcomes silenced, hidden, and overlooked voices (Fisher, 2016); layers perspectives to deepen understanding of a phenomenon (Fisher, 2013; 2016); attends to freedom, expression, and praxis (Fisher, 2016; Nieto, 2002); explores patterns of convergence and divergence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986); and considers issues of truth, trustworthiness, quality, and validity (Leavy, 2009). Ultimately, prismatic narrative inquiry is a call to action: mapping both the inside and outside, holding open spaces for freedom, and generating layered understandings that resist closure while advancing justice-oriented praxis.

Methodology

Prismatic narrative inquiry invites a team of researcher-participants to write narratives (Fisher et al., 2024). This is often started by at least one of the researcher-participants. From there, the team, in whole or in part, examines the narratives for themes and patterns (Fisher et al., 2024). Both narratives and their evaluators seek to layer perspectives in alignment with prismatic inquiry (Fisher et al., 2024). Data is then reviewed by all researcher-participants for authenticity and trustworthiness (Moss, 2004).

In this case, seven internal leaders and two external leaders were invited to participate as researcher-participants. A total of six chose to participate. Narratives were gathered, then reviewed by an external researcher invited for his perspective, then reviewed again and revised by the researcher-participants. Additional authors were selected by researcher-participants to review the findings.

Overview of the Results

Each leader reported learning much regarding the nature of leadership, social in/equities, and working within a system. Several prominent themes emerged including engagement with and power within systems, the centrality of changes, and leadership within the collective. One participant researcher observed that leadership involves *"assess[ing] the prevailing situation, taking stock of essential requirements, available resources, and identifying avenues to establish significant systems."* Multiple leaders acknowledged that education, as a system, is impacted by the systems and influences that surround and encompass it, such as "external pressures" or "economic drivers." As such, leading any part of the schooling process necessitates recognizing one's position relative to the larger or dominant/dominating systems and determining how best to negotiate that. Leaders in this study used the term "power" to describe a leader's ability to navigate or change these systems, noting that teachers *"have power within the classroom"* and then hinting that school administrators have even more power.

Each of the authors focused on change as essential to their work during times of turmoil, with one author suggesting that the role of a leader is *"to ensure that systems change—and systems have space to adapt."* Another stated that *"It takes courage to thrive in unprecedented times and yet we must, to navigate the uncertainty and necessity of systemic change needed in education."* Change was also paired with terms such as "systemic," "departmental," "meaningful," and "transformational." Throughout the narratives, leaders suggest that the purpose of power is to make change, a daunting task. Taking this idea further allows the readers to explore the assumption that systems can be changed despite being entrenched or cumbersome.

The leaders in this research do appear to view themselves as having power yet also insist on the fundamental importance of "stakeholders" being active participants in their leadership. Leadership *"means supporting authentic voices at all levels, so*

that both students and educators have space to not only share their thoughts and ideas but also to make decisions that matter." Participants suggest a good leader changes systems by "creating a resilient and forward-moving collective spirit." The importance of working with and listening to others while engaging in leadership emerges across the narratives. Participants assert that an adaptive leader is in *"perpetual reflection, as the needs of individuals might emerge, evolve, or alter over time"* and should *"defer to the wisdom of staff members who had long standing relationships within our community and with each other."* The leaders assert that effective leadership should be collective and less authoritarian, as *"meaningful change cannot be imposed but must be co-created."* Leaders should work towards the *"cultivation of a shared vision and goals"* in order to create and guide change.

Conclusions

During this time of uncertainty for education, taking the time to examine and reflect on how effective leadership allows schools and classrooms to approach challenging situations is more valuable than ever. These leaders share their practices during periods of change, exploring their self-perceptions, adaptability, and capacity to initiate and sustain transformative processes.

As today's challenges escalate, impacting education systems, the cultivation of strong, responsive, and collaborative leadership that meaningfully engages stakeholders is vital. This research suggests that a deeper understanding of the significance of collective and participatory leadership not only illuminates pathways for effective change management but also reinforces the resilience and sustainability of educational communities. As such, insight into the importance of collective leadership with engaged stakeholders is essential.

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Prismatic Arts-Based Research

An Arts-Based Look at Educational Perspectives on Professional Learning Communities

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Abstract

This study explores teacher perspectives on effective professional learning communities (PLCs) within a school self-study. Using narrative inquiry and arts-based research, the study highlights the importance of authentic PLCs that foster collaboration, shared goals, and data-driven practices, contrasted with less effective, disjointed groups. The findings reveal that strong PLCs promote collective learning, open communication, and a student-centered focus, positively impacting educational practices and school culture. Additionally, the research centers educator viewpoints to advocate for empowering PLCs that support continuous improvement, inclusive of diverse and minoritized voices. This work underscores the necessity of teacher involvement in shaping sustainable, impactful professional communities.

Keywords: professional learning communities, arts-based research, narrative inquiry, prismatic theory

Introduction

There are many lenses for examining the world. Furthermore, "the selection of a form through which the world is to be represented not only influences what we can say, it also influences what we are likely to experience" (Eisner, 2002, p. 7-8). In a study designed to explore educator experiences, narratives offered information, but an arts-based analysis offered a layer of emotion within Dewey's (1934/1954) third space, where the space between the art and the audience is where art is most dynamic. Thus, data can be gathered, but the data can also be used to evoke feelings for the reader. Through exploring six educational perspectives reflecting on the key elements that promote effective collaboration and meaningful educational change, this research advocates for both including teacher viewpoints in educational research, but also for creating empowering professional learning communities with educators.

Purpose/Objectives

This research was part of a school's self-study. The purpose of this subset-study was to gather teacher perspectives on what makes an effective professional learning community from the educator viewpoint. Additional goals were to center educator viewpoints and to advocate for building empowering professional learning communities within education.

Relevant Literature

In line with Kotter's (2012) advice, professional learning communities (PLCs), introduced in the early 2000s (DuFour, 2002), are collaborative networks of educators dedicated to improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes (DuFour & DuFour, 2012). These communities offer a platform for ongoing dialogue, sharing best practices, analyzing student data, and collaborating on instructional strategies.

By fostering a culture of continuous learning and teamwork, PLCs aim to promote school improvement and support the success of all students.

PLCs are based on the belief that sustained professional development and collaboration among educators are crucial for building effective schools (DuFour & DuFour, 2012). Starting a PLC involves organizing teams focused on learning, providing dedicated time for collaboration, and ensuring school structures support shared responsibility for student success and continuous teamwork (DuFour & DuFour, 2012). DuFour and DuFour highlighted the importance of shared goals, collective accountability, and results-focused efforts within PLCs. These processes often begin with identifying behaviors that hinder positive group experiences and establishing commitments to behaviors that foster productive outcomes (DuFour & DuFour, 2012). Additionally, PLCs may adopt SMART goals—specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound—to track progress and guide effective action (DuFour & DuFour, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Prismatic theory expands on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of rhizomatic theory, emphasizing mapping instead of tracing linear pathways. The rhizome concept centers on examining a phenomenon from multiple angles to deterritorialize hierarchical, arborescent paradigms. Prismatic theory also seeks to identify overlooked and hidden aspects (Fisher, 2013). Paired with arts-based research, prismatic theory encourages multiple ways to view the world (Eisner, 2002).

Methodology

This study employs narrative inquiry to focus on participant perspective (Fisher et al., 2022; Chapman, 2005; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Soohoo, 2006), while also offering an opportunity to highlight the needs of individuals with dis/abilities and the lived experiences of those who are traditionally minoritized (Lalvani, 2019). Narrative inquiry also relies on trustworthiness (Moss, 2009). The whole research team was invited to serve as participant researchers, composing a short narrative based on the prompt:

> Please write a page or two covering: What does it mean to you to be a member of a professional learning community? What have you seen/do you see as effective and non-effective elements for PLC practice? What is your perspective/experience on implementing educational change?

Of the six responding educators, two were school counselors, two were K-5 general education teachers, and two were K-8 teachers who had moved into leadership. Participants all identify as women between ages 25-55, and are representative of both dominant and non-dominant ethnic backgrounds. One participant self-identified as having an invisible dis/ability, and another identified as "not exactly binary." While

all participants had completed a minimum of one year in the education field, two reported more than ten years of experience.

Utilizing an arts-based lens (Leavy, 2009), researchers reviewed the narratives, composing found poetry that centralized and represented each researcher-participant. Found poetry is developed from an existing text, creating a rich and insightful analysis and representation in order to essentialize the narratives (Sullivan, 2005). Found poetry presents opportunities to investigate and present the multidimensional nature of the narratives, allowing the nuances and often overlooked lived experiences to emerge.

Overview of the Results

The results were clustered into two categories. First, the qualities of PLCs that emerged from the data were analyzed, then the results of the arts-based analysis were explored.

"Bad" vs. "Good" PLCs

Looking over the narratives highlighted both the problems with "bad" PLCs. This included those that were not authentically supported by leadership, poorly directed, filled with busywork, or "broken." Any of these resulted in problems with consistency, connection, and followthrough. In addition, these bad PLCs—or the lack of PLCs—failed to address the isolation otherwise felt by educators:

As a new teacher
it was as if I was teaching on an island
Alone
within the four walls of my classroom.
Hardly ever did we talk about
student learning,
share strategies,
or look at data together.

[Then]
I learned what a true professional learning community culture looked
and felt like. (Narrative One)

"Good" PLCs, however, supported both individual and collective learning. This involved strong communication, managing change, and leaning on the group's collective knowledge. The benefits of collective knowledge were especially helpful when overcoming idea blocks:

There have been many instances
initially excited and full of ideas, [then]
I would run into a roadblock.

Working with a team of educators

is crucial.
The exchange of ideas
leads to deeper thinking
better lesson development
a variety of strategies and sources…

Being a member of a PLC means
I have the support, ideas, suggestions, and perspective of the individuals
to create meaningful learning experiences
for my students. (Narrative One)

These PLCs also have strong group dynamics, fostering both open communication and team connections.

Professional orientation within a strong PLC maintains a solid purpose and a collective focus on data drive practices while maintaining a student-centered focus. The development of clear SMART goals and a data-team protocol fostered this:

> *A very objective SMART goal was then written to help our team measure student learning. Two key components of SMART goals are that they can be measured and that there is a time frame in which this goal is to be revisited. When revisiting your goal, it is important to know that if a student does not achieve your team's SMART goal it is not considered a failure. The amount of success and pride my team took in completing these protocol cycles every year was unexplainable. Teachers work endlessly to help students learn, but oftentimes the wins or celebrations can be diminished by student behavior, low student engagement, or simply a bad day. Revisiting these goals at the end of the year, help all of us put into perspective the work that is poured into each individual student throughout the year.* (Narrative Five)

Furthermore, PLCs with structures and systems in place to maintain focus supported team consistency. Finally, the PLCs focus was also recognized as having become inherent to the school culture.

Arts-Based Analysis

A key aspect of arts-based research is its ability to evoke feeling. While each narrative offered a wealth of information, the distillation process into poetry highlighted key elements from each narrative, offering a sense of their emotions while triggering a similar sense in the reader, invoking Dewey's (1934/1954) third space. At the same time, Eisner's (2002) premise that the integration of the arts increases how to experience and explore the world suggests that additional senses are roused through an arts analysis. As such, the poetry produces a clearer sense of each teacher's feelings, whether excitement or despair, than the straight narrative, which reads as more informative.

Conclusion

The narratives served to document the qualities of problematic and effective PLCs. The importance of connection, collaboration, and goals were especially

beneficial. What emerged more clearly through an arts-based lens was the isolation without a functioning PLC and the exultation of PLC successes. The integration of PLCs within the school's culture, including the protocols for data management, restorative practices, and goal setting made building functional PLCs easier, but did not exclude all problems. The integration of PLCs cannot be a checkbox or lip service; effectiveness requires time for the teams to meet, a clear purpose, guidelines for meetings, goals for measuring successes, and processes for healing broken teams. The effort, however, it clearly worth it.

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Dyslexia and Literacy

The Innovative Use of Electronic-Learning Modules to Enhance Teacher Development, Expertise, and Advocacy

Kai J. Greene, Dominic Grasso, & Sue Sears

Abstract

The UC/CSU California Collaborative for Neuroscience, Diversity and Learning developed innovative electronic-learning modules to prepare university teacher preparation programs and to grow the knowledge and skills in all those who impact the literacy experiences of diverse learners in school with a particular focus on dyslexia.

Keywords: e-learning modules, dyslexia, literacy, professional development, advocacy

Introduction

The International Dyslexia Association reports that up to 15% of individuals are affected by dyslexia, which equates to nearly 1,000,000 students in California schools alone (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2024). The negative long-term consequences for those who struggle to read are well documented and include under- and un-

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employment, mental health challenges, and involvement with the criminal justice system. Concerns extend even further upon consideration of persistent inequities for students of color and multilingual learners, who consistently perform among the lowest of student groups on literacy assessment measures (Washington & Iruka, 2025). Aware of what has been described as a national reading crisis, nearly all states have passed legislation focused on reading difficulties, such as dyslexia. Policies enacted include the establishment of state-wide dyslexia definitions (see 2025 IDA Definition Explanation), universal screening for risk of reading problems, and mandated evidence-based reading instruction. Recognizing that the success of these efforts is a high-quality workforce, California has also passed legislation requiring pre-service educator preparation programs and in-service training programs to address dyslexia and include research-based literacy teaching practices, and foundational reading skills instruction. It has been argued, however, that this research has not been sufficiently translated into practice (Seidenberg, et al., 2020).

The translation and dissemination of current reading research have been a major focus of the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) Collaborative for Neuroscience, Diversity, and Learning. To this end, the UC/CSU Collaborative has developed a series of six E-learning modules written by neuroscientists, reading researchers, and teacher educators (See Table 1). Designed primarily, but not exclusively, for teacher preparation programs, the modules can be viewed synchronously or asynchronously and are freely accessible at: https://www.arrayalearning.org/ In this paper we discuss the content and use of three of these modules: "Screening and Assessment of Literacy Skills and Dyslexia"; "Dyslexia and Multilingual/English Learners: Understanding Language and Literacy Considerations"; and "Expanded Foundational Literacy Skills."

E-module #3: Screening and Assessment of Literacy Skills and Dyslexia

In 2025, California began to implement universal screening for reading difficulties in Kindergarten through second grade; following Education Code Section 53008 (Odegard et al., 2025). This policy requires that all students be screened annually using culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate tools. The goal is not diagnosis but prevention—identifying students at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, and connecting them to early targeted learning support. This module situates legislative changes within a broader discussion of equitable assessment practices (Lollini et al., 2025). By understanding screening as an instructional tool rather than a gatekeeping mechanism, teachers are better equipped to interpret results, communicate with families, and collaborate with colleagues in designing responsive literacy instruction (Goodrich et al., 2023).

At the heart of the module is the commitment to equity-centered literacy assessment. The module challenges these patterns by distinguishing between language difference and disorder, helping teachers recognize how dialectal or multilingual variations influence reading development. Interactive case studies and reflective "check-ins for understanding" accompany each section, encouraging teacher candidates to apply learning to authentic classroom scenario. Through these embedded

Table 1

Overview of the Electronic-Learning Modules on Dyslexia and Literacy

Electronic-learning Module Title	*Description*
1. Introduction to Dyslexia and Literacy	This module examines defining, identifying, and understanding dyslexia. It also presents ongoing questions, future directions, and strategies for consulting with families.
2. The Reading Brain and Dyslexia	This module defines neurodiversity, provides an explanation of the evolution of the reading brain, identifies unique features of the dyslexic brain, and discusses the relationship between emotions and cognition.
3. Screening and Assessment of Literacy Skills and Dyslexia	This module begins with an overview of screening and addresses the assessment process f services for struggling readers, particularly with dyslexia.
4. Early Childhood and Dyslexia: Language and Literacy Development in Young Diverse Learners	This module focuses on the early language and literacy development of diverse young children and provides an overview of early markers of potential difficulties with literacy.
5. Dyslexia and Multi-lingual/English Learners: Understanding Language and Literacy Considerations	This module emphasizes the importance of integrating multilinguals' first language skills, cross-linguistic influence, oral English language proficiency with literacy development along with multilingual assessment considerations.
6. Expanded Foundational Literacy Skills	This module presents an expanded view of foundational literacy skills, that includes the contributions of all language processes, phonological, orthographic, semantic, morphological, and syntactic, word recognition, and fluency.

Note: Currently, two additional modules are in development that address writing and reading instruction for K-12 students. Link: https://www.arrayalearning.org/

activities, candidates engage in analyzing student profiles, identifying potential risk factors, and determining next instructional steps based on assessment data.

The module allow participants to explore how to select and interpret assessment tools that are linguistically appropriate and grounded in the student's cultural and language background. In practice, this means moving away from deficit frameworks toward asset-based perspectives that honor linguistic diversity as a strength (Yurick et al., 2024). The module also provides strategies for communicating assessment results with families in ways that affirm students' abilities and support collaborative planning for intervention.

From Policy to Practice: Preparing Teachers for Implementation

The universal screening policy places new responsibilities on schools and teachers to implement screening with fidelity and sensitivity. For teacher preparation programs, this change highlights the need for explicit instruction on how to administer, interpret, and use screening data within inclusive, multi-tiered systems. This module offers a ready-to-use, research-informed resource that teacher educators can embed in coursework or field-based experiences. Its design encourages active learning, collaboration, and reflection, reinforcing connections between assessment literacy and culturally responsive pedagogy. Mentor teachers and university supervisors can use the module to guide discussions about interpreting assessment results, developing targeted interventions, and engaging families in decision-making. Importantly, the module helps teacher candidates understand that screening is not an endpoint but the beginning of a process that supports equitable instruction and advocacy for diverse learners.

Together with companion modules on foundational literacy skills and multilingual learners, this resource contributes to a statewide network of multipliers—educators who extend the reach of evidence-based, inclusive literacy practices across California's schools (White et al., 2020). Through collaboration, reflection, and the intentional use of technology, we move closer to realizing the promise that every child, regardless of background or language, can experience the joy and power of reading.

E-module #5: Dyslexia and Multi-lingual/English Learners: Understanding Language and Literacy Considerations

This module places a significant emphasis on the need to acknowledge, recognize, and value students who speak a language or dialect other than English. In California, English learners (ELs) constitute approximately 40% of the school-age population (Kanno et al., 2024). Educational practitioners face many challenges when tasked with unraveling the language abilities of diverse students who hear, speak, and use more than one language who may present with a language-based

learning disability to include dyslexia. (Goodrich et al., 2023). While being a multilingual speaker is not an eligibility for special education, learning a second language may require specialized instruction to assist with English language development (Wesley-Nero et al., 2024).

Preparing Teachers to Service Diverse Learners in Diverse Contexts

Of importance is that teacher preparation programs consider multilingual students' funds of knowledge; an assortment of available resources, experiences, exposure, knowledge, culture, and linguistic background that develops and changes over time (Cuba et al., 2024). Noted is how the diversity of languages and range of dialects that students bring to the classroom are assets not deficits. Assumptions persist that both educators and students share a common goal: literacy and mastery of Standard American English (SAE) which is an idealized variation of American English that rarely occurs in conversation but is used in textbooks, academic resources, and media communications. Of importance is to note that dialects are influenced by a person's historical, political, social, linguistic, cultural, and various geographical factors (Oetting, 2025).

To eradicate previous deficit linguistic perspectives, one needs to remember how no variety of American English, or dialect alone is deficient, and does not reflect a language developmental disorder. Dialects are part of typical sociolinguistic processes whereas language-based learning disabilities are due to atypical psycholinguistic processes. In this learning platform, examples are provided of African American English (AAE), a dialect that linguistically shares many features of Southern American English and several African creole dialects and is spoken by many, but not all African Americans, as well as other people in the United States (Washington & Iruka, 2025).

From Policy to Practice: Preparing Teachers for Implementation

Castilla-Earls and colleagues (2020) use converging evidence that combines four assessment measures to support best practice to diagnose language-based disabilities among multilingual populations. These four areas include: (1) language-focused parent interviews or teacher questionnaires, (2) standardized tests, (3) multilingual language sample analysis, and (4) dynamic assessment of learning potential. While these measures primarily focus on developmental language disorders, this framework can also be applied for reading and writing assessments. While no one single assessment is sufficient, pursuant to these guidelines, educational practitioners can move beyond the monolingual norm and value the varied linguistic repertoires of their student by integrating these four assessment components.

E-module #6: An Expanded View of Foundational Literacy Skills

Foundational literacy skills are considered the building blocks of literacy development necessary for individuals to read texts independently and with understanding. Foundational skills typically include those identified in curricular standards: print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency. We all know the importance of foundational literacy skills, yet age-old disagreements about the teaching of reading, as most recently reflected in concerns with the Science of Reading (SOR) movement, have led some educators to view foundational skill instruction as synonymous with phonics instruction (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2022). This reductionists conceptualization is inconsistent with the SOR and research-based multi-componential intervention studies (Wolf, 2025).

Once thought to be the result of a core phonological processing deficit, recent research suggests that students with or at risk of dyslexia are better understood as a heterogeneous group, with multiple manifestations and varying student profiles (Ozernov-Palchik et al., 2017). While some students with dyslexia do exhibit phonological processing difficulties, many others struggle with additional and different linguistic processes that underlie skilled reading. To address the diverse literacy needs of students with dyslexia, as well as others who are struggling readers, it is essential that we move beyond narrow views of the past, by expanding our understanding of foundational literacy skills to include the critical role of all language processes (phonological, orthographic, semantic, morphological, and syntactic) to word recognition, fluency, and skilled reading (Ehri, 2024).

Preparing Teachers to Service Diverse Learners in Diverse Contexts

Sections of the foundational skills module are organized by language processes and literacy skills. Of these, the module first examines concepts of print that includes the alphabetic principle and phonological/phonemic awareness, both considered precursors to word reading. In these sections the module focuses on supporting children's discovery of the conventions we have for putting spoken language into printed form. The module provides descriptions of phonemic awareness development for children ages 4 through 9, relevant assessment procedures and argues that recommended instructional practices link the speech sounds with the letters that represent them, right from the beginning (Yurick et al., 2024).

The next three sections address topics that are sometimes not explicitly taught as foundational skills—semantic knowledge, morphological knowledge, and syntactic knowledge—all of which contribute to word recognition and fluency. As noted in the module "Who would have thought that the more you know about a word, the faster and better you read it." Teaching strategies focus on the development of semantic networks, generative morphology, and the constructing and parsing of complex sentences into grammatical units.

Although we cannot say often enough—foundational skills are not synonymous with phonics—decoding and word recognition remain in an expanded view as essential literacy skills. This section of the module includes developmental phases of word reading and spelling skills, examines the process of orthographic mapping, and provides comprehensive discussions of informal assessment procedures and systematic instruction. While the automatic recognition of words makes reading comprehension possible, dysfluent reading interferes with the understanding of written text. The section on fluency emphasizes the integrated role of all language-based processes on fluent reading at the pre-lexical, lexical, and connected text levels. The module concludes with a discussion of Structured Literacy and the efficacy of multi-component approaches to instruction and intervention.

Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

The contributions of multiple linguistic processes to foundational literacy skills have greater potential than narrower views to address the needs of diverse student populations, including multilingual/English learners (Cuba et al., 2024). With a dual focus on English language development and the cross-linguistic transfer of skills from students' native language to English, the foundational skills instruction presented in this module values students' language and literacy diversity and is reflective of an asset-based approach. For this reason, we offer the content within this module as a resource for the promotion of instructional equity and inclusion within teacher preparation programs (Hall et al., 2023).

Each foundational skills section includes consideration for language differences, (both dialectical variations and multilingual learners). Examples include the following: provide a rich collection of children's literature that reflects multiple cultural heritages and experiences; recognize, respect and support dialectical differences; offer additional practice with the sounds and sound combinations that do not exist or are different in a student's native language; explicitly teach the academic vocabulary that is required to understand English-language content area texts; call direct attention to syntactic similarities and difference across languages: and, value and leverage instances where a grapheme in a student's native language represents the same phoneme as in English.

From Policy to Practice: Preparing Teachers for Implementation

Nearly all states have passed legislation focused on dyslexia and the screening of students at risk of dyslexia. Recognizing that integral to the success of these policies is high-quality professional preparation, several states, including California, also require that aspects of dyslexia be addressed in pre-service preparation programs. In 2022 the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) adopted new teaching of reading standards. Standard 7: Effective Literacy Instruction for All

Students requires the incorporation of the California Dyslexia Guidelines and the systematic, explicit teaching of foundational reading skills in all early childhood, elementary, secondary (English language arts) and special education credential programs.

Conclusion

The overriding goal of the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) Collaborative for Neuroscience, Diversity, and Learning UC/CSU is to expand upon the knowledge-base and literacy skills of those who influence and potentially impact the literacy experiences of diverse learners. Over the last twenty years we have seen a proliferation of research on dyslexia in the neurosciences and education, yet it is argued that this research has not been sufficiently translated into practice, nor disseminated and taught in professional pre-service programs (Seidenberg et al., 2020). Collectively, these E-learning modules offer a focus on preparing teachers with trusted information to inform decision-making and educational practice.

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Middle School Bilingual Teachers' Translanguaging, Biliteracy, and Advocacy Practices

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Abstract

This study addresses how an asynchronous 36-hour online professional development program in Spanish supported middle school bilingual teachers' translanguaging practices, critical consciousness, and advocacy. Drawing on interviews with bilingual teachers from California and New Mexico, findings reveal that the program helped participants reconceptualize biliteracy, adopt translanguaging as a healing and advocacy practice, and extend advocacy beyond classrooms to families, schools, and districts. The study demonstrates how professional learning can cultivate advocacy skills in bilingual educators, who in turn prepare multilingual students to critically interrogate inequities and use language as a tool for social change.

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Introduction

The current anti-immigrant climate calls for educators to advocate for diverse students and families (Villareal, 2024). This is particularly true for bilingual educators after the White House's historic move to designate English as the official language of the United States (Exec. Order No. 14224, 2025). Teachers who engage in advocacy can create classroom environments that encourage the questioning of inequitable practices and resist deficit views of students' cultural and linguistic practices (Picower, 2012; Simon & Campano, 2013; Villareal, 2024). Studies on translanguaging have shown it can contribute to decolonizing bilingual classrooms (Wei & García, 2022; Wei, 2022) and developing bilingual teachers' critical consciousness (Palmer et al., 2019; Hamman-Ortiz et al., 2025; Rodriguez-Mojica & Briceño, 2019). Critical consciousness develops teachers' political and ideological clarity so they can advocate for bilingual youth (Alfaro, 2019; Hurie & Joseph, 2021). However, not all teachers have access to current research such as the roles of critical consciousness and translanguaging in bilingual education.

This paper presents findings from a qualitative study that examined how an asynchronous, 36-hour online professional development (OPD) program in Spanish supported middle school bilingual teachers' advocacy efforts, translanguaging practices, and the development of their critical consciousness. We examined how teachers integrated translanguaging into their pedagogy, how they expressed the development of their critical consciousness, how they reconceptualized biliteracy, and the advocacy practices that emerged both within and outside their classrooms. Finally, we consider how online professional learning opportunities might prepare bilingual teachers to advocate for students in a sociopolitical climate that privileges monolingualism and marginalizes communities of color.

Translanguaging and Advocacy

Translanguaging has emerged as both a pedagogical approach and an inherently political practice. Scholars such as García and Li (2014) and Wei (2022) argue that translanguaging challenges monoglossic ideologies and repositions bilingual students' full linguistic repertoires as legitimate resources for learning. Kaveh and Estrella-Bridges (2024) describe translanguaging as a healing practice for teachers who themselves experienced linguistic trauma, while also functioning as a form of resistance against restrictive language policies. Such studies demonstrate how translanguaging enacts advocacy by simultaneously affirming students' identities and challenging deficit narratives.

Scholarship consistently highlights that resistance and advocacy are a central dimension of bilingual educators' work. Teachers act as advocates when they resist

deficit ideologies, legitimize students' linguistic practices, and push for equitable resources and policies. Yet, research also shows that such advocacy work can be isolating and emotionally demanding. Picower (2012) describes teacher advocacy as both necessary and burdensome, while Aguirre-Muñoz and colleagues (2024) emphasize that advocacy can function simultaneously as a coping mechanism and as a source of professional stress. Villareal's (2024) work further illustrates how advocacy requires teachers to confront inequitable practices, sometimes in defiance of district policies. These studies point to the urgent need for professional development that equips teachers with the tools and confidence to engage in advocacy rather than leaving them to navigate the work alone.

Despite the centrality of advocacy in bilingual education, teachers often lack access to professional learning that foregrounds this learning. While state standards in California and Texas explicitly require bilingual teachers to demonstrate advocacy (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2023; Texas Education Agency, 2020), Warren (2021) finds that many pre-service and novice teachers remain new in their understanding of advocacy, often reducing it to program promotion rather than a critical interrogation of inequities. This gap underscores the importance of designing professional development that intentionally cultivates advocacy stances through translanguaging and critical consciousness.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study draws upon critical consciousness and critical biliteracies as interrelated frameworks for understanding teacher advocacy. Building on Freire's (2000) conceptualization of conscientização, Palmer et al. (2019) define critical consciousness in dual language education as the interrogation of power, the prioritization of marginalized histories, the practice of critical listening, the willingness to sit with discomfort, interrogation of power structures, situating knowledge within marginalized histories, practicing reciprocal listening, and tolerating the discomfort that arises from confronting inequities. They argue for adding critical consciousness as a fourth core goal of dual language education, alongside bilingualism, biliteracy, and sociocultural competence. Developing teachers' critical consciousness enables them to identify inequities in bilingual education and equips them to advocate for systemic change.

Similarly, Colomer and Chang-Bacon (2020) propose a critical biliteracies framework that broadens the definition of biliteracy to include analysis of power and identity, thereby positioning biliteracy as a political practice that requires advocacy. Critical biliteracies expand the concept of biliteracy beyond the ability to read and write in two languages. Instead, critical biliteracies involve analyzing the power dynamics of language, literacy, and identity, positioning biliteracy as a political and intersectional practice. This framework requires teachers to view their work not simply as instruction but as advocacy that legitimizes minoritized linguistic practices and challenges systemic inequities. Together, these frameworks situate translanguaging pedagogy as

more than a teaching strategy; it becomes a form of praxis that combines reflection, ideology, and action. In this view, bilingual teachers are not only instructors but also advocates and leaders engaged in the ongoing project of equity.

Methodology

This qualitative study is part of a larger, multi-year National Professional Development grant that supported the design, implementation, and evaluation of asynchronous Spanish-language professional development modules for dual language educators. Each module included mini-lectures, assigned readings, classroom videos, quizzes, discussion boards, and applied assignments. The 36-hour program was completed over seven months.

Eight middle school bilingual teachers participated in this study (see Table 1). They were from California and New Mexico, taught grades six through eight in dual language or heritage language programs, and held bilingual authorizations. The group represented a range of backgrounds, with an average of 11 years of teaching experience. Interview data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom within a year of participants' completion of the OPD. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and involved flexible use of English and Spanish. Interviews were transcribed, checked for accuracy, and uploaded into Dedoose software for analysis. The research team employed four rounds of iterative coding, combining inductive and deductive approaches. The first cycle focused on translanguaging stances and practices. The second examined critical biliteracy practices, particularly how teachers shifted toward asset-oriented perspectives. The third explored teachers' interpretations of language policies and how they resisted deficit-oriented mandates. The final cycle focused explicitly on advocacy practices both inside and outside the classroom. We then consolidated codes into themes. For each phase of coding, one of the first two authors served as the first coder on half of the interview transcripts and the second coder on the other half. We then identified and discussed discrepancies and areas of disagreement and arrived at consensus.

We recognize that "designing consequential research requires that researchers intentionally consider why they do the work that they do" (Milner, 2024, p. 3). As such, our positionalities informed all aspects of this study. As current and former K-12 teachers and university faculty, we identify as advocates for multilingual learners and value teachers' roles as advocates. Authors 1, 3 and 4 identify as Latina/Chicana and authors 2, 5 and 6 identify as white. We have all encountered —and continue to encounter—situations in which our activism is critical to our work.

Findings

Findings indicate that participation in the OPD enabled teachers to reconceptualize biliteracy, adopt translanguaging as both a pedagogical and advocacy practice, and engage in advocacy within and beyond their classrooms.

Teachers began to reconceptualize biliteracy not as separate competencies in two languages but as a dynamic process that draws upon students' full linguistic repertoires (García & Li, 2014). This reframing led to new pedagogical practices,

Table 1
Study Participants

Pseudonym	*Grades and content area(s) taught during the OPD*	*Number of years teaching experience*	*Program model*	*Self-identification: race/ethnicity, gender, and state*
Alejandra	7, 8 Math and Spanish language arts	23	Heritage	New-Mexican/ Indigenous-American, of Mexican ancestry Female New Mexico
Guadalupe	8 Spanish language arts & Literacy Coach	17	Two way dual immersion (TWDL)	Latina Female California
Veronica	6, 7, 8 Spanish Language Arts	11	TWDL	Latina Female California
Catalina	6, 7 Spanish	22	TWDL	Latina/Chicana Female New Mexico
Yajira	6, 7, 8 English language arts & science	3	TWDL	Mexican-American Female California
Mimi	6, 7, 8 Special Education teacher	8	TWDL	Mexican-American Female New Mexico
Maribel	6 ELD teacher & program coordinator	1	TWDL	white Female California
Estefani	6, 7, 8 Math interventionist & migrant education teacher on special assignment	2	TWDL	Latina Female California

such as allowing assessments to be completed bilingually and explicitly teaching students to bridge across languages. For example, Guadalupe explained that she explicitly said to her middle school students, "Why should I teach you something in Spanish if you already learned it in English?" She helped her students to see how their knowledge of each language supported the other, and she used her students' assessments in both languages to lesson plan. Speaking about the BBILY modules, she said:

> Having gone through the modules helped me realize that my kids were not just English learners or Spanish learners. They do come with so much more! So being okay with that, being okay with letting go of some of my old beliefs and seeing the kids blossom and seeing them grow in their language skills. I think that's helped them feel more confident in any language.

Formerly trained in a strict separation of languages model of bilingual education, Guadalupe realized that she needed to let go of her old understandings of language development to better understand her students and meet their needs. It required overcoming old beliefs and developing new ones about language and literacy learning and her students.

Teachers also embraced translanguaging as a healing and advocacy practice (Muñoz & Babino, 2025). For some, this involved confronting and overcoming their own linguistic trauma. Catalina, for instance, described how the program helped her reframe her bilingual identity as a strength rather than a deficit, a perspective she sought to pass on to her students. Others, like Yajira, used translanguaging pedagogy to guide students in critical inquiry projects, such as investigating César Chávez's legacy and grappling with its complexities. These practices not only affirmed students' identities but also developed their critical consciousness and advocacy.

Importantly, teachers extended their advocacy beyond their classrooms. Maribel shared that some teachers at her school did not know how to deliver a designated ELD lesson. Having taken BBILY's module on designated ELD, Maribel shared what she learned with her colleagues, including the BBILY designated ELD lesson plan template. She stated:

> I pulled up my ELD lesson and I shared it with the staff. And so, I explained to them the process of how to create an ELD designated lesson and the different components that it has. So now, every elementary school teacher in my district has the BBILY's ELD lesson plan template because I had that resource in my pocket that I could take out and use. At the end of May I'm gonna set up a couple of appointments with different teachers in the district to go deliver a designated ELD lesson in their classroom so that they can see it!

Maribel seized the opportunity to share what she had learned from the BBILY modules. She was using the designated ELD lesson plan template regularly, so she was able to easily explain it to her peers, and was looking forward to doing demonstration lessons in their classrooms. Knowing that language development

was a need in her school, Maribel found an opportunity to advocate for designated ELD.

Similarly, Alejandra outwardly questioned her school's processes for students who were not yet scoring proficient in math and English language arts. A heritage language teacher in New Mexico, Alejandra protested when the administration decided that her heritage Spanish class would only be available to students who were not deemed to need extra help in math and ELA. She explained:

> If students were not passing the state test in reading and math, [administrators] stopped letting them come to their Spanish class. It became a punishment … they weren't scoring well in English, now they couldn't go to their Heritage Spanish and I was like, wait a minute. Why would you stop them from coming?

Alejandra explained to the administrators the research behind bilingual education and how development of the students' heritage language would support their English language and literacy. She was engaging students and their families in the situation as well. Alejandra was in the midst of her advocacy efforts at the study's completion.

Other examples of teachers' advocacy efforts include: (1) Estefani challenging the irrelevance of her district's migrant education summer school curriculum and successfully proposing an alternative program that was more culturally responsive (2) Guadalupe advocating for her students' appropriate placement in high school Spanish courses, resisting policies that misrecognized dual language graduates' competencies, and (3) Yajira engaging family members in conversations about sustaining multilingualism despite histories of linguistic trauma, demonstrating how advocacy extended into personal and familial spaces. Collectively, these examples show that advocacy informed by translanguaging and critical consciousness operated at multiple levels: within classrooms, across schools, in families, and at district decision-making tables. While teachers acknowledged that this work was difficult, they also recognized that advocacy required courage and was central to their role as bilingual educators. They shared that the OPD provided them with the knowledge, confidence, and critical stance necessary to take on this work.

Implications and Conclusion

This study adds to the dearth of existing literature about middle school bilingual teachers and explores how an asynchronous OPD in Spanish supported their advocacy efforts. The teachers evidenced a translanguaging stance through their advocacy for more equitable biliteracy opportunities for multilingual students. They combatted norms and policies they perceived to be inhibiting progress toward social justice (García et al., 2017).

The findings demonstrate that professional learning can prepare teachers to advocate for both their profession and their students. For our participants, advocacy is inseparable from bilingual teaching. By adopting translanguaging pedagogy and reconceptualizing biliteracy, teachers positioned themselves as advocates within

their classrooms and modeled advocacy for their students. The study also shows how advocacy extends beyond classrooms into families, schools, and communities. Teachers leveraged their learning to influence curriculum decisions, challenge inequitable placement policies, and sustain multilingualism in their families. These actions underscore the multiple scales at which advocacy operates and the need to prepare teachers to engage at all levels.

At a time when bilingual education faces heightened political attacks and when English-only ideologies are resurging, this research highlights the urgency of equipping educators with advocacy skills. Professional learning that integrates translanguaging, critical consciousness, and critical biliteracies provides a model for cultivating such skills. By supporting teachers' growth as advocates, we strengthen the profession as a whole and expand opportunities for multilingual students.

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Enhancing Vocabulary Acquisition Through AI-Driven IXL Platform

JinHee Lee & Yuxin Zhong

Introduction

Multilingual Learners (MLs), who comprise 10.6% of U.S. public-school students and 18.9% in California, often struggle with nuanced vocabulary and context-appropriate word choice due to limited exposure to diverse English usage. These challenges contribute to lower standardized test performance, as seen in the 2024 NAEP results, where only 9% of Grade 4 MLs reached proficiency in reading compared to 39% of all students.

Learning Challenges and Purpose

The purpose of the study is to propose a digital transformation solution to improve MLs' vocabulary acquisition and practical English application. The solution emphasizes the semantic difficulties and the cultural context requirements for their language proficiency and standardized test readiness.

Theoretical Framework and Perspectives

AI-driven platforms facilitate opportunities for Communities of Practice (CoPs)

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that can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition for Multilingual Learners (MLs). These platforms are where MLs connect, share learning experiences, and provide mutual support. For example, rewarding contributions and celebrating learners' accomplishments stimulate motivation. Features such as collaborative forums and shared resources (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2009).

Connectivist learning theory posits that learning, both in the human mind and within technology, is enhanced through connections and networks. Digital tools and systems are crucial in this framework, offering significant benefits for MLs preparing for standardized tests (Harasim, 2017).

A multimodal approach, as described by Kress and Selander (2012), supports diverse learning styles by integrating text, audio, video, and interactive elements. AI platforms enhance this by offering personalized feedback, pronunciation tools, and visual aids, allowing MLs to internalize vocabulary more effectively. These multimodal strategies also extend to assessment, enabling learners to demonstrate understanding in ways aligned with their strengths.

The instructional framework, based on Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1987), emphasizes providing comprehensible input slightly beyond learners' current linguistic capabilities. The platform utilizes adaptive learning technologies to tailor instructional content in real time, calibrating lexical and syntactic complexity according to ongoing learner performance. Proficient learners are gradually exposed to authentic, interest-aligned texts, promoting deeper syntactic development within meaningful contexts. This strategy balances cognitive challenge and comfort, facilitating natural language acquisition. The platform integrates the principles of Keller's ARCS Model of Motivation (2010) to sustain learner motivation. The platform integrates Keller's ARCS Model (2010) to sustain motivation through gamified, interactive experiences, personalized content aligned with aspirations, and progressively structured tasks with positive reinforcement (Keller, 2010).

Within the framework of digital learning environments, Collaborative intelligence underscores the cooperative relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) systems and humans in the educational process. Collaborative intelligence highlights AI's role in augmenting pedagogical practices through personalized instruction and data analytics, while human educators remain central to facilitating engaging activities, supportive environments, and critical evaluation of AI feedback (Cope & Kalantzis, 2017). AI-driven platforms can achieve this through a multimodal approach, integrating visual, aural, and interactive elements into their learning materials (Kress & Selander, 2012). For instance, when introducing a new vocabulary word, the platform can provide definitions, example sentences, and audio-visual aids. This multimodal approach caters to different learning styles and enhances vocabulary internalization (Clark & Mayer, 2023).

Developing a Digital Learning Solution

The IXL platform offers a broad curriculum with adaptive assessments, scaffolded learning pathways, and multimedia features. Teachers begin by administering the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic to identify MLs' needs, then guide students through targeted practice in short, focused sessions. Consistent use of IXL has been linked to improved MAP and CAASPP scores, with students gaining confidence and demonstrating stronger vocabulary retention.

The intervention aims to improve student performance on the MAP Growth Language Arts assessment by strategically applying IXL's personalized learning features and focused skill practice. The case study in California provides compelling evidence that consistent IXL usage can lead to measurable gains in student performance on state standardized tests. Teachers can encourage students to achieve at least one skill proficiency weekly to support sustained practice and reinforce mastery of core English Language Arts (ELA) competencies (An, 2024).

This IXL intervention offers a promising framework for improving ML performance on the MAP Growth Language Arts assessment, specifically addressing common gaps in reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary. With the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic, educators can personalize instruction based on each student's specific proficiency profile. This strengthens that practice tasks are adjusted to individual needs. Summarizing main ideas and articulating reasoning motivates in-depth cognitive engagement and promotes durable retention.

Research Methodology and Findings

Setting

The study took place in two public middle schools in California. Both schools are located in culturally and linguistically diverse communities where English Language Arts (ELA) instruction increasingly integrates digital tools to support vocabulary development. Classrooms were equipped with laptops and internet access, allowing students to engage with IXL as part of regular ELA instruction. IXL was selected for its adaptive feedback, real-time diagnostic assessment, and personalized learning pathways, which align closely with the theoretical principles of differentiated and data-informed instruction. Teachers collaborated with the researcher to embed the IXL activities into ongoing vocabulary units so that the intervention would supplement, rather than replace, traditional classroom learning.

Participants

The participants in this study were thirty multilingual learners between the ages of eleven and thirteen. They represented a diverse range of linguistic backgrounds, including Spanish, Mandarin, and Tagalog, reflecting the multilingual landscape of California classrooms. Participants were identified as intermediate or above-inter-

mediate English users via prior MAP Growth Reading assessment scores. To ensure equity in participation, only students who had at least one year of prior experience with digital or mobile-assisted learning platforms were included. Parental consent and student assent were obtained before participation, and ethical guidelines regarding confidentiality and voluntary involvement were strictly followed.

Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate the impact of AI-driven platforms on multilingual learners' vocabulary acquisition and reading proficiency. The quantitative phase was conducted first to determine the extent of measurable learning gains, followed by a qualitative phase aimed at exploring learners' experiences and perceptions of AI-assisted instruction. The eight-week intervention in fall 2025 consisted of three 30-minute weekly sessions, integrating classroom instruction with individual practice using an AI tool. Teachers facilitated each session by providing guidance, monitoring engagement, and connecting AI-generated feedback to the ongoing vocabulary curriculum. The sequential design allowed the researcher to triangulate quantitative evidence with qualitative insights, offering a holistic understanding of how AI tools influence language learning outcomes.

Data Collection

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data were obtained from two primary sources: the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic reports and the MAP Growth ELA vocabulary subtest. The IXL Diagnostic was administered at the beginning and end of the eight-week period to assess changes in vocabulary mastery and contextual understanding. It provided fine-grained analytics on skill proficiency, accuracy, and time-on-task. The MAP Growth assessment served as a standardized measure of reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. Together, these data sources captured both adaptive learning progress and formal assessment outcomes, enabling a multi-dimensional evaluation of student growth.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data, collected after the quantitative phase, included semi-structured interviews with ten participants and reflection surveys from all thirty students, offering insights into their experiences. The interviews explored learners' attitudes toward AI feedback, their motivation to engage with the platforms, and their perceptions of how digital tools affected their understanding of word meaning and connotation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Paired-sample t-tests were applied to compare students' pre- and post-intervention scores from both the IXL and MAP assessments, while effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d to evaluate the magnitude of change. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize average gains in vocabulary mastery, contextual word interpretation, and reading comprehension. Analysis indicated statistically significant improvement in all measured areas, indicating a positive impact of the AI-based intervention on ML vocabulary proficiency.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews and reflection surveys were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019). All responses were transcribed, coded, and grouped into emergent themes that reflected shared experiences among participants. Patterns related to motivation, engagement, and contextual understanding were identified and interpreted in connection with the study's theoretical framework, including Keller's ARCS model of motivation and Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Peer debriefing and multiple rounds of coding were conducted to enhance reliability and minimize researcher bias.

Findings

Quantitative Findings

The results from the quantitative analysis demonstrated substantial academic improvement among the participating multilingual learners. Students demonstrated substantial academic improvement: CAASPP ELA scores increased by 13%, MAP vocabulary scores by 12%, and IXL Diagnostic data showed an additional 15% gain in overall skill mastery, particularly in contextual meaning and synonym differentiation. The paired-sample t-test confirmed that these gains were statistically significant ($p < .05$), with an effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.78$) indicating a strong impact of AI-supported instruction. Teachers also reported that students exhibited greater confidence in using newly acquired words and demonstrated stronger retention when applying vocabulary in speaking and writing tasks.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative phase provided valuable insight into how students experienced and perceived the integration of AI tools in their vocabulary learning. Participants consistently described the AI-based environment as personalized and motivating, valuing immediate feedback and visual progress tracking that fostered regular

practice and self-improvement, aligning with Keller's learner-centered design principles. Another major theme centered on contextual and cultural understanding. Learners noted that authentic materials, such as FluentU videos and AI-generated dialogues, exposed them to real-world language use and cultural references, helping them understand nuances in meaning and connotation. Finally, students emphasized the collaborative relationship between AI tools and teachers. They valued how teachers interpreted AI feedback, clarified complex vocabulary, and guided reflective discussions, demonstrating that effective learning occurred when technology complemented rather than replaced human instruction.

The integration of both quantitative and qualitative results revealed that AI-driven platforms can enhance vocabulary learning not only by improving test performance but also by fostering deeper engagement and contextual understanding. These findings suggest that thoughtfully designed AI-mediated learning environments can play a critical role in supporting multilingual learners' linguistic growth, academic confidence, and motivation to use language in authentic contexts.

Assessments

The effectiveness of AI-driven digital learning solutions in supporting ML vocabulary acquisition will be determined through comprehensive assessment. This evaluation will integrate quantitative standardized test scores, qualitative learner feedback, and continuous data from AI-driven tools like IXL Real-Time Diagnostic. These platforms will provide personalized recommendations and track progress to measure ML engagement, vocabulary development, and ELA proficiency.

Conclusion

In summary, this study investigates how AI-driven digital language learning platforms can assist English vocabulary acquisition challenges for multilingual learners. In the advancement of information technologies, MLs can reap benefits from learning different languages without time and space limitations. Recent studies and literature attest to the effectiveness of AI-generated applications and language platforms for both MLs and universal language learners. There are numerous advantages to using digital language learning tools.

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From the Classroom: Teaching Reflections & Teaching Tips

Elevating Academic Language and Accountable Talk for Every Student Using "Talk Moves"

Sally A. Baer

Abstract

This article will highlight the strategies all teachers can use to support and elevate academic language, academic discourse and accountable talk using "Talk Moves." I discuss the rationale and benefits of integrating a community of talk moves, the research that supports accountable talk, a timeline of my learning and journey, and specific examples of this work.

Keywords: talk moves, accountable talk, academic discourse, academic language, ELD strategies

Introduction

I was recently facilitating a virtual workshop about supporting academic language and one of the participants made a connection to our new learning by

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sharing a story about when her daughter was a kindergartener. The participant fondly remembered that they were chatting casually about something, and her 5-year-old daughter confidently said, "Mommy, I respectfully disagree." I excitedly remarked, "The use of academic language at such a young age is amazing!" This academic language is something that all students practice and learn as they progress through their school journey, pre-school to college and beyond; we are *all* language learners when it comes to academic language!

Rationale for Using "Talk Moves"

One strategy that is a powerful tool that I have integrated into my teaching and learning practices to support development of academic language and discourse is "talk moves." Higher level thinking and meaning-making through collaboration

> …happen when students engage in productive peer talk where they elaborate and justify their own ideas and engage with others' ideas. Productive peer talk can help students deepen individual thinking through activities such as elaboration, justification, and reflection. It can also promote students to think with others through activities such as evaluation, building on each other, and pressing for reasoning. (Hu & Chen, 2023, p. 799)

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)and WIDA English Language Development standards frameworks both include the need for all students to become proficient in conversing with peers using academic language by constructing viable arguments, critiquing the reasoning of others, asking clarifying questions, supporting opinions with reasoning and revising one's opinion based on new information (CCSS, 2010 & WIDA, 2020). Talk moves promote accountability, student agency, and language negotiation, where every student is an active participant in classroom discussions. It also supports the development of what Cummins, a pioneer in second language acquisition theory, calls CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) or "classroom language," which takes much longer for all language learners to acquire than social language, or "playground language" (Cummins, 2008, p. 4-5, 7).

My Journey to Utilizing "Talk Moves" to Support Academic Discourse

As I was beginning my National Board certification journey during the 2023-24 school year, I was teaching at a K-5, Title I elementary school outside of Seattle, 450 students total, with a beautifully diverse population of 56% BIPOC students. During that year, our school supported over 40% of students on free/reduced lunch and approximately 100 multilingual students in all grade levels (20.7%). As a team, we identified a professional learning need to grow our students' accountable talk tool kit and decided to integrate talk moves into our collective instructional practices. Utilizing teacher feedback and language data to drive our decisions, we identified the need to support every student's academic language growth, specifically our multilingual learners (MLLs) and complex learners, to ensure every student had

equitable opportunities to enter and engage in meaningful conversations that were highly scaffolded and supportive of every learner.

Through my research, I created several ongoing learning opportunities for our staff, including professional development workshops, modeling through classroom co-teaching, and staff newsletter "tips and tricks." The teacher feedback was overwhelmingly positive; staff began integrating talk moves into their collective practices and were also thinking ahead to elevating our work (See Images A, B & C: Jamboard feedback (2) and Google Survey Feedback).

Image A

Exit Ticket from 12/13/23 Staff Professional Development on "Talk Moves"

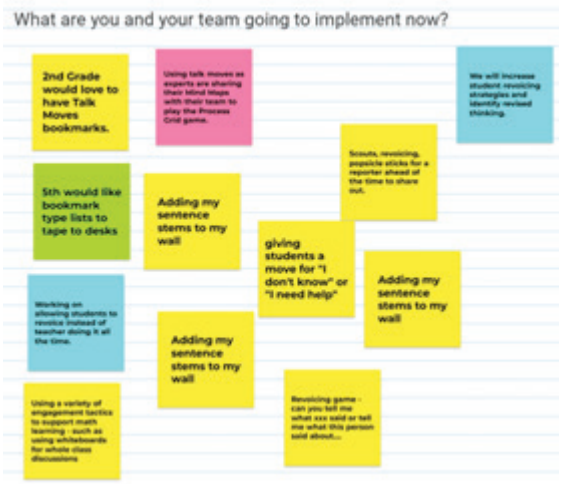


Image B

Jamboard Staff Feedback from 3/27/24 MLL Professional Development

Image C

Anecdotal Staff Feedback from an Online Survey Sent on 3/15/24

Please comment on the positive impact for students you have observed by implementing talk moves building-wide. *Please be specific.*

6 responses

It allows students a way to enter into conversation when they might need more time to process or not sure how to even start their sentence to begin to be a part of the conversation. So in essence it gives voice to those that might not otherwise have a voice. Additionally, it allows me to informally gage who is engaged with what we are talking about.

Everyone has a voice, different opinions are welcomed, respectful ways to disagree

They are engaged by showing when they agree and disagree. They also know the expectation is that they are to engage in our class discussions and will be held accountable with support. I think the sentence stems especially support all our students to feel confident as they participate in class discussions.

My students know how to speak to their peers/teacher during academic discussions. They are excited to use the hand signals to show their peers they are engaged in classroom discussions. They are able to better support their opinions and revise their thinking by listening to other's feedback/thought processes.

Students feel more confident to participate when they are given structure and time to practice/rehearse before sharing in a group.

What Do "Talk Moves" Look Like and Sound Like?

Talk moves consist of sentence stems, hand gestures and other student-centered strategies to empower students to show that they agree or respectfully disagree with a peer, want to add onto another student's thinking, need clarification about something that was said, or want to take the conversation in a completely different direction (Smekens, 2018 & Chapin, et al 2022). It allows students to deepen their understanding through revoicing and restating a peer's ideas (Chapin, et al). "Talk Moves are designed to create a classroom culture where students are regularly expected to speak, listen, and respond to one another. Each gesture serves a different purpose in establishing and/or maintaining a dynamic conversation" (Smekens). Having multiple moves to enter a conversation that are embedded in classroom routines, are differentiated for varying levels of language proficiency and scaffolded using graphics, gestures or total physical response (TPR) benefits every child and celebrates the language assets they bring to our school communities! Having these talk moves available to students can lower affective filter and cognitive load for students, as every student is able to participate in well-established routines (Chapin, et al).

Embedding "Talk Moves" in My Learning Space and Yours!

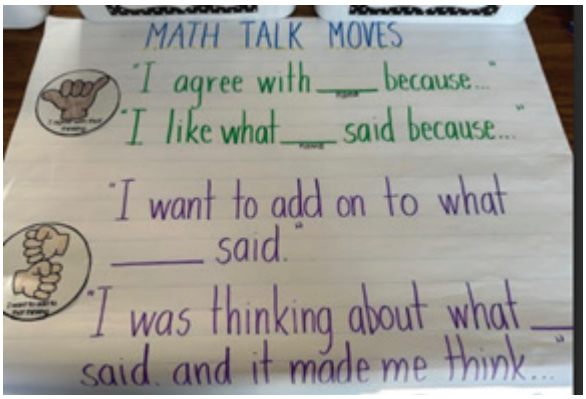
As a veteran teacher, with over 20 years of service as a classroom teacher, reading specialist and a MLL Specialist, I am continually growing in my practice

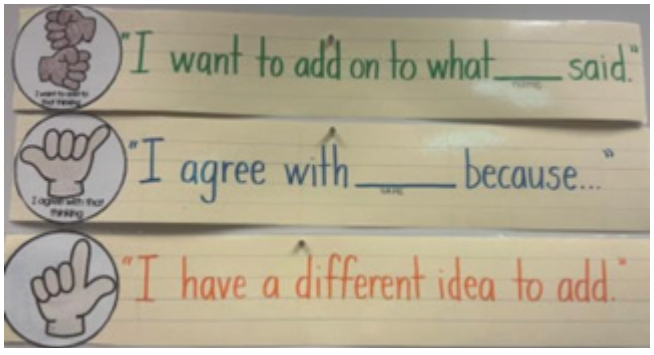
and reflecting on how to effectively implement, sustain and leverage talk moves to ensure every teacher feels confident utilizing strategies and has a positive impact on student's academic language learning. The first way I use talk moves in my learning space is to explicitly teach the "agreed upon" schoolwide hand gestures and basic sentence stems for students to use during classroom discussions. It's best practice that the entire school uses the same hand gestures to lighten the cognitive load of students because they know how to engage in academic discussions as part of their everyday classroom routines.

I initially made the mistake of trying to teach too many gestures at once to a first-grade class; it is best practice to teach one talk move at a time, to mastery, before explicitly teaching and practicing the next move. I use laminated sentence strips with a picture of the hand gesture, so I can easily move the strip around in every teaching context (i.e., whole group, small group, math, ELA, etc.) (See Images D & E: examples of sentence stems with hand gestures).

Images D & E

Sentence Stem Anchor Charts to Support Academnic Discourse and Accountable Talk





Another way I use talk moves to support student academic language is to co-create paper anchor charts with my students to use for specific learning, whether it be content or language learning. For example, when I was teaching a mini-unit science unit on plants, the students and I co-created a vocabulary list for supporting speaking and writing, and we used content-specific sentence stems to support academic discourse in this scientific learning space (See Images F & G: science anchor chart examples).

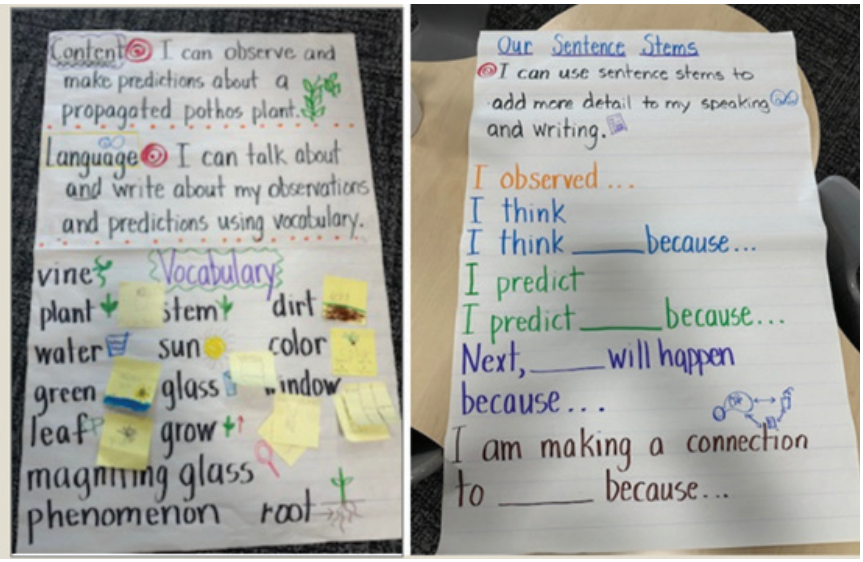
Lastly, I am leaning into using "traveling" speech bubbles with my small language groups this year. For example, when I was teaching a lesson about providing text support for main ideas and supporting details in non-fiction, I provided one specific sentence stem for students to use to support their speaking and writing: "I know this is a supporting detail because the text says…." The stem was in the form of a speech bubble and every time a student was speaking, they held the speech bubble next to their head, supporting not only academic discourse, but use of TPR to build connections.

Conclusion

In conclusion, integrating talk moves in our diverse classrooms has many advantages and positive impacts on students. According to Hu and Chen, using talk moves "elicit high-level cognitive activities" and "facilitate high-level social

Images F & G

Anchor Charts from Science Mini-Lesson on Plant Propogation That Scaffold Academic Discourse, Vocabulary Development, and Accountable Talk



interdependence" (p. 800). Every student, specifically our multilingual and bilingual students, deserves an equitable opportunity to engage in robust classroom discussions, feel supported and "belonging" in their classroom space.

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Analyzing Academic Strengths & Weaknesses in a High School-College Outreach Program

A Pathway to Enhanced Educational Outcomes

Fan Liu & Cynthia J. Lewis

Abstract

This study examines the academic strengths and weaknesses of students enrolled in the Access program atone high school to inform targeted supports that improve learning outcomes. Using a longitudinal mixed-methods design, quantitative analyses (GPA, test scores, attendance, and graduation) are paired with qualitative interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, and program staff. The design includes an interrupted time-series to compare cohorts by years of program participation while controlling for demographic variables. Preliminary survey and interview findings indicate (a) lower confidence and performance in mathematics relative to English language arts, (b) strong perceived value of peer tutoring and mentoring, (c) uneven awareness and use of available resources, and (d) the significant role of social capital—relationships with peers, families, and mentors—in shaping help-seeking and persistence. The study argues that accurate student self-assessment, non-cognitive skills (e.g., growth mindset, resilience), and structured opportunities to build social capital are central to closing perfor-

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mance gaps. Implications include clearer communication of supports, intensified math interventions, and teacher-program coordination to normalize help-seeking.
Keywords: Access program, Aptos High School, academic strengths and weaknesses, social capital, targeted interventions

Purposes of the Study and Research Questions

The high school serves students with wide variation in background, academic preparation, and access to support systems. Like many diverse schools, it faces the challenge of meeting student needs through instruction that goes beyond traditional teaching and considers psychological, social, and structural factors (Polirstok, 2017; Brookbank, 2017; Palardy, 2019). The Access Program, developed in partnership with the University of California Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center, was introduced as a structured effort to provide academic scaffolding, build stronger learning habits, and increase equity in student achievement. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the academic strengths and weaknesses of students enrolled in the Access Program and to understand how these characteristics shape their learning experiences, help-seeking behaviors, and long-term outcomes. The goal is not simply to label students, but to generate data that can guide targeted, equitable interventions and potentially serve as a model for similar schools.

The primary research question of this study is: How do Access students address their academic challenges, and how do their decisions shape their learning experiences? Along with Sub-Questions: (a) How do Access students characterize their academic strengths and weaknesses? (b) In what ways do students' perceptions align with their actual performance? (c) How do Access students seek support for their academic weaknesses? (d) Why do students choose the specific supports they rely on?

These questions allow the study to examine both cognitive and non-cognitive factors, linking self-perception, social context, and academic performance. Findings are expected to inform the design of targeted interventions at Aptos High while contributing to broader conversations about equity-driven instructional practice.

Significance of the Study

This study examines the academic strengths and weaknesses of students in the Access Program at the high school, with a focus on underrepresented students, including those from low-income backgrounds, first-generation college students, English learners, and students with disabilities. These students often experience barriers that limit access to academic support, confidence-building opportunities, and college-readiness resources. By identifying both cognitive and non-cognitive factors that influence their achievement, this study provides a clearer picture of what these students need to succeed.

Building on prior work on self-assessment, motivation, and non-cognitive skills (Polirstok, 2017; Brookbank, 2017; Andrade, 2019; Coles, 2023), the findings

will help educators design targeted interventions rather than generalized supports. The goal is to inform instruction, programming, and resource allocation so that the Access Program can strengthen what students already do well while directly addressing areas where they struggle.

Beyond this high school, the study contributes to broader conversations about equity by offering a model for schools serving similar populations. The expected outcomes include better academic performance, stronger engagement, and increased college readiness, demonstrating how schools can intentionally support underrepresented students by aligning resources with their actual academic profiles.

Lack of Social Capital in the School

Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as the relationships and networks that provide access to opportunities. Atthis high school, this capital is unevenly distributed: students from low-income, multilingual, or underrepresented backgrounds have fewer connections to mentoring, AP/honors pathways, and résumé-building activities—not due to lack of ability, but limited access to information, time, and support. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that schools reproduce class inequality, which is visible at Aptos when white, middle-class students dominate advanced courses while marginalized students remain excluded from the very spaces that lead to future opportunity. Anyon (1981) adds that the "hidden curriculum" rewards dominant cultural norms, making it harder for students without existing capital to gain it in school.

Nieto (1999) calls for schools to intentionally build social capital through mentoring, equitable course access, and stronger peer-adult relationships. Doing so not only expands opportunity but also shapes students' academic confidence—connecting directly to the next section on self-perception of strengths and weaknesses.

Students' Perceptions of Academic Strengths and Weaknesses

Students' self-perceptions play a major role in their motivation, confidence, and academic outcomes. When students misjudge their abilities, either overestimating or underestimating themselves.teachers may not see the full picture of what they need. Understanding this perception gap is especially important for programs like Access, which aim to support students who may not always communicate their struggles. Brookbank (2017) found that students' self-assessments often differ from their actual performance, suggesting that some strengths go unnoticed while some weaknesses remain unaddressed. Andrade (2019) showed that structured self-assessment can improve academic growth by helping students recognize what they truly understand and use feedback more effectively. For Aptos High School, encouraging regular self-reflection could help students align their beliefs about their abilities with real data.

Together, this research suggests that students benefit when schools address both performance data and self-perception. By integrating self-assessment, mindset development, and emotional support into the Access Program, Aptos High can help

students better understand their strengths, acknowledge their challenges, and build the confidence needed for long-term success.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a longitudinal mixed-methods design to examine the academic strengths and weaknesses of students in the Access Program at the high school. The quantitative component applies an interrupted time-series (ITS) approach covering the graduating classes of 2020–2024, allowing comparison across different lengths of program participation. Key outcome variables include GPA, standardized test scores, attendance, and graduation rates. Independent variables include years in the program, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status (free/reduced lunch), and baseline GPA. Academic and demographic data will be drawn from school records, and logistic regression models will be used to estimate the relationship between program participation and academic outcomes while controlling for background factors.

The qualitative component consists of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with selected students, teachers, and program staff. Interview topics include perceived strengths and weaknesses, help-seeking behavior, motivation, use of program resources, and teacher observations of student growth. Thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring patterns, followed by cross-case comparison across cohorts. Triangulation of qualitative findings with ITS results strengthens validity by linking measurable outcomes to lived experiences.

Setting and Participants

This study takes place at a high school in California, a 9–12 public school serving 1,360 students. The student population is diverse: 49.7% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 6.1% are English learners, and 0.2% are foster youth. School performance indicators show a 94.5% graduation rate (yellow), a low suspension rate of 4.5%, and mixed academic results. English Language Arts performance is rated 6.6 points above standard, while mathematics is rated with students scoring 76.8 points below standard, highlighting a significant math achievement gap.

The study focuses on students enrolled in the Access Program, which provides academic support for students with demonstrated need. A stratified sampling strategy will be used to ensure representation across grade levels, achievement levels, and demographic groups. Participants include students from varied backgrounds—such as low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities—along with teachers and program coordinators involved in Access. Quantitative data will be drawn from academic records (GPA, attendance, standardized test scores), while qualitative data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with selected students and staff. This mixed-methods design allows the

study to examine both statistical trends and lived experiences related to academic strengths, weaknesses, and program impact.

The Role of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations

The researcher has been involved with the Access Program at the high school for the past two and a half years, serving as a tutor and college advisor. This ongoing role created strong relationships with students and teachers, which helped secure participation and provided firsthand insight into the academic challenges the program is designed to address.

The study received approval from the school administration, including the principal, and aligns with institutional guidelines. Data collection includes online surveys and semi-structured interviews. Surveys gather quantitative information on academic performance, motivation, and study habits, using a mix of closed- and open-ended items that were piloted beforehand. Interviews with selected students, teachers, and staff provide deeper qualitative perspectives on learning experiences and perceptions of the Access Program.

All procedures follow standard ethical protocols. Participation is voluntary, data are anonymized, and confidentiality is maintained throughout. Consent (and guardian consent for minors) is obtained before participation. The researcher's established rapport with the community supports honest responses while still maintaining professional boundaries. These steps ensure that the study is both methodologically sound and ethically responsible.

Data Analysis

A mixed-methods approach was used to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data. Survey responses were numerically coded and entered into Excel, where descriptive statistics were used to summarize trends in academic confidence, resource use, and performance. Interview data from students and teachers were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through thematic coding to identify recurring patterns related to support systems, challenges, and program impact. Cross-case analysis was used to compare themes across cohorts and demographic groups. Finally, qualitative findings were triangulated with survey results to confirm consistency and strengthen validity. This combined analysis provided a clearer picture of Access students' strengths, weaknesses, and support needs, guiding targeted intervention design.

Results

Survey Findings

Academic Confidence and Performance: Students consistently reported low confidence in mathematics, which aligned with their lower performance in math courses. When asked about their most difficult subject, "math" was the most

frequent response, often linked to trouble understanding concepts and falling behind in classwork. In contrast, students expressed higher confidence in English and social science courses, where they felt more competent and engaged. As one student explained, "I feel confident in English because I enjoy reading and writing, but math is a struggle" (See Figure 1).

Engagement and Resource Utilization: Survey responses showed that the Access Program plays a major role in helping students feel supported, especially through peer tutoring and mentoring. Students described these elements as essential for understanding difficult concepts and gaining confidence. As one student noted, "Peer tutoring has helped me understand hard topics," while another shared, "Mentoring sessions boosted my confidence and gave me new study strategies." However, engagement with program resources varied. Some students regularly attended tutoring and study groups. In contrast, others used them rarely or not at all—often due to time conflicts, lack of awareness, or not recognizing the benefits early on. One student explained, "I didn't know about all the tutoring options until later in the year," pointing to the need for clearer communication and outreach (See Figure 2).

Perception of School Experience and Curriculum Relevance: Stu-

Figure 1

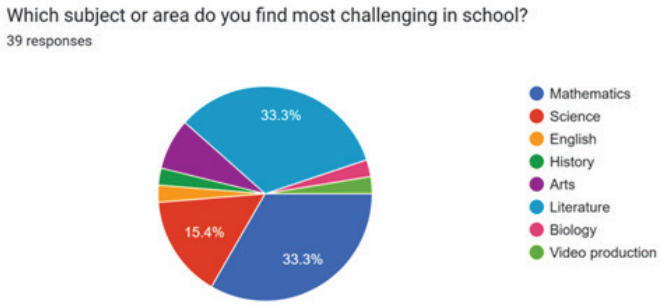
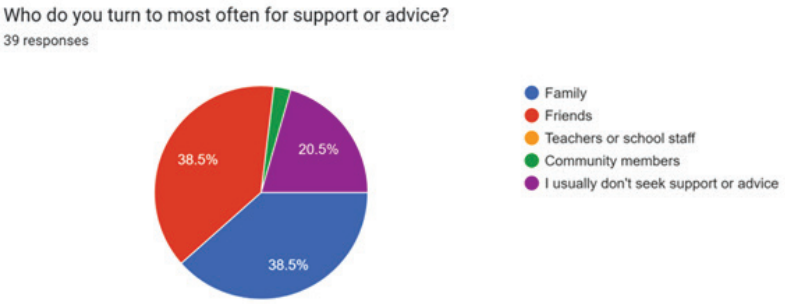


Figure 2



dents expressed mixed views about how relevant their coursework is to their future goals. Many felt that subjects like math and English were useful, while others questioned the value of topics they saw as disconnected from real-life or career plans. As one student stated, "I feel like some of the curriculum is relevant, but not all of it." Another added, "I'm not going to use everything I learn in high school in my career as a nurse or doctor," reflecting a wider concern about the practical application of certain subjects (see Figures 3 and 4).

Home and Community Influence: Students frequently emphasized the role of home and community in their academic success. Many described supportive family environments that encouraged studying and emotional well-being. One student explained, "My family is very close, and we support each other," highlighting the importance of home-based encouragement. Community activities—such as volunteering, sports, and religious programs—were also seen as valuable, not only for life skills but for building social capital that strengthened both academic confidence and personal growth (See Figures 5, 6, and 7).

Self-Assessment and Feedback: Students emphasized that feedback from teachers and mentors strengthened both their study habits and confidence. As one

Figure 3

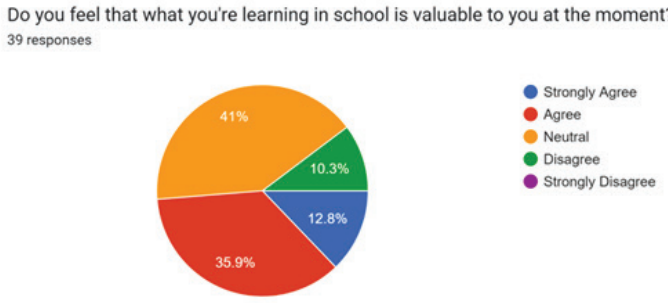


Figure 4

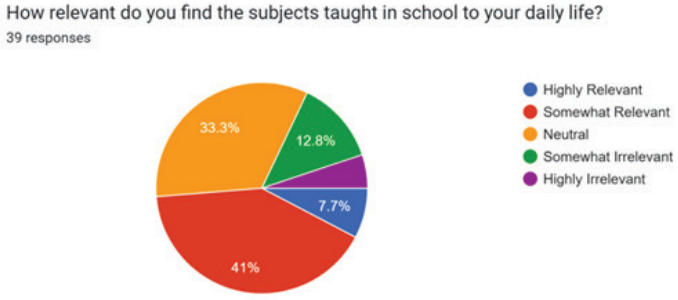


Figure 5

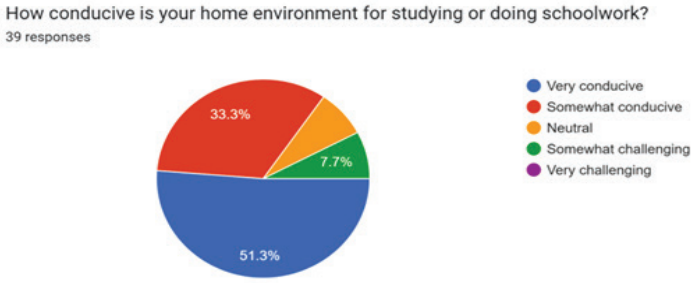


Figure 6

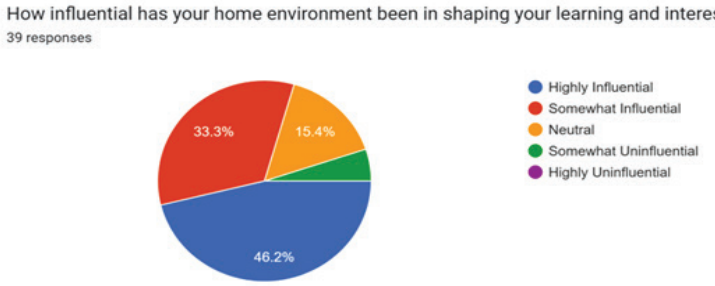


Figure 7

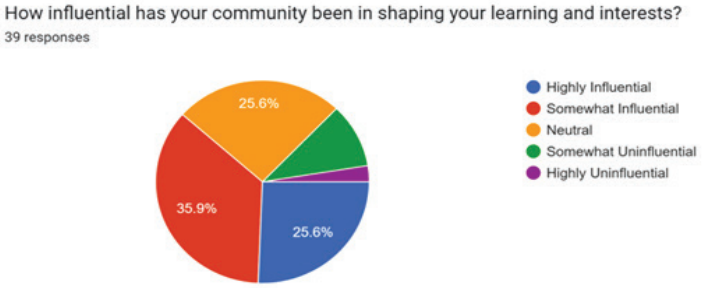
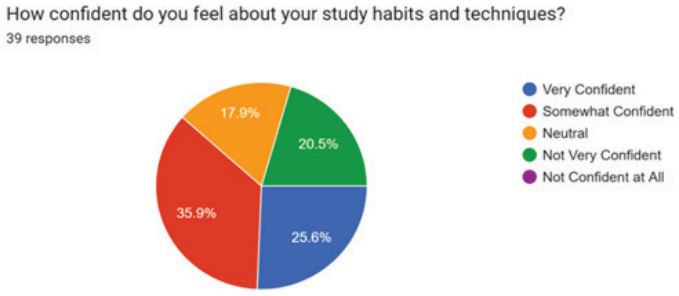


Figure 8



student explained, "I feel confident about my study habits because my teachers give helpful feedback," showing how constructive guidance supports effective self-assessment and academic growth (See Figure 8).

Challenges and Support Systems: Students reported that personal and family issues often affected their academic focus, but the Access Program's flexible support helped them stay on track. One student explained, "The program helped me manage personal and family issues that could have affected my studies," showing its role in providing whole-student support.

Interviews with Teachers

Interviews with four of the high school teachers revealed consistent themes about the impact of the Access Program on student engagement and academic growth. Across subjects, teachers observed that Access students were more likely to seek help, participate in class discussions, and use available resources such as tutoring and workshops. Several teachers emphasized that much of the program's success comes from normalizing help-seeking behavior, especially in subjects where students typically lack confidence, such as math. Although external factors—such as family responsibilities, socioeconomic stress, or personal challenges—still affect student performance, teachers agreed that the structured support, peer collaboration, and mentoring offered through Access helped students develop stronger organizational and learning skills over time. One teacher estimated that Access students performed roughly 8% higher than non-participants, not only because of academic support, but because they felt "safe to ask questions" and more connected to school adults.

Interviews with Students

Interviews showed that students' help-seeking choices depended on access, comfort, and the nature of the problem. Some preferred going directly to teachers, viewing them as the most reliable source of answers, while others first attempted independent problem-solving, online resources, or help from siblings. Peer support was used when students wanted faster, more relatable explanations—especially in math—though teachers were still seen as the ultimate experts. Students emphasized that teacher attitude (approachability, patience, respect) strongly shaped whether they felt comfortable asking for help. Cultural or linguistic background did not appear to be a major barrier for most, though one student was unsure of its effect. Students also viewed the Access Program as a key support system, especially when teachers were unavailable. They valued its tutoring, college-readiness guidance, and sense of community, noting that it built confidence and provided skills beyond regular coursework. Overall, students' decisions were not about avoiding teachers but about convenience, confidence, and having multiple supportive spaces where help-seeking is encouraged.

Conclusion

This study shows that the success of Access Program students at the high school depends not only on instruction, but also on social capital, targeted support, and a school culture that normalizes help-seeking. Consistent with prior research, tutoring, mentoring, and personalized guidance improved students' confidence and engagement, especially for underrepresented groups (Polirstok, 2017; Brookbank, 2017; Andrade, 2019). The continued gap in math performance demonstrates the need for subject-specific interventions rather than universal strategies. Reducing inequities in social capital remains essential. Students without networks or mentoring face added barriers, which programs like Access can help close (Bourdieu, 1986; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Anyon, 1981). Strengthening partnerships, peer supports, and teacher awareness can further extend these gains. The Access Program offers a model for schools serving diverse learners: cultivate social capital, provide structured supports, and treat self-perception as part of academic growth. With continued investment, such approaches can create more equitable learning environments in which all students have the opportunity to reach their academic potential.

Author Note

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Hands-on Interdisciplinary Teaching for a Sustainable World

Pam Wasserman, Amy Gimino, & Cynthia Geary

Introduction

Environmental Education (EE) can have tremendous benefits for K-12 students (North American Association for Environmental Education, 2025). A review of 199 peer-reviewed studies by researchers at Stanford University (Ardoin et al., 2018) found EE not only enhanced student academic performance and understanding of science, biology, math and reading, it also enhanced students' social skills, civic engagement, environmentally friendly behavior, critical thinking and problem solving skills. This session's workshop activities and discussion sought to provide teacher educators with knowledge, resources and innovative ways to help preservice and inservice teachers weave environmental themes into instruction for several content areas. The workshop addressed the question: How can we, as teacher educators, prepare future teachers to integrate environmental principles and concepts throughout the K-12 curriculum, while meeting content standards and developing important skills for life, including critical thinking, inquiry, and making responsible choices? The innovative instructional materials and strategies modeled and shared provided teacher educators with face-to-face and digital resources to

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engage diverse K-12 students with each other around issues of sustainability in their communities, nationally and around the world.

Challenge

Today's environmental challenges require an environmentally literate population. California's Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&Cs) highlight the deep relationship between humans and the natural world and are intended to inform standards-based instruction and fuel student inquiry. In their review of literature Ardoin et al. (2018) identified significant trends that provide evidence that environmental education has positive correlations with learning, motivation, skill-building, and empowerment. Teachers can support environmental literacy by helping students to understand and apply the EP&Cs across academic disciplines and in the real world. In 2016, the EP&Cs were integrated into the revised California History-Social Science and the new California Science framework. Yet, new and future teachers may be at a loss on the best ways to build their teaching portfolios with teaching activities that will help them engage all kinds of learners in an inclusive classroom on timely environmental themes. Across the K-12 continuum, there is a need and opportunity for highly engaging instruction that includes environmental themes in several disciplines including English language arts, science, mathematics and social studies.

Purpose

This hands-on workshop, introduced participants to interdisciplinary curricular resources and teaching activities developed by Population Education (Pop Ed), a non-profit program of Population Connection, whose mission is to "provide K-12 educators with innovative, hand-on lesson plans and professional development to teach about human population growth and its effects on the environment and human well-being" (Population Education, 2025). Over the past 200 years, the world's population has grown from one to eight billion. Pop Ed offers standards-aligned interdisciplinary lesson plans with engaging simulations and cooperative challenges exploring population growth themes aimed at inspiring students to "tackle a variety of real-world problems and to become positively engaged in their communities as the next generation of leaders and policy makers" (Pop Ed, 2025). Educators that attend a Pop Ed workshop are provided free access to online curricular resource libraries, including *Teaching Populations (k-12), Counting on People (Elementary), People and the Planet (Middle school) and Earth Matters (High School).*

The presenters modeled and engaged participants in several interdisciplinary teaching activities on human-environmental connections that can be incorporated into K-12 classrooms. These activities developed inquiry and critical thinking skills while addressing science, mathematics, English Language Arts and social studies content standards. This interdisciplinary approach aimed to foster a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness between human societies and the natural

world. In helping to prepare students for ways to analyze and address environmental challenges, it is helpful to introduce human ecology concepts in the elementary grades and continue development in middle and high schools. These concepts include interdependence in nature, understanding human needs and wants (food, energy, water and shelter), renewable and nonrenewable resource use, carrying capacity, land use patterns (agriculture, forests, human settlements) pollution, waste, and the importance of environmental stewardship and conservation. The workshop presenters modeled and engaged participants in interdisciplinary activities that they could share with preservice teachers, that they, in turn, could use in their future inclusive classrooms. The activities were presented in both face-to-face and virtual formats and are suitable for elementary, middle school and high school classes.

Overview of Workshop Activities

The presenters began the workshop with a contextual framework for the activities presented. They provided a brief introduction to Pop Ed and explained the importance of including modeling, simulations, and other experiential strategies to address human ecology themes in the interdisciplinary K-12 classrooms. They also shared the relevant California Academic Content Standards for science, mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) and history-social studies.

The presenters spent most of the workshop modeling and engaging participants in activities that can be successfully implemented in university classes for K-12 preservice teachers. These activities drew from a hands-on/minds-on constructivist model to motivate students to build problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Activity formats presented and/or described included modeling, role-playing simulations, interactive stories, resource-allocation games, and group problem-solving. Thematically, the activities explored different aspects of the human ecology including population trends, the growth of agriculture and other land use issues, renewable and nonrenewable resource use, climate change, and changes in biodiversity. The presenters demonstrated activities that built knowledge and skills in life and earth sciences, geography and mathematics, while applying learning to authentic problems. Within the time frame the presenters modeled various activities and shared how participants could implement in pre-service methods classes in small groups. The activities included:

- *Population Circle/ World Population Video:* This large-group simulation allowed participants to see and experience the impact of population growth over the past 500 years. The activity, aligned with upper elementary, middle school and high school science, social studies and math standards, incorporated numeracy skills and simple algebraic functions to conceptualize a geometric growth pattern. It also brought in historical markers to introduce advancements in science/technology and standards of living over the time period.

- *Something for Everyone/ One for All*: This resource management game challenged participants to find strategies to share a commonly-held resource. This activity, aligned with upper-elementary, middle and high school science and social studies standards, required participants to use mathematical reasoning to overcome the "tragedy of the commons" effect where individuals acting in their own best interest deplete a shared resource at the expense of the whole group. Through communication, collaboration and critical thinking, participants determine short-term consumption strategies to preserve a long-term supply of resources deepening their understanding and appreciation of sustainability.

- *More or Less/ Más o Menos/Everything is Connected/Todo está Conectado*: This team concept mapping activity developed participants' vocabulary and deepened their understanding of positive and negative environmental impacts of population growth. This activity, aligned with K-12 ELA, science, social studies standards, provided vocabulary cards in two languages as scaffolds and guidance for using the activity with multilingual learners.

The presenters engaged the participants in a discussion on how best to incorporate these activities into preservice teaching methods courses for several disciplines and how to provide guidance to students on differentiating these lessons for diverse learners in their own classrooms. This guidance included modifying activities for bilingual and multilingual learners. Participants spent time analyzing each activity and reflecting on the impact on pre-service teaching and learning. Questions that were discussed included: What are effective ways for pre-service teachers to engage learners in human ecology and geography themes? What tools and resources are effective in implementing a curriculum that addresses interdisciplinary approaches? The presenters allowed time at the end of the session for additional questions. Participants received lesson plans and background readings in an electronic format, as well as links to recommended online resources, to help support their work at their colleges and universities.

Practices that Address the Issue

Environmental literacy is a component of 21st Century Skills. Per the *P21 Framework Definitions* (2015), this component requires students to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the environment and the circumstances and conditions affecting it, particularly as relates to air, climate, land, food, energy, water and ecosystems

2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of society's impact on the natural world (e.g., population growth, population development, resource consumption rate, etc.)

> 3. Investigate and analyze environmental issues, and make accurate conclusions about effective solutions
>
> 4. Take individual and collective action towards addressing environmental challenges (e.g., participating in global actions, designing solutions that inspire action on environmental issues). (p. 2.)

The activities in this workshop addressed these components by building students' understanding of interconnectivity, cause and effect, human impacts on the natural world, and change over time. The three activities integrated California Content Standards and engaged participants in meaningful learning experiences through interactive simulations, games and concept-mapping.

During the *Population Circle/ World Population Video* simulation, participants experienced firsthand how the world's population grew slowly 500 years ago, but began to grow exponentially over the past few hundred years. After the simulation, they reflected on their experience describing and explaining trends in population growth. Participants observed exponential growth starts slow and finishes fast, with over 50% of the population being added since 1980. Presenters added that secondary students could also be asked to consider the impact of historical and scientific changes, such as modern medicine, better nutrition and sanitation and challenges and advantages associated with population growth.

During the *Something for Everyone/ One for All* simulation game, participants experienced how renewable natural resources, if managed properly, can be used again and again. In order to successfully win the game, participants had to collaboratively determine and implement a strategy that would produce a sustainable amount of renewable resources. After the simulation, they reflected on their experience drawing parallels between the game tokens and the renewable resources upon which people depend. Presenters shared how the activity could be modified for early elementary children by passing a bowl of goldfish around a circle. They also shared how secondary students could explore the impact of human population and identify individual and collective short-term consumption strategies to preserve a long-term supply of resources.

During the More or Less/ Más o Menos/Everything is Connected/ Todo está Conectado activity, participants explored the First Law of Ecology - how everything within the natural environment and local, regional and global society is connected to everything else. In small groups, participants created concept maps illustrating cause and effects relationships associated with our "8 billion and growing" population. The presenters shared scaffolds, including vocabulary cards for lower elementary and multilingual students and less scaffolded word webs and enrichment activities (e.g., researching real world examples of population impacts and making predictions about the state of the future environment based on data and content knowledge) for high school students.

Significance to the Field of Teacher Education

Environmental content is a key element of the California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS), with environmental topics incorporated into many of the disciplinary core ideas and performance expectations for students at each grade level. Environmental literacy is encouraged across academic disciplines like science, history-social science, mathematics and language arts. Pop ED's innovative, hands on lesson planning resources, *Teaching Populations* (k-12)*, Counting on People* (Elementary)*, People and the Planet* (Middle school) and *Earth Matters* (High School) offer preservice and inservice teachers a strong foundation for weaving environmental literacy into disciplinary content and building environmental literacy These lessons can have sticking power when they are memorable and interactive, and when students work collaboratively to address/solve authentic problems (Donovan, Bransford & Pellegrino, 1999). The presented lessons in this workshop could be a meaningful addition to future teachers' portfolio, as they are timely, age-appropriate, aligned to state standards and advance California's Environmental Principles and Concepts. They are highly engaging and inclusive of diverse students and learning modalities (in-person and virtual) found in classrooms throughout the state.

Conclusion

Our *hands-on interdisciplinary* workshop modeled and provided participants with online Pop Ed curriculum, interactive lesson plans, and both face-to-face and digital tools to share with preservice and inservice teachers. The materials integrate environmental principles and concepts throughout the K-12 curriculum, while meeting California content standards and developing important skills for life, including critical thinking, inquiry, and making responsible choices. The innovative, collaborative, hands-on activities engage students in understanding the impact of population growth and issues of sustainability in their communities, nationally and around the world.

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From Evaluation to Coaching

Humanizing Feedback to Build Trust and Capacity

Furwa T. Rizvi

Abstract

University supervisors and school administrators know evaluation is more than checklists and compliance, but how can we actually practice differently? This workshop demonstrated how to use research-based coaching frameworks such as the Ladder of Inference, Specificity and Objectivity Matrix, the 5D+ Rubric, and Coaching for Equity, to build trusting relationships and promote professional growth. Activities and role-playing feedback simulations helped participants explore the evaluator's influence on teacher identity and capacity-building, as well as practicing specific strategies that prioritize relational trust and instructional equity. This workshop was created for those supervising or supporting the evaluation of student teachers or field educators.

Keywords: teacher evaluation, coaching, trust, equity, supervision, feedback

Introduction

Teacher evaluation has been held up as a solution to ineffective teaching and accountability for years. For many teachers, evaluation still suggests a single day of scrutiny, not necessarily support or the chance for improvement. Systems of

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supervision throughout California and the rest of the country have often been based on compliance with regulations, documentation, and timelines. Focused on the mechanics of instruction rather than the humanity of it, evaluation systems can often foster mistrust, stress, and missed opportunities for reflective practice if based on external accountability rather than professional growth.

In both PK–12 and higher education settings, one of the most important roles in teacher learning is evaluators (principals, administrators, supervisors, and mentors). Their feedback both affects teachers' instructional practice and shapes their identity and confidence as professionals. New teachers, in particular, find themselves in a vulnerable position as their high-stakes observations by evaluators may be used for personnel or credentialing decisions. Studies in this area have consistently shown that teachers view their evaluations as inconsistent, bureaucratic, and unrelated to their instructional practice (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Donaldson, 2012).

Relational trust has also been recognized as a precondition for conducting evaluations and collegial work in a supportive manner (Bryk & Schneider, 2022; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). When feedback is informed by evidence, transparency, and dialogue, evaluation can create the conditions for instructional improvement and teacher agency. This implies a reframing of evaluation as a continuous cycle of coaching and inquiry instead of an event that has high stakes (Aguilar, 2020; Dehombreux, 2024). This claim is also in line with research in teacher education on the importance of formative supervision, reflection, and feedback practices that support teachers' work for equity and sense of professional efficacy (Dehombreux, 2024).

This article describes a conceptual shift in how to practice evaluation as a trust-, reflection-, and equity-centered coaching practice. Drawing from scholarship and practitioner learning shared through the California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE), we consider how four frameworks can be used as tools to reframe supervision as a collaborative process of growth. Rather than seeking to replace existing evaluation systems, these frameworks focus on re-centering evidence-based dialogue, reflective practice, and relationship building in existing systems of evaluation.

Reframing evaluation in this way supports the Fall 2025 CCTE Conference theme, Who We Are, Why We Matter. The invitation to humanize evaluation extends beyond a professional and ethical call to action to work with teachers in a way that humanizes them and supports their development through trust and collaboration. Grounded in equity and relational trust, evaluation becomes a way to move away from accountability and toward authentic professional learning and continuous improvement. This discussion builds on prior scholarship that conceptualized teacher evaluation as a relational and coaching-centered process grounded in trust and reflection (Rizvi & Marroquin, in press).

The Shift: From Compliance to Coaching

Teacher evaluation in the United States has historically been grounded in

a managerial orientation that prioritizes efficiency, accountability, and control. Supervision practices in the early twentieth century were influenced by industrial management models that valued procedural uniformity and productivity (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1979). While these systems aimed to ensure instructional quality, they often positioned evaluators as enforcers of standards rather than facilitators of professional learning. Evaluation became an instrument of compliance that reinforced hierarchical relationships and limited opportunities for authentic collaboration between evaluators and teachers.

Current teacher accountability initiatives have continued this tradition, connecting teachers' work to student scores, common rubrics, and contract deadlines. While these systems are designed to create reliability and equity, they often become prescriptive systems that limit reflection and growth. Teachers, especially new teachers, can experience evaluation as a high-stakes practice that reduces collaboration and emphasizes documentation. Principals and university supervisors experience similar pressures with contractual and reporting requirements, along with public expectations, while they may have little training in coaching or formative feedback processes (Donaldson et al., 2024).

Evaluation based on compliance has been shown not to capture the nuance of the work of teaching or the conditions that support professional learning. Darling-Hammond (2013) and Papay and Johnson (2012) highlight that teacher learning is accelerated in conditions where feedback is contextualized, formative, and occurs in a climate of trust. When evaluation systems are focused on relationship-building, inquiry, and equity, evidence shows a positive impact on professional efficacy and instruction (Dehombreux, 2024; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). This work demonstrates the need to move away from systems based on procedural compliance and toward developmental coaching in which evaluators are learners alongside teachers.

A coaching lens reconceptualizes evaluation as a process that is reflective and collaboratively driven. Evaluation from this perspective would consist of ongoing conversations with a teacher in which they are asked to think about the rationale behind their instructional choices and respond from a student lens while considering ways to improve practice. In this way, the evaluator's job is more nuanced than assigning a score or grade. Rather, the evaluator is helping to drive reflection on instructional strengths and risks and problem-solving. Such practices lower affective filters, promote psychological safety, and create conditions where teachers engage more openly with feedback.

This shift in thinking also redefines the evaluator's area of expertise. The evaluator is no longer a technical sentinel, but a reflective practitioner who relies on research, empathy, and cultural responsiveness. Coaching based approaches ask evaluators to reflect on their own biases, question their interpretations, and work with teachers to co-construct professional knowledge. The aim is not to dilute standards or lessen accountability, but to balance accountability with sincere support that builds both competence and confidence.

Transitioning from compliance to coaching requires both a philosophical and practical shift. It disrupts traditional hierarchies and emphasizes relational trust as the basis for professional development. In teacher education, this aligns with efforts to train supervisors and administrators as coaches in reflective, equity-focused conversations about teaching. Anchoring evaluation in coaching principles can help educators reimagine it from a compliance task to a sustained process of inquiry, learning, and collaboration.

Conceptual Framework: The Coaching-Centered Toolkit

Shifting the culture of teacher evaluation from compliance to learning requires tools that support evaluators in objectivity, reflection, and relational trust. Four interrelated frameworks help: The Ladder of Inference, the Specificity and Objectivity Matrix, Coaching for Equity, and the 5D+ Rubric. They comprise a coaching-centered toolkit that guides evaluators in feedback conversations with greater clarity, empathy, and a learning orientation. Each framework supports one dimension of the evaluator's work that involves thinking, observing, relating, and leading. The integrated use of these frameworks cultivates evidence-based and humanizing feedback.

The Ladder of Inference

The ladder of inference is a concept first introduced by Argyris and later popularized by Senge (1990). The ladder of inference is a cognitive framework that illustrates how people use information to make assumptions or conclusions. In evaluation settings, the ladder of inference is used to help evaluators slow down their thinking and question the assumptions that may be underlying their own inferences. For example, during classroom observations, evaluators may go quickly from observations to what they believe about a teacher's practice. The ladder of inference can help evaluators slow down and determine whether their feedback is based on facts or filtered through bias. By asking questions such as "What evidence is used to reach this conclusion?" or "What other explanations might there be for what I observed?" an evaluator and teacher can have a discussion. By mitigating cognitive bias, a more level playing field can be created, allowing for more fairness, transparency, and understanding. As shown in Figure 1, the Ladder of Inference illustrates how evaluators move from observing data to forming interpretations and conclusions, highlighting the importance of slowing reasoning and examining assumptions.

Specificity and Objectivity Matrix

This matrix, developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2013), allows for organization and clarification of the difference between judgmental, vague, or biased statements and descriptive, evidence-based

Figure 1

The Ladder of Inference: A model for slowing reasoning and examining assumptions. Adapted from "Clearer communication: How to use the ladder of inference when communicating data to your business users," by C. Chin (2020), Holistics.

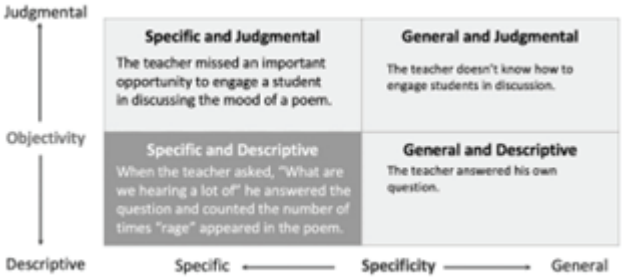
statements. In practice, evaluative feedback that is general or subjective (e.g. "the students seemed bored") can feel discouraging and non-constructive. However, specific and objective statements (e.g. "three students in the back row were off-task during the independent work period") can open the door to problem-solving and progress. When using this matrix, an evaluator will work with observation notes to shift the language to be more clearly focused on observable behavior rather than impressions. The resulting feedback will be more trust-building by clarifying that the observation is not a personal opinion but is based on evidence that could be shared with the educator. Figure 2 depicts the Specificity and Objectivity Matrix, which helps evaluators distinguish between vague or judgmental feedback and statements that are descriptive, neutral, and evidence-based.

Coaching for Equity

Elena Aguilar's (2020) Coaching for Equity framework centers emotional safety, curiosity, and justice in professional conversations. The model envisions feedback

Figure 2

Specificity and Objectivity Matrix used to guide evidence-based observation notes. Adapted from Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2013).



as a process to both affirm teacher identity and challenge practices that might unintentionally perpetuate inequity. It also encourages evaluators to lead with inquiry rather than correction, building the conditions in which teachers can honestly reflect on their practice. When evaluators create an emotionally safe space for dialogue, teachers are more willing to explore the contextual and cultural influences at play in their instruction. The Coaching for Equity framework also invites evaluators to reflect on their own positionality and potential biases, strengthening the relational and ethical foundations of evaluation. In this way, equity becomes not an additional component of evaluation but the lens through which all feedback is framed. As illustrated in Figure 3, the Coaching for Equity framework emphasizes three interrelated principles: leading with inquiry, building emotional trust, and centering equity, to guide reflective feedback conversations.

The 5D+ Rubric for Teacher Evaluation

The 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning Rubric is from the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership (2020). It organizes the instructional task according to five interrelated instructional elements: purpose, engagement, curriculum, assessment, and classroom environment. Used as a coaching tool,

Figure 3

Three guiding principles from Coaching for Equity (Aguilar, 2020).

not a compliance checklist, the 5D+ Rubric supports evaluators and teachers to co-construct professional goals and monitor progress across developmental stages. Instead of rating or scoring, evaluators use the rubric to advance the conversation around targeted teaching moves, student engagement, and instructional alignment. The vision is to turn a compliance document into a shared language for reflection and planning with the 5D+ Rubric. When used formatively within a coaching relationship, research shows that rubrics increase teacher engagement in evaluation and promote continuous teacher learning (Dehombreux, 2024; Kraft et al., 2018). Figure 4 presents the five dimensions of teaching and learning, demonstrating how the 5D+ Rubric can serve as a developmental tool for shared goal setting and reflective dialogue.

Integrating the Frameworks

Each of these frameworks brings a unique but interrelated lens to the practice of evaluation. The Ladder of Inference raises our awareness of cognitive bias, the Specificity and Objectivity Matrix grounds feedback in evidence, Coaching for Equity helps ensure our conversations are inclusive and identity-affirming, and the 5D+ Rubric provides a scaffold for growth-focused dialogue. Applied together, they can make evaluation an iterative process of observation, reflection, and collaborative goal-setting. These tools' combined use supports a professional culture in which feedback becomes relational rather than transactional and growth is understood as a

Figure 4

The 5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning Framework. Adapted from the Center for Educational Leadership (2020).

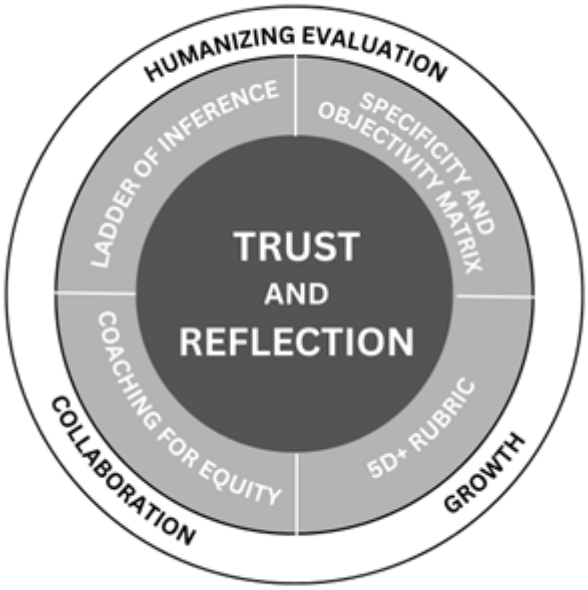
shared responsibility. Grounded in both research and practice, this coaching-centered framework offers a practical roadmap for humanizing evaluation and building trust across supervisory contexts. As articulated in earlier work on coaching-centered evaluation (Rizvi & Marroquin, in press), these frameworks collectively position evaluation as a system for learning rather than surveillance, reinforcing the central role of trust in professional growth. As summarized in Figure 5, the four frameworks collectively form a coaching-centered model that integrates objectivity, reflection, equity, and growth to humanize teacher evaluation.

Application: Professional Learning in Practice

The coaching-based frameworks were implemented in a professional learning workshop shared at the Fall 2025 California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE) Conference. The session, From Evaluation to Coaching: Humanizing Feedback to Build Trust and Capacity, offered supervisors, administrators, and faculty opportunities to reflect on how evaluation can be a reflective, relational, and equity-centered process. Participants explored how compliance-focused systems increase anxiety and limit learning. Following that, they reflected on approaches to building trust and collaboration.

Figure 5

Integration of the four frameworks for a coaching-centered approach to evaluation. Adapted from Rizvi (2025), CCTE In-Person Workshop Presentation.



The four frameworks were each presented using a brief demonstration and practice. Workshop participants began with the Specificity and Objectivity Matrix (Figure 2), using classroom observation notes to rephrase judgmental language into neutral, evidence-based statements. This exercise highlighted the connection between objective language and feedback that is both accurate and relational. Using the Ladder of Inference (Figure 1), participants then explored the assumptions that underpin feedback, comparing initial impressions from a video observation to evidence-based descriptions to see how the process of reflection can slow down reasoning and help to remove bias.

Role-play activities were designed around Coaching for Equity principles (Figure 3) to model curiosity, inquiry, and emotional safety. Practice with feedback questions affirmed teacher agency and addressed contextual and equity-based factors. The 5D+ Rubric (Figure 4) was then used to co-construct goals linked to instructional purpose, engagement, curriculum, assessment, and environment. The reframe shifted the use of a rubric from a ratings tool to a shared resource for growth.

The session ended with a review of how the four frameworks function together as part of a coaching cycle (Figure 5). Participants reflected that bringing these tools together created a balance of accountability and support, as well as shifting evaluation from a compliance-based exercise to one of capacity building. The results of the workshop provided strong support for the central argument of this study that evaluation, based on evidence, reflection, and equity, can build and maintain trust and professional learning across contexts.

Additional details about the workshop activities, including observation templates, reflection prompts, and framework application tools, are provided in Appendix A.

Implications for Teacher Education and Leadership

This evolution of evaluation as a coaching-centered practice has important implications for teacher preparation and leadership in schools. In university-based credential programs, supervisors can incorporate these frameworks into clinical supervision to foster reflection, self-assessment, and professional agency. When preservice teachers experience feedback that is specific, objective, and equity-aligned, they are more likely to approach supervision as a learning opportunity rather than a high-stakes evaluation. Consistent application of the four frameworks also models for candidates how trust-based dialogue can inform their future work with students and colleagues.

Aspiring administrators and instructional leaders can embrace the concept of a coaching approach to evaluation to help overcome the traditional gap between accountability and professional development. Training programs for educational leaders could include the elements of the frameworks presented here in coursework and field-based practicum experiences, with a focus on building competencies in inquiry, evidence, and relationship-based feedback. The administrator who models

engagement of teachers through the processes of reflective questioning and shared goal setting fosters a culture of risk-taking and innovation.

This approach directly supports the theme for the Fall 2025 CCTE Conference, Who We Are, Why We Matter, by redefining the roles of evaluators and supervisors as partners in teacher education rather than as compliance monitors. By placing trust, equity, and evidence at the center of evaluation, we can create a professional culture that prioritizes learning, collaboration, and ethical responsibility. When teacher education and leadership preparation programs embrace these principles, evaluation can become a tool for collective growth that supports teachers, students, and the entire educational community.

Conclusion

Shifting teacher evaluation from a compliance activity to a coaching process is a paradigm and cultural shift. The four frameworks that have been shared, The Ladder of Inference, Specificity and Objectivity Matrix, Coaching for Equity, and the 5D+ Rubric, offer an evidence-based structure for this shift in practice. Together, they show that evaluation can be rigorous and not punitive, and feedback can be evidence-based and humanizing. Evaluation is transformed into professional development when evaluators engage in reflexive dialogue, use specific and unbiased language, and take care in attending to equity and relational trust. This requires continuous focus on the process of providing, receiving, and acting on feedback as well as on preparation of leadership programs and supervisory systems that foster empathy, inquiry, and shared accountability.

Humanizing evaluation is consistent with the CCTE's values to support and grow professional learning communities based on reflection and social justice. When teachers reframe evaluation as a mutual learning process instead of a test of compliance, they validate the collective commitment of the profession: to serve and promote trust, growth, and equitable learning for all.

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Appendix A
Workshop Observation and Feedback Activity Sheet

This multipage handout was originally developed for the Fall 2025 California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE) Conference workshop "From Evaluation to Coaching: Humanizing Feedback to Build Trust and Capacity." It provides observation and feedback activities aligned with the frameworks described in the main text, including the Ladder of Inference, Specificity and Objectivity Matrix, Coaching for Equity, and the 5D Rubric. The handout builds upon the research and reflective practices outlined in Rizvi and Marroquin's (in press) article "From Evaluation to Collaboration: Building Trust Through Coaching-Centered Practice in Issues in Teacher Education" and serves as a practical resource for supervisors, administrators, and faculty implementing coaching-centered evaluation.

Why Shift from Evaluation to Coaching?

Evaluation often feels like surveillance rather than support. Coaching-centered approaches build trust, reflection, equity, and growth by humanizing feedback.

Observation 1 (Rizvi & Marroquin, in press)

1. Select one element to observe in the video from the CSTP standards. Watch & collect instructional data. (fill in below)

2. With a partner, discuss:
    a. What instructional data did you observe from the lesson?
    b. Where would you place the instructional data you collected in the table below?

Specific: Broad:

Evidence-Based: Biased

Notes:

Four Frameworks to Transform Feedback

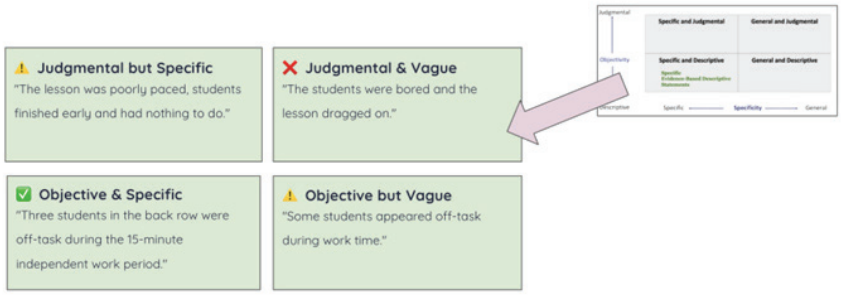
1. Ladder of Inference (Argyris, 1990)

Slows down judgment by distinguishing between what we observe, interpret, and conclude.

Ask: "What evidence supports this conclusion? What else might explain what I'm seeing?"

Notes:

2. Specificity & Objectivity Matrix
(Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2013)



Use specific, descriptive, evidence-based language instead of general or judgmental terms. Example: "Three students in the back row were off-task during the 15-minute independent work period."

Notes:

Observation 2 (Rizvi & Marroquin, in press)

Now let's watch the observation video and collect instructional data using the Specificity & Objectivity Matrix.

Specific & Judgmental:

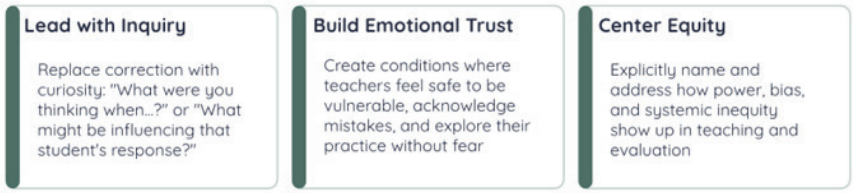
General & Judgmental:

Specific & Descriptive:

General and Descriptive:

3. Coaching for Equity (Aguilar, 2020)

Lead with Inquiry: Replace correction with curiosity.
Build Emotional Trust: Create safety for vulnerability.
Center Equity: Acknowledge bias and power.



4. 5D Instructional Growth Rubric (Center for Educational Leadership, 2020)

When used as a coaching tool instead of a rating scale, it supports co-constructed growth goals and emphasizes learning over labeling.

Shifts focus from rating to reflection across: Purpose | Engagement | Environment | Curriculum | Assessment

Integrating & Applying the Frameworks: When woven together, these frameworks shift evaluation from compliance to capacity building, from surveillance to support.

Coaching Conversation Role-Play:
From Feedback to Dialogue
How could you use the Ladder of Inference and Coaching for Equity to deepen this feedback conversation?

Evaluator/Coach	Teacher
"I noticed that..."	**Reflect on what worked well.**
Use specific objective, specific evidence. **Lead with inquiry.**	**Describe decision-making:**
"What was your goal for that part of the lesson?" "What might have influenced that student's response?"	"Here's what I was trying to do..."
Offer 1 reflection question instead of a solution.	**Identify one area for growth or curiosity.**

Key Takeaways

Trust	Growth happens when relationships come first.
Reflection	Inquiry transforms evaluation into learning.
Specificity	Evidence-based feedback builds clarity.
Equity	Coaching must acknowledge identity and justice.

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Examining School Change

A Three-Year Look at Implementing Restorative Practices

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Abstract

Restorative Practices is inherently linked to advocacy because it seeks to amplify marginalized voices, dismantle inequitable power structures, and promote inclusive participation in decision-making. This research identifies how a K-8 school focused on understanding restorative practices in the literature before establishing

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communities from the beginning. Exploring two years of practices and a third year of goals, the first year pitfalls, the second year's refocused goals, and the plans for year-three offer suggestions for how restorative practices advocate for inclusion.

Keywords: restorative practices, educational change, community building, conflict resolution, democratic schools

Introduction

If you look at the patterns of traditional educational discipline vs. restorative practices[1] and the underlying theories, it quickly becomes noticeable why school discipline falls apart when students are sent out of the classroom for misbehavior (Warner et al., 2010). Furthermore, the pattern of student removal undermines the classroom community's powers to manage misbehavior while ensuring that the student is excluded. Since students with dis/abilities typically struggle more with expected classroom behaviors, traditional discipline results in exclusive practices. For one school, it set out on a 3-year self-study to determine how to improve inclusion and inclusive practices, starting with restorative practices.

Purpose/Objectives

The purpose of this research was to explore restorative practices as a framework for inclusion. As such, implementation serves as a means for promoting collaboration and communal empowerment. Leading toward a transformation of communities for equity and inclusion advocates for those who are typically excluded. This includes children with dis/abilities, educators, educators with dis/abilities, and teachers of special education, who are typically left out of the discourse.

Relevant Literature

Restorative practices serve as the guiding theoretical framework for this study. While the literature presents varied definitions of restorative justice and restorative practices, establishing a universally accepted definition remains challenging (Song & Swearer, 2016). Drawing from Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Wertsch & Bronfenbrenner, 2005), Song and Swearer (2016) propose an ecological approach to defining restorative justice that situates it within the broader systems—macro, meso, and micro—that shape student experiences. In this model, restorative justice is understood as a set of guiding principles and practices that schools and communities use to inform policies, programs, and interventions. These principles emphasize repairing harm in relationships, empowering all stakeholders, and fostering collaborative problem-solving (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Pranis, 2005; Zehr, 2002).

By making the ecological layers and collaborative processes explicit, this framework aligns with the school consultation literature (Gutkin, 2011; Gutkin

& Curtis, 2009) and encourages researchers and practitioners to view interactions between school policies, home–school partnerships, peer relationships, and multi-tiered systems of support through a restorative lens. Within this study, the ecological approach complements a professional learning community (PLC) model operating under adaptive leadership, recognizing that key restorative relationships exist in classrooms, within school policies, and in family partnerships.

Restorative practices distinguish themselves from traditional punitive approaches by reframing the core questions. Rather than asking what rules were broken and who is at fault, restorative practices ask about who was harmed, the needs behind the incident, and how to make things right (Song & Swearer, 2016). This shift, however, must occur at all levels—starting with leadership, extending through teachers and staff, and ultimately becoming embedded in student thinking and behavior.

While restorative practices share some structural similarities with school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), they go further by engaging both the heart and mind (Ingraham et al., 2016). PBIS functions as a decision-making framework that applies evidence-based practices to improve academic and behavioral outcomes. In PBIS schools, existing systems of problem-solving and decision-making can strengthen restorative approaches. However, restorative practices extend this foundation by explicitly focusing on developing communication skills, building positive relationships and school climate, healing harm, and fostering empathy among all parties (Ingraham et al., 2016).

Restorative practices may be understood through two complementary perspectives: the process conception and the values conception (Morrison & Ahmed, 2006). The process conception focuses on healing and restoration by bringing together everyone affected by an incident to discuss the facts, share their experiences, and agree on how to repair harm. The values conception highlights the philosophical shift from punitive justice—where infractions are seen as violations of rules warranting punishment—to restorative justice, which views infractions as violations of people and relationships (Schetky, 2009). This perspective assumes that violations create obligations and that justice must actively involve victims, offenders, and the community.

Rather than isolating or removing the offender as an anomaly (Clark, 2005), restorative practices address the harm within the context of human connections, societal influences, and community responsibilities (Clark, 2005; Morrison & Ahmed, 2006). This inclusive approach seeks to repair not only the harm experienced by victims and the community but also the harm experienced by the offender, fostering conditions for reintegration and long-term behavioral change (Boulton & Mersky, 2006; Drewery, 2016; Schetky, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Prismatic theory builds on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of rhizomatic theory. This involves mapping rather than tracing previous paths. The idea of

the rhizome circles around a phenomenon in order to deterritorialize arborescent paradigms. Prismatic theory focuses on finding what has been overlooked and hidden with the goal of improving education (Fisher, 2013).

Methodology

Collaborative prismatic inquiry works with prismatic theory and layers perspectives in order to develop a better map of the phenomenon (Acheing-Eversen et al., 2017). In this case, observations, interviews with six administrators, and narratives written by four educators were collected and layered. After discussion, key players from each year were asked to summarize results, which were then reviewed by the team.

Driving Questions

The driving question for this work asked: What does restorative justice look like in schools? Several sub-questions eventually developed:

1. What model of school discipline have you seen in schools? What do we need to change in our school?

2. How have you seen restorative practices influence relationships, community empowerment, and equity? How does this compare to traditional punitive models?

3. What leadership, cultural, and relational conditions are necessary for school-wide adoption of restorative practices to move beyond reactive conflict resolution toward proactive community building?

Overview of the Results

The analysis of the findings identified four major areas. These started with the theoretical findings, which then drove the year-one,-two, and-three stages.

Theoretical Findings

When a community routinely suspends students for behaviors, "problems," or disruptions, it weakens the classroom's ability to manage discipline (Warner et al., 2010), leading to more behavioral issues over time. This practice also reduces the student's connection to the community while reinforcing the idea that the student, not the behavior, is the problem.

Traditional discipline is paternalistic (Benade, 2015; Mullet, 2014), controlling large populations with less individual power and more dominant authority, which perpetuates inequality (Freire, 1970/2005). It relies on external enforcement to make individuals follow rules, weakening the community's capacity to self-regulate behavior (Warner et al., 2010) and hindering fair processes (Tyler, 2006). This approach resembles Pavlovian conditioning—punishment works only if consistently

applied, but misbehavior often increases when individuals are not caught (Ormrod, 1995; Tyler, 2006). It also equates individuals with crimes, reducing fairness and reinforcing systemic inequities (Tyler, 2006). In schools, exclusion as punishment fuels the school-to-prison pipeline, making traditional discipline less effective and leading to more behavioral problems (Varnham, 2005; Warner et al., 2010).

In contrast, restorative practices aim to foster social harmony and repair relationships (Warner et al., 2010). They emphasize that connected individuals behave better and promote democratic practices (Benade, 2015), boosting community and individual power (Apple & Beane, 1995; Sehr, 1997) while diminishing the influence of dominant power structures. Restorative approaches separate the person from their behavior—while honoring culture and voice—and focus on building fair procedures that reduce misbehavior and systemic injustice. Prioritizing healing and relationships over punishment, these practices involve the community and empower members. They are most effective when procedural justice is upheld, fostering a sense of fairness within the system.

Year-One Stumbles

The initial implementation year revealed significant systemic resistance to transformative change, exposing how deeply traditional punitive structures had become embedded within educator practices and institutional culture. Despite comprehensive professional development introducing restorative concepts, implementation remained wildly inconsistent across classrooms, with teachers demonstrating varying levels of commitment to dismantling exclusionary practices. Educators, when confronted with paradigmatic shifts that challenge their positional authority, often retreated to familiar power structures that maintain hierarchical control over student bodies. The fact that teachers may be slow to change until they see the benefits and positive changes in their students aligns with the literature (Guskey, 1985), and should have been predicted. Reluctant teachers then reproduced systemic inequities over relational approaches that recognize student humanity, thereby perpetuating the very structures that restorative practices seek to dismantle.

Key problems identified that first year included: the need for ongoing professional development and the lack of both accountability for teachers who did not implement practices and support for those who were unsure of how to utilize restorative practices in various situations. Teachers who already used restorative practices continued to be successful, while teachers who did not, failed to improve. A key strength, however, was the importance of a united leadership team. Any time when the leadership's unity wavered, such as the perspectives regarding ongoing professional development and accountability, problems increased at the teacher and classroom level. Another strength was recognition of how certain strong PLCs supported each other in developing both humanizing (Paguyo et al, 2022) and restorative practices within the whole grade level, increasing the grade level success as a whole.

The focus on inclusion and universal design for learning began to show improvements, particularly in the Multiple Tiered Support System (MTSS) (OCDE, 2023) as Tier 2 supports started being implemented by instructional facilitators assigned to each grade level, which improved both support and tracking. The growth of the special education team so that there were enough education specialists and instructional facilitators to be part of grade level PLCs also began to improve inclusion at some grade levels. During year-one, the leadership team, including the special education leaders, moved into the PLC room, improving leader collaboration and communication as well as teacher access to leaders.

Year-Two Refocus

Year-two involved a refocus on the goal of implementing restorative practices. Support was differentiated for teachers when it was realized that some intuitively engaged in restorative language while others needed more coaching and support. The focus shifted onto social-emotional learning (SEL) plans and a SEL program as well as SEL and universal design for learning. These elements focused teachers on the whole child (Eisner, 2002; Guisbond et al., 2006) while promoting a humanizing approach to learning (Al-Tawil & Hoven, 2024; Paguyo et al., 2022) that push back against Freire's (1970/2005) banking model of education (Paguyo et al., 2022). Counselors also provided ongoing restorative practices training during individual PLCsto support teacher development throughout the year, addressing one of the key problems from year-one. Year-two also began to see the benefits of restorative circles that repaired relationships at the PLC level, aligning with Boulton and Mirsky's (2006) implementation of restorative circles for faculty. The shift toward school-wide universal design for learning also continued to improve during year-two. Finally, year-two moved the special education team out of an outlying portable, shifting education specialists and instructional facilitators into associated grade level classrooms. This improved collaboration and connection while reducing the divide between general and special education.

Year-Three Plans For Growth

Year-three, the current year, has focused on equipping teachers with the tools and strategies needed for implementing restorative practices as well as further support in weaving SEL into the classroom and school-wide. The school counselors provided an all-staff professional development training focused on practical examples of the preventative piece of restorative practices through community building as well as in the moment conflict resolution skills needed to support students. In addition to this training, the school counselors established a specific SEL team PLC to collaborate with a teacher from each grade level. The intent of this PLC is to increase consistent implementation of the SEL curriculum (Second Step), facilitate school-wide wellness events, and collaborate on any SEL support needed for our students. Two months into

the year, counselors reported that collaboration and integration continued to improve, as did the implementation of restorative practices. Teachers also began to identify social emotional support needed by different students within the MTSS system, addressing the needs of the whole child. Collaboration with the counselors also improved.

Discussion

The step from theory to practice was not smooth at this school. Some educators embraced restorative practices, while others tried to implement more traditional punishments. Working on community at all levels and redirecting the teams took time, which was frustrating for some leaders, especially the first year, when progress was intermittent. Other leaders focused on differentiating support for each teacher, scaffolding training and individual work. Attrition affected both the supporters and detractors. Many educators saw the school's established PLCs as key spaces to improve community at the educator level. It also served as a key space for improving restorative language, practices, and social emotional skills. Of key importance was that the leadership team continued to maintain the goal of establishing restorative practices throughout the school. This involved improvements at all levels, including establishing follow up training and support throughout the school year. While the older literature suggests that the school psychologist should be the frontrunner for restorative practices (Ingraham et al., 2016), school psychologists' time, in the past nine years, has been taken up more and more by testing for special education, leaving little time for general education. The roles of school counselors, however, changed significantly after COVID, expanding their areas of support. As such, school counselors became the ideal leads for working with teams of parents, teachers, and administrators to build a restorative system.

Conclusion

While the integrating restorative practices was not immediately successful, a commitment to the goal by administration for the long view was a key element of vision that carried forward. Accountability was not addressed, but teacher-support was improved, and the integration of counselors into the PLCs was a resounding success. It might be argued that improved support and community within the PLCs would be more successful, in the long run, as following restorative practices than a more punitive form of accountability. Within functional PLCs, the teams supported each other's learning and implementation, which restorative circles were used to support and repair the functionality of broken PLCs.

Note

[1] Since restorative *justice* aligns with the justice system and connotations of punishment, the school decided early on to focus on restorative *practices*, as described by Song and Swearer (2016).

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A Prismatic Look at K-8 Change

Layering DisCerit and Disability Studies Over Educational Change

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Abstract

Prismatic inquiry suggests that education is a complicated, wicked problem. This presentation reviews the culmination of a charter school's two-year self-study, layering a prismatic theory, DisCrit, and Contemporary Disability Studies for Education (DSE) lenses over the study, to question hidden spaces, centering a dis/ability lens. Aligning findings with the seven tenets of DisCrit, then highlighting the findings through DSE, before exploring prismatic areas of divergence and convergence leads us toward a need to educate the whole child.

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Keywords: educational change, disability studies, DisCrit, prismatic inquiry

Introduction

When considering complicated, "wicked problems" within our world (Rittel & Weber, 1972), education stands out as an institution that is, by nature, complex and multifaceted, while attempts are regularly made to offer simple solutions doomed to fail. Prismatic inquiry highlights the inherently messy nature of education and challenges the notion that a one-size-fits-all model can effectively capture the realities of teaching and learning (Fisher, 2016). At a time when authoritarian voices seek to diminish the presence of traditionally minoritized populations, cut funding and support for education, and undermine universities and research, this study centers the voices of educators—particularly in special education—while emphasizing the critical importance of diversity in shaping equitable and inclusive educational systems.

Purpose/Objectives

This study reviews the culmination of a charter school's two-year self-study. The purpose of this study was to layer the findings of several smaller studies in order to examine a charter k-8 school's focus on changes that improved inclusion while implementing restorative practices. In addition, the school's foundational focus on project-based learning and adaptive leadership (Weshah, 2012; Wilder, 2015) was layered against the goals for improving inclusion and implementing restorative practices while monitoring change.

Relevant Literature

For this study, the literature focused on the theoretical frameworks in order to outline a clear lens for subset-studies that each already had their own literature reviews. As such, the focus was on DisCrit and Contemporary Disability Studies for education.

DisCrit

The development of Disability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit) marks a significant theoretical advancement that fills important gaps in both dis/ability studies and critical race theory when these perspectives are applied separately in educational settings. As Annamma et al. (2013) describe in their seminal work, DisCrit "theorizes about the ways in which race, racism, dis/ability, and ableism are built into the interactions, procedures, discourses, and institutions of education, which affect students of color with dis/abilities qualitatively differently than White students with dis/abilities" (p. 7). This framework offers analytical tools to interpret the patterns observed throughout this school, especially the ongoing discrepancies between ideals of inclusion and the realities of exclusion outlined across all studies.

DisCrit arose from the understanding that students holding multiple marginalized identities experience layered forms of exclusion that cannot be comprehensively examined through single-axis approaches. It builds on intersectionality theory while specifically focusing on how dis/ability and race mutually shape each other within educational contexts. As Connor and Ferri (2007) note, "disability has historically been used to justify the exclusion and oppression of people of color, while racial categories have been used to pathologize and disable entire populations" (p. 65). This historical intertwining continues to influence contemporary educational practices in ways that conventional inclusion models often overlook.

Contemporary Disability Studies for Education

Contemporary Disability and Social Equity (DSE) scholarship focus on transformation rather than merely reform. Taylor and Sailor (2024) call for "a shift from a medical model of disability to a social model that emphasizes modifying the learning environment to meet students' needs, rather than trying to fit students into existing settings" (p. 8). Achieving this shift requires more than superficial adjustments; it necessitates a "fundamental overhaul of educational structures rather than mere accommodations within current systems" (Connor and Valle, 2024, p. 5).

The challenges encountered in implementing DSE-informed practices highlight the strong institutional resistance to paradigm shifts. Waitoller (2020) analyzes charter schools and notes that "despite policy rhetoric advocating inclusion, the way choice policies are implemented often undermines inclusive practices, leading to the marginalization of students with disabilities" (p. 4). This discrepancy between rhetoric and reality exposes "gaps in theory, practice, and the spaces between" (Morton et al., 2021, p. 1207), indicating that meaningful transformation must address multiple levels simultaneously.

The potential of DSE lies not only in reframing ideas but also in fostering new practices and possibilities. Educators must continue to challenge deficit-based models of dis/ability and question traditional segregated approaches to special education (Elder et al., 2021, p. 113). These acts of resistance, guided by DSE principles, create "spaces of possibility"—moments when alternative educational approaches can be imagined and enacted (Naraian, 2019).

However, DSE scholars increasingly acknowledge that individual acts of resistance, while vital, cannot dismantle systemic barriers without broader structural change. "Effective implementation of inclusive education requires committed leadership that prioritizes equity and challenges established norms" (Connor & Valle, 2024, p. 7). This responsibility extends beyond individual administrators to involve "systemic leadership" that coordinates efforts across multiple levels to dismantle ableist frameworks.

Theoretical Framework

Prismatic theory expands on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of rhizomatic theory, suggesting that it is important to map a phenomenon, rather than merely retracing paths. Furthermore, the prismatic lens (Fisher, 2016), embraces this layered approach in order to deterritorialize arborescent paradigms (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

Methodology

This study proposed prismatic inquiry for layering perspectives and looking for what goes unseen in education. Then two lenses, Disability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit) (Annamma et al., 2013) and Contemporary Disability and Social Equity (DSE) theory (i.e., Taylor & Sailor, 2024) were layered to question hidden spaces, centering a dis/ability lens. Finally, Prismatic inquiry tied the ideas together, examining areas of divergence and convergence, and offering to action for education that focuses on the whole child.

This study brought together a team of scholars to examine a series of smaller studies that emerged out of a k-8 school's 2-year self study. Each subset-study offered theoretical and practical applications while highlighting key ideas and practices, engaging in different research practices along the way. At the end, the scholars examined the overall results, layering the findings through narratives that implemented DisCrit, Contemporary DSE, and prismatic lenses. The narratives were then shared with the team to assess truth and trustworthiness (Moss, 2004).

Overview of the Results

The results were organized into three categories. This included results viewed through: the DisCrit lens, the DSE lens, and the prismatic lens.

Through the DisCrit Lens

Applying the tenets of DisCrit (Annamma et al., 2013) suggest several areas of focus. These played out both in positive and negative and negative lights for the school's implementation of restorative practices and inclusion.

First, recognizing how racism and ableism operate interdependently as a hidden systemic undercurrent that promotes normalcy (Annamma et al., 2013), phenomenological interviews with school leaders identified that labeling practices serve both racist and ableist functions (Maghzi et al., 2024).

Second, valuing intersectional identities (Crenshaw, 1991), DisCrit challenges how education forces students to prioritize a single aspect in order to receive services and support (Annamma et al., 2013). Perspective taking supports understanding the whole child, which increases both student and teacher success (Falce et al., in press).

Third, race and ability are social constructions, and there are psychological

and material effects from labeling (Annamma et al., 2013), which highlights the contradiction between restorative practices' goal to "separate the individual from the behavior" and how schools disproportionately discipline students through pathologized and racialized lenses (Fisher et al., 2023).

Fourth, DisCrit centers traditionally marginalized populations, recognizing how the perspectives from individuals experiencing multiple oppressions offer insight into systemic inequity, which is displayed through the voices of leaders and teachers within special education, but fails to address issues associated with race (Maghzi et al, 2024; Nguyen-Stockbridge et al, 2025).

Fifth, the legal and historical facets of dis/ability and race are used to aggregate and disaggregate populations, denying them rights (Annamma et al., 2013), which is exemplified by the school-to-prison pipeline discussed by Fisher et al. (2023). Sixth, whiteness and ability function as a form of property, and gains for people with dis/abilites large emerge out of white, middle class advocacy (Annamma et al., 2013), failing to serve the needs of dis/abled students of color, highlighted by leadership reflection on whiteness and privilege (Maghzi et al, 2024).

Finally, DisCrit requires activism while supporting all forms of resistance (Annamma et al., 2013). This aligns with the school's transformative orientation, rejecting reformist approaches that maintain existing power structures under a progressive illusion.

Through the DSE Lens

Integrating DSE perspectives reveals patterns often hidden. For example, the restorative practices that "separate the individual from the behavior" (Fisher et al., 2023) raise questions about whether this approach addresses ableist pathologizing. The discussion of professional learning communities (Chun et al, 2024) prompts inquiry into whose knowledge counts. While research participants include dis/abled individuals and specialists, the question of centering dis/abled voices remains unasked. Beaty et al's (2024) celebration of authentic project-based learning prompts DSE to consider which projects are inclusive and whether dis/abled students' interests are validated.

Through the Prismatic Lens

The prismatic focus integrated two types of findings. This focused on: spaces of divergence and spaces of convergence.

Prismatic Spaces of Divergence

Prismatic inquiry, in alignment with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic theory, can find spaces where ideas diverge. This can be key in recognizing where findings move away from expected outcomes or disagree among viewpoints. Looking

for divergence is important for ensuring that the hidden is seen. In this case, the focus was on diverging viewpoints regarding success, particularly in the first year. Constant vigilance is needed to support minoritized individuals when education has structures calcified into exclusion. This is especially important under a presidential administration focused on silencing facts and science, undermining education, and destroying traditionally minoritized voices. Perspective taking is an educational key (Falce et al., in press), as is leadership that ensures that minority and unpopular voices are heard (Dorner et al., 2023) while maintaining a fair system (Fisher et al., 2023).

DisCrit and contemporary Disability Studies in Education (DSE) note educational spaces in a constant state of divergence. Exclusion is about division and separation: naming, separating and clustering groups, then denying them (Gordon & Rosenblum, 2001). Educators, however, are called to dismantle divisive practices.

The school's leaders all have ideas about success, and they are all growth-oriented (Fisher et al., in press; Nguyen-Stockbridge, 2025; Maghzi, 2024). However, one was frustrated by slow growth where children get lost in the system (Maghzi, 2024) while others were more positive, looking forward through small successes. Ultimately, though, the goal is that no child ever be lost and that programs continue to grow (Petty et al., in press).

Prismatic Spaces of Convergence

Rhizomatic theory suggests that there are spaces where ideas converge across a thousand plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). For prismatic inquiry, the integration of a multifaceted lens also searches for spaces where viewpoints align. Key elements were identified across the school's diverse foci that resulted in spaces of convergence for successful results.

There are benefits to adaptive leadership's person-centered approach (Kuluski et al., 2021), which offers democratic elements (Dewey, 1916; Sehr, 1997). All of this is surrounded by the qualities of adaptive leadership, which is democratic enough to hear all voices (Dewey, 2016) while also supporting minority and minoritized voices (Heifetz and Laurie, 2004). Furthermore, adaptive leadership naturally aligns with PLCs, with the person-centered approach (Kuluski et al., 2021), local context focus (Gallagher, 2009), collaboration (Woolard, 2018), democratic engagement (Noble & Kniffin, 2021), and reconciliation for conflict resolution (Leigh, 2002). These traits also work well with how restorative practices call for restorative leadership (Evans, 2009; Stout & Salm, 2011).

The leadership model must also be in alignment with the PLC and for effective PLC development. Similarly, the leadership must be in alignment with restorative practices (Kuluski et al., 2021) while including all perspectives (Heifetz and Laurie, 2004). Furthermore, this person-centered focus needs to be embedded throughout the school as part of the campus culture at all levels (Gallagher, 2009).

Nearly twenty-five years ago, Elliot Eisner (2002) suggested what schools need:

deep conversations, higher level thinking skills (Fisher et al., 2015), authentic problem solving (Hill & Smith, 2005), and curriculum would be driven by student interest (Hill & Smith, 2005; OSLA, 2010). Students own their learning (Eisner, 2002; Fisher et al., 2015) while promoting, celebrating, and exploring their voices (Eisner, 2002; hooks, 1994). This learning should focus on a universal design where every child can be successful (Rose & Strangman, 2007). Most importantly, this type of education results in learning that carries beyond the classroom and school (Eisner, 2002).

Conclusion

As educators, we are called to resist reductionist solutions while recognizing the beautiful complexity of education. When examined through a prismatic lens, systemic inequities, which are rooted in racism, ableism, and entrenched educational norms, highlight how, while schools shape the experiences of students and educators, they can also unintentionally undermine the ideals of inclusion and equity. Therefore, this study notes the benefits in spaces of convergence where adaptive leadership, restorative practices, and project-based learning intersect to foster environments that are more democratic, person-centered, and responsive to diverse learners. However, educational transformation requires ongoing reflection, collaboration, and courage to confront exclusionary structures. Ultimately, educators need to recognize that diversity is not an obstacle to be managed, but a strength that enriches both learning and leadership, and that education holds multiple truths simultaneously within a system that honors the wholeness of every child.

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Additional Research Presentations from the CCTE Fall 2025 Conference

Following is a listing of the research sessions that occurred at the CCTE Fall 2025 Conference which are not represented by articles in this monograph. Many of them can be viewed on the CCTE YouTube channel.

Concurrent Research Presentations:

Initial Program Review: Strategies to Support New Program Proposals and IPR Success. Miranda Gutierrez (Commission on Teacher Credentialing), Debbie Meadows (California State University Bakersfield), & Rosemary Wrenn (Commission on Teacher Credentialing).

Pathways for Advancing Visionary Educators: A CCC-CSU Collaboration Sharing the PAVE Toolkit. Hilary Seitz (California State University Office of the Chancelor) & Cheri Forton (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office).

Critically Examining the Spanish Language Proficiency Requirement for the Bilingual Authorization in California. Clara Amador-Lankster (National University) & Kris Nicholls (University of California Riverside).

For Us & By Us: Political & Pedagogical Preparation For & By Educators of Color. Oscar Navarro (California State University Long Beach).

Teacher Education and the Power to Act: Preparing Minoritized and Multilingual Justice-Centered Educators. Edward Curammeng, Minhye Son, & Sara Díaz-Montejano (California State University Dominguez Hills)

From Some to All: Readiness to Launch a Dual Credential Residency. Deondra Campbell (California State Polytechnic University Pomona).

Internationalizing Teacher Education: A Toolkit Approach to Embedding Global Competencies in Educator Preparation Programs. Reyes L. Quezada & Viviana Alexandrowicz (University of San Diego), James O'Meara (Texas A&M International University), & Tara Mathien (University of Florida).

Fostering Presence in Absence: Designing Asynchronous Teacher Education Through the Community of Inquiry Framework. Weina Chen (University of Massachusetts Global) & Shannon Tabaldo (Loyola Marymount University).

The Impact of Project Based Learning on Learning and Motivation. Robyn Hernandez, May-Lynn Montano, & Katarina Murillo (California State University Dominguez Hills).

Panel and Workshop Presentations:

Humanizing Professional Learning: Equity, Agency, and Well-being Across Three California Subject Matter Projects. Claudia Martinez (University of California), Jon Kovach (University of California Irvine), Margaret Peterson (Stanford University) & Eduardo Muñoz-Muñoz (San Jose State University)

Advancing Inclusive Education in California: Data, Dialogue, and Direction for Educator Prepration. Nat Hansuvadha (California State University Long Beach), Andrew Wall (Fenix Research and Evaluation), Meghan Cosier (Chapman University), Marquita Grenot-Scheyer (California State University Long Beach), Audri Gomez (Chapman University), Kimberley White-Smith (University of San Diego), Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) , Shireen Pavri (Californa State University Office of the Chancellor), & Annmarie Francois (University of California Los Angeles)

Supporting Teacher Educators with High-Quality National and State Resources: Learning from Experts at the CEEDAR Center and the UC|CSU Collaborative. Meg Kamman & Erica McCray (University of Florida), Anne Spillane (Alliant International University), Susanne James (National University), Alison Yoshimoto-Towery (University of California Los Angeles), Kate Esposito (California State University Dominguez Hills), & Julie Schnider, Zoe Mao, & Kyle Hay (University of California Los Angeles)

The Justice Reboot ... in One California MSI. Brenda Burgo, Frances Valdovinos, & Mayeen Quader (University of California Riverside).

ECE COLLAB Bridges CCC and CSU to Strengthen Early Childhood Educator Preparation in Early Literacy and Mathematics. Hilary Seitz (California State University), Marisol Diaz (California State Polytechnic University Pomona), Jenny Chiappe (California State University Dominguez Hills), Kristina Brower (Canada College), Janice Jefferis (El Camino College), Jiyoung Kim (California State Polytechnic University Pomona), & Keting Chen (California State University San Bernardino).

A Step-by-Step Guide to Submitting to Issues in Teacher Education. Editors of *Issues in Teacher Education*

Research Roundtable Presentations:

Beyond Burnout: Elevating the Voices of Infant/Toddler Educators Through Resource-Centered Story and Systems Advocacy. Christina Laney (California State University Long Beach)

Supporting Teacher Candidates with Disabilities Across Credential Programs. Jolan Smith (California State University Long Beach)

Reclaiming Professional Authority: How Disabled Educational Leaders Disrupt Comfort Culture. Joe Petty (Loyola Marymount University)

Supporting and Retaining Teachers of Color: How Leaders Within Teacher Education Use Culturally Responsive Leadership to Make Justice-Centered Decisions. Alexandrea Kahn & Shayna Sullivan (Alder Graduate School of Education)

Forming Servant Leaders: Supporting all Educators Through the Servant Leadership Institute at Concordia University Irvine. Teresa Hess, Sara Morgan, & Lori Doyle (Concordia University Irvine)

Teachers' Beliefs Expressed as Personal Practice Theories: A Touchstone and Tool to Navigate First Year Teaching Challenges. Tara Barnhart & Sera Shimakura (Chapman University)

Teaching as Liberation: Bad Bunny and Cultivating Critical Consciousness Through the Arts. Erika D. Garcia, Lucia Alcantar, & Ariana Saavedra Melchor (University of San Diego)

Building Critical Bridges: Crosscurricular Teacher Development Through World Language and Ethnic Studies Integration. Eduardo R. Muñoz-Muñoz (San Jose State University) & Margaret Peterson &Amado Padilla (Stanford University).

Shielding Equity While Teaching Truth: Navigating the 'Ending Radical Indoctrination' Executive Orderas Equity-Driven Teacher Educators. John Pascarella (University of Southern California).

Sustaining High-Quality Teacher Residencies: The Role of Reciprocal Partnerships and Technical Assistance. Cathy Yun & Victoria Wang (Learning Policy Institute), & Conni Campbell (Santa Clara County Office of Education).

Poster Session Presentations:

The End of DEI and the Ramifications for Teachers. Ernest Black (CalStateTEACH).

Designer Perspectives on the PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Credential: Wows, Wonders, and What Ifs. Heather L. Horsley, Pei-Ying Wu, & Lindsay Meeker

(California State University Fresno), Ruth Piker (California State University Long Beach), Maria Fusaro (San Jose State University), & Jenny Chiappe (California State University Dominguez Hills).

Pathways Interrupted: Investigating Non-Completion Rates of Black and Brown Male Teacher Candidates in Credentialing Programs Through the Lens of Community Cultural Wealth. Amie Acuna (University of San Diego)

Play Invitations to Promote Foundational Language and Literacy Development PK-3rd Grade. Lindsay Meeker (California State University Fresno), Hilary Seitz (California State University Chancellor's Office), & Jenny Chiappe (California State University Dominguez Hills).

Empowering Pre-Service Teachers Through Micro-Teaching Lesson Study. Carolyn Mitten (Westmont College).

Cultivating Strategies for Teacher Well-Being and Sustainable Career Fulfillment. Heather L. Horsley & Christina Macias (California State University Fresno).

November 8 Virtual Day Presentations:

AI, Accessibility, Inclusion, and Ethics in Education: A Practical Exploration for Teacher Educators. Lara Ervin-Kassab (San Jose State University).

Teaching with Technology, Thriving with Humanity: Rebuilding Human-Centered Education, Insights from a Longitudinal Study of Teacher Candidates Pandemic Testimonials. Gabriela Walker (National University) & Rosemary Onyango (Eastern Illinois University).

Tracking the Growth of the Teacher Residency Model in California. Susan Kemper Patrick, Julie Fitz, & Cathy Yun (Learning Policy Institute.

Equipping Future Educators: Training Pre-Service Teachers to Advocate for Students with Disabilities. Janeth Aleman-Tovar (California State University Fresno)

Reclaiming the Mic: Embedding Advocacy at the Core of Teacher Education. Latoya Easter (Round Rock Unified School District)

Advocacy in Action: Creating a Preschool for Young Gifted Minds. Gayle Bentley (Bridges Graduate Schoolof Cognitive Diversity in Education) .

Confronting Divisive Tribalism with Wisdom: Our Journey to Become Core-Values-Driven. Robin Duncan, Keith Walters, & Doreen Ferko (California Baptist University).

Centering Educators and Students as Experts: The Intersection of ES Pedagogies and Youth Participatory Action Research. Edward Flores (California State University Northridge)

Information on the California Council on Teacher Education

Founded in 1945, the California Council on the Education of Teachers (now the California Council on Teacher Education since July 2001) is a non-profit organization devoted to stimulating the improvement of the preservice and inservice education of teachers and related school personnel. The Council attends to this general goal with the support of a community of teacher educators, drawn from diverse constituencies, who seek to be informed, reflective, and active regarding significant research, sound practice, and current public educational issues.

Membership in the California Council on Teacher Education can be either institutional or individual. Colleges and universities with credential programs, professional organizations with interests in the preparation of teachers, school districts and public agencies in the field of education, and individuals involved in or concerned about the field are encouraged to join. Membership includes announements of semi-annual spring and fall conferences, receipt via email in PDF format of the journals *Teacher Education Quarterly* and *Issues in Teacher Education*, emailed newsletters on timely issues, an informal network for sharing sound practices in teacher education, and involvement in annual awards and recognitions in the field.

Each academic year the California Council on Teacher Education holds a Fall Conference that features significant themes in the field of education, highlightss prominent speakers, and affords opportunities for presentation of research and discussion of promising practices, and a Spring Policy Action Network (SPAN) Conference in Sacramento which considers current and future policy issues in the teacher education field and includes visits with legislators and legislative offices.

For information about membership in the California Council on Teacher Education, please contact: Alan H. Jones, Executive Secretary, California Council on Teacher Education, 3145 Geary Boulevard, PMB 275, San Francisco, California 94118; email alan.jones@ccte.org; website www.ccte.org

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