Possibilities for Achieving Social Justice Ends through Standardized Means

By Deborah Bieler

In 2006, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) made a controversial decision to remove the term "social justice" from its list of desirable teacher dispositions. Arthur Wise, NCATE president at the time, conceded that the term was "susceptible to a variety of definitions" (Johnson & Johnson, 2007) and argued that key NCATE standards in fact embrace the spirit of "social justice," for example, by requiring teacher candidates to "teach consistently with the ideals of fairness and the belief that all children can learn" (Wise, 2007). Given varying beliefs about what constitutes fairness and how these beliefs might translate into practice, debate concerning use of the term "social justice" in teachers' professional standards has continued, highlighting the need for equity with regard to schools (e.g., Sleeter, 2008), the relationship between teachers' justice orientations and their content skills/knowledge (e.g., Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009), and the learning outcomes and environments that can be causally attributed to justice-oriented pedagogies (e.g., North, 2008; 2009).

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Now that NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) have, as of October, 2010, merged to become the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), a major revision of professional standards for teacher candidates is once

more underway, and decisions concerning the inclusion of the term "social justice" are again at hand. In this article, I seek to contribute to this conversation by sharing results of research that teases apart one of the many aspects of teacher candidates' professional practice in which " social justice" would likely be manifested: lesson planning. Specifically, I sought to identify the specific knowledge and skills that teacher candidates need in order to create community-based, justice-oriented lesson plans, which many scholars consider to be a critical feature of modern American social justice education (e.g., Delpit, 2006; Gay, 2000; Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Howard, 2003; Nieto, 2000). This article, which draws on a study of three years of secondary English student teachers' community-based lesson plan projects, addresses the tension between the standards movement and social justice goals in teacher education. It highlights both the possibilities of working within given standards as well as the promise of advocating for future standards that would explicitly require teacher candidates to identify and embrace local perspectives in order to promote equity in and through their instructional planning.

Defining "Social Justice Teacher Education"

It is important to note that the debate surrounding what social justice entails and whether a focus on it belongs in schools has escalated in accordance with the standards debate. The pressure to tie all instructional goals to given standards has caused educators not only to identify but to lobby vigorously on behalf of the content and goals most important to them for fear of their being omitted from what appears to be a zero-sum game. By the most simplistic account, for some, omission from standards threatens to connote omission from classroom practice; thus, it is no accident that scholarly attention to social justice in education has remained rapt for over a decade. Rather than offer a review of this vast literature, which has been compellingly presented elsewhere (e.g., Grant & Agosto, 2008; North, 2006; 2008), I briefly discuss teacher education for social justice, paying particular attention to Cochran-Smith's (2010) theory and its potential to influence professional standards.

The major critiques of social justice definitions over the years have remained relatively consistent: one is that as a concept, social justice is highly variable—ambiguous and subject to personal interpretation (e.g., Zeichner, 2006)—and the second is that social justice is woefully undertheorized (e.g., North, 2006). Before the term "social justice" was removed from NCATE standards in 2006, it had been listed alongside *caring, fairness,* and *honesty* as a sample disposition (Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Lahann, Shakman, & Terrell, 2009). According to scholars concerned with the theories of justice from which social justice is derived (e.g., McDonald, 2005; North, 2006), however, it is clear that social justice is far more than a disposition. One professional educational organization's definition of social justice, for example, argues that it is at once a goal, a theory, a stance, a pedagogy, a process, a framework, and a process (Conference on English Education, 2009). Recently,

Cochran-Smith (2010) has taken a historic step in advancing the field of social justice education; her work offers a "theory of teacher education for social justice" that posits interrelationships between a theory of justice, a theory of practice, and a theory of teacher preparation. The articulation of this (appropriately) complex theory holds great promise for the integration and valuing of social justice work in P-16 classrooms because, as Sister Chittister, by way of North (2006), reminds us, "if it is not in the language, it is not in the mind; and if it is not in the mind, it cannot be in the social structure" (p. 524).

According to Cochran-Smith (2010), three main interdependent tenets should undergird a theory of social justice for teacher education: equity of learning opportunity, respect for social groups, and acknowledging and dealing with tensions. In her theory, these ideas should inform both teacher practice (an expansive endeavor she conceptualizes as including knowledge, interpretive frameworks, methods, and advocacy) and teacher preparation (an enterprise she understands to be comprised of selection and recruitment, curriculum and pedagogy, contexts and structures, and outcomes). Cochran-Smith's insistence that teachers must work to improve both student learning *and* life chances is one of her theory's most compelling contributions. Set against the backdrop of standards-driven U.S. educational policy, Cochran-Smith rejects the reductive notion that teachers are mere mechanisms through which content is delivered and assessed and instead advances the idea that while teachers must of course teach content and skills in the short term, they must work toward expanded definitions of learning and improved learning conditions in order to benefit students in the long term. Recalling some of her earlier work (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1991; 2006), she calls upon teacher educators to work simultaneously both within and against the system for the benefit of our students and our democracy.

Introduction to the Study

To imagine how social justice standards might be drawn from Cochran-Smith's theory and thus to participate in the within/against work for which it calls, this study examined the work teacher candidates produced for a community-based course project and explores whether this work sufficiently accomplished the social justice goals espoused by the scholars mentioned above—or whether standards more specifically focused on social justice would better serve these ends. The study focused on one assignment, the "Communities Project," that is completed by secondary English education majors at a large Northeastern university. Undergraduate teacher candidates at this institution take methods courses and begin fieldwork during the fall semester of their senior year; they then student teach full-time in the same schools during spring semester. Students' field placement sites vary widely in terms of both location (urban, suburban, and rural) and type (middle school and high school; traditional public, public vocational, charter, private, and parochial).

Seniors complete their Communities Project as part of one fall methods class,

and projects are typically about 15 pages in length. At the top of the project's assignment sheet appears the following introduction that references two of the texts we read and discuss in the course:

> In the Communities Project, you will inquire into the multiple communities in and around your school—and use this inquiry to design a lesson that you teach your students this fall (though we hope this project will influence your practice long beyond this!). The design of this project is based on the notions that classroom life is complex, influenced by multiple social practices inside and outside classroom walls, and that educators should make efforts to allow these practices to guide and enrich subject area instruction (Delpit, 2006; Finn, 1999).

The project contains five sections: (1) an ethnographic description with photographs; (2) demographic information and state test scores; (3) partial transcripts of interviews with at least two community members, one from inside and one from outside the school; (4) analysis of the interviews; and (5) a lesson plan. Students' interviews focus on diversity, home/school relationships, and English class's relevance for career success. Students then reflect on what they learned in sections 1-4 and create a lesson plan that uses this knowledge to meaningfully connect the unique needs and desires of the community with the content being covered in the class. The teacher preparation faculty has used the Communities Project to measure our candidates' performance on the following four National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) standards:

> 2.2 Use English Language Arts (ELA) to help their students become familiar with their own and others' cultures;
>
> 2.3 Demonstrate reflective practice, involvement in professional organizations, and collaboration with both faculty and other candidates;
>
> 2.5 Make meaningful connections between the ELA curriculum and developments in culture, society, and education; and
>
> 4.4 Create and sustain learning environments that promote respect for, and support of, individual differences of ethnicity, race, language, culture, gender, and ability.

As with the other 38 NCTE standards that were in place at the time of the study, for each of the above four standards, faculty assigned a score of 5 (Exemplary), 4 (Strong), 3 (Satisfactory), 2 (Making Progress), or 1 (Unacceptable).

Methods

Researcher Position, Setting, and Participants

In 2006 as part of this program's restructuring to meet NCATE requirements, I created the Communities Project assessment, and for three of the ensuing five years (2007, 2009, and 2010), I served as instructor of the methods course and thus evaluated these projects. I have also coordinated the English education program and co-written our accreditation reports.

The data set initially collected for this study was the set of Communities Projects completed by the 118 undergraduate secondary English student teachers who graduated during the five-year period from 2006 to 2010. However, in order to ensure consistency in the readings and definitions of social justice with which the students worked in the methods courses, the data set was narrowed to the 79 students who graduated during the three years I served as instructor. For example, before they embarked upon their Communities Projects, students in this study read and reflected on Freire's (1983) notion of reading the world as well as Christensen's (2000) focus on equity, particularly the need to include marginalized students in English Language Arts curriculum. Other course readings, such as Ladson-Billings' (1995) work on culturally relevant pedagogy and Finn's (1999) work on working-class children, helped shape their understandings of social justice and equity in education early in the semester. Although the Communities Project assessment itself did not reference "social justice" or "equity" explicitly, it emphasized one of the three key ideas in Cochran-Smith's (2010) theory of social justice: a respect for social groups.

In this study, I sought to explore these two research questions: (1) What patterns are evident in the social justice goals of lesson plans produced as part of a community-based assessment? (2) What do these patterns suggest both about (a) the suitability of current standards in supporting teacher candidates' ability to create community-based, justice-oriented lesson plans and (b) whether different standards are needed to better support this ability?

Data Analysis

In order to investigate these patterns, I selected a stratified random sample via quantitative methods and then qualitatively analyzed the samples. First, I examined the scores that all 79 senior-year teacher candidates received on the three NCTE standards (2.2, 2.5, and 4.4) in this project that have been historically associated with social justice teaching. This process yielded a set of 237 data points (79 x 3).[1] In order to arrive at a stratified random sample that could be more closely analyzed for patterns across strata, I calculated the frequency of the five scores for each of the three standards and then chose a sample representing about 15% of the data set (n=13) that mirrored its overall numerical qualities, intentionally increasing the representation of scores of "2" and "3" in the sample in order to yield a greater understanding of the criteria that differentiated "satisfactory" (i.e., earning a score of 3 or above) from "unsatisfactory" (i.e., earning a score of 1 or 2). I also aimed to include females (n=6) and males (n=7) equitably in the sample.

Once the sample was identified, I used a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to code the students' lesson plans, which included the following eleven sections: general information, objective(s), assessment(s), context, beliefs/rationale, materials/preparations, classroom management issues, plan with time segments, anticipating students' responses, standards, and reflection. In the coding process, I identified whether the lesson plans evidenced social justice-oriented goals and, if

so, how they were conceptualized: first, I noted evidence in each lesson plan that was relevant to each of the three standards (developing familiarity with cultures, connecting ELA curriculum to the real world, and promoting respect for differences), then I placed each piece of evidence in a chart organized by standard and score. I used this chart to re-examine the evidence and wrote analytic memos on the similarities and differences I noted. These memos helped me identify thematic and numeric patterns in the lesson plans' social justice goals.

Findings: Lesson Planning for Social Justice

Two primary findings resulted from the analysis. First, among the lesson plans analyzed, those with the highest net score (i.e., a score of 5 on all three standards—2.2, 2.5, and 4.4) unfailingly evidenced three characteristics: (a) a more complex understanding of content standards, (b) a deeper grounding in the local community, and (c) much clearer justice-oriented goals than did those with lower net scores. Second, students could perform satisfactorily on this community-based assignment without having demonstrated more specific justice-oriented goals.

Lesson Plan Characteristics

Although all of the student teachers clearly had worked to meet the standards with their lesson plan design, it is significant that the high-scoring lesson plans had much more in common than high scores. While the standards themselves reference increasing familiarization with culture (2.2), connecting ELA to the real world (2.5), and creating respectful, supportive environments (4.4), the interconnections between these concepts were not explicitly outlined or discussed in the project directions. Thus, it is noteworthy that in the sample's exemplars, the connection between local community, ELA content, and social justice goals was explicit and markedly similar. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the highest-rated Communities Projects contained lesson plans in which the definition of and focus on social justice goals resulted only when careful attention had been paid to both the local community and ELA content. In other words, the social justice goals were derived from the student teachers' understanding of the local community and the ELA content—and their sense of how these pieces might fit together. This finding is consistent with the assertions of many scholars who have argued that effective teachers draw on extensive knowledge of not only their subject matter but also their students (e.g., González, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2001; Moll, 1992). In the sections below, I discuss three pairs of lesson plans that were written by student teachers placed in similar communities but that exhibited different justice orientations in order to illustrate how the relationship among characteristics outlined in Figure 1 can be variously realized.

Complex understanding of content standards. One pair of lesson plans can illustrate how the level of content knowledge influences student teachers' ability to construct justice-oriented lesson plans. In this pairing, two student teachers,

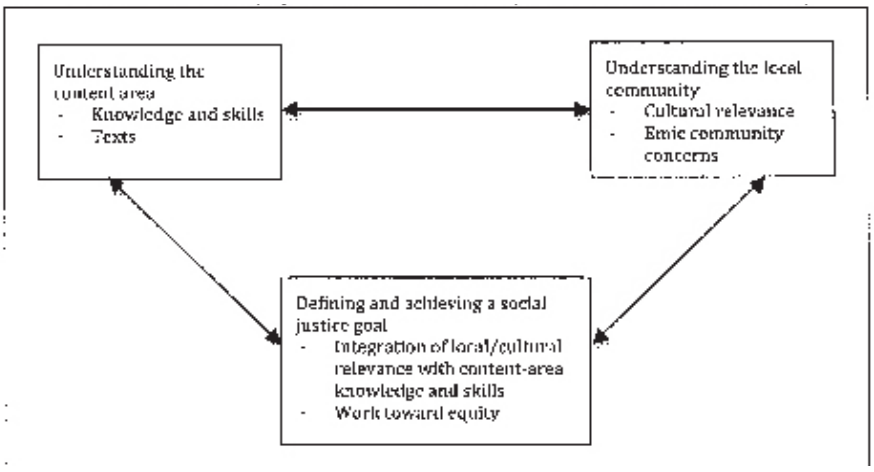
Marcie and Summer, were assigned to high schools in two different school districts, which, though 35 miles apart, were located in transitioning rural communities: rural farming towns that are becoming suburbanized.[2] In their Communities Projects, both Marcie and Summer described, in great detail, the tremendous and tension-inducing transitions in their respective districts, and both expressed explicit hopes that their lesson plan would help their students, even in some small way, manage these changes in ways that were respectful of differing perspectives (Standard 4.4). Marcie, for example, noted that one of her interviewees used the term "diversity opportunities" in reference to the school's influx of immigrants. She explained that this comment

> urged me to see the benefits of diversity and to embrace the power that it can have in my classroom. An idea that resonated throughout both interviews was the idea that students needed to be taught tolerance and to be able to understand and communicate with other groups. This raises the question for me, as an English teacher, of just how I am going to accomplish this. . . . I am unsure how I will effectively be able to heed this challenge. Hopefully, challenging students to listen to, respect, and learn from the ideas and beliefs of those around them in the following lesson plan is a starting point from which I can expand my ability to make students aware of the differences among them.

Summer expressed similar concerns regarding her approach to this topic:

> In no way does it feel unwelcoming when I drive around, get gas, and eat pancakes at the [Town] Diner. But there is clearly something beneath the surface that I am very glad I found out about early enough to consider how it may affect my teaching. I absolutely think something I am going to have to do as a teacher here is talk about

Figure 1
The Relationship of Three Characteristics of Social Justice Lesson Planning



> people migrating and immigrating into communities and countries, and how they are treated there. I want to show them that some groups of people are discriminated against when they move into new areas, while some are welcomed, and talk about what it's like to uproot your life and move, and the process of moving and fitting into a new place. I am not sure how explicit I want to be about this, however, if my students' parents and probably the students themselves are still very sensitive to the tensions inherent in this issue, so I will have to proceed with caution.

While these student teachers' level of local knowledge, interest in addressing local concerns, and degree of uncertainty appear to be quite similar, their conceptualization of content knowledge, particularly with regard to its possibilities for connecting to local knowledge, differed significantly. As Table 1 illustrates, the focus of Marcie's lesson ended up being the preparation of students for the beginning of *Romeo and Juliet*. Although she certainly focused on building text-to-self connections during this lesson, absent were the concerns she expressed elsewhere in her Communities Project. While her comments above reference her desire for her lesson to serve as a "starting point" for the development of tolerance and respect, Marcie did not make what she terms "social issues" locally relevant in her lesson plan. This apparent disconnection may indicate any number of things: for example, Marcie may have perceived the need for students to engage in civil discourse about non-threatening topics before they would engage in civil discourse about topics that may be more uncomfortable, or she may not have seen any connection between the "social issues" from Shakespeare's play and the local concerns she identified. A third possibility, of course, is that she did not subscribe to the belief that the classroom is an appropriate place in which to address local concerns—or, fourth, she understood her cooperating teacher to have this position. Whatever the case, the connection between content and local knowledge is not clearly made in her lesson plan.

On the other hand, Summer's lesson plan backgrounded the theme of change, foregrounded a locally relevant text, and positioned her students as experts with important information to contribute and discuss. Summer's lesson incorporated not only student-produced texts for which they were required to consult their family members about their family's history in the town but also an online text about the town. Marcie and Summer both intended for their students to better understand their connection to society and to participate effectively in discussions, but while Marcie's students discussed fate and romance as a whole class, Summer's students talked about their local community and did so in small groups. Further, while Summer's students engaged in discussion for the duration of the lesson, Marcie's students engaged in discussion for only a small portion of the lesson. Relatedly, a tighter alignment of objectives, standards, and assessments is found in Summer's lesson: each of these elements concerns the oral and written sharing of personal experiences. Although neither of these teachers' lesson plans completely realized the social justice-oriented goals noted in their Communities Projects, both took steps toward these goals. However, because Summer's approach integrated local

Table 1
A Comparison of Marcie's and Summer's Lesson Plans

	Marcie's	Summer's
Grade level	9th grade	12th grade
Class length	46 minutes	41 minutes
Objectives	Students will be able to • determine connections between texts, self, and society • predict the plot of a story based on given context clues	Students will be able to • discuss their personal histories and their classmates' histories in relation to [the town's] • create information sheets about [the town] that reflect their personal experiences and those of their classmates
Assessment	Students will be assessed for a pass/fail participation grade based on their active participation in the class discussion [and] . . . the completion of an anticipation guide . . . Since this lesson is the introduction for a text, there is no real information to assess the students on . . . The Lesson is designed ro be a discussion to get the students thinking about the text prior to reading it rather than to assess stduents on information.	I will collect three different written assignments: I will collect the Discussion Guide sheets that each student will have individually completed for homework before I teach this lesson, I will collect each group's "Revised Wikipedia" activity, and I will collect a "Where I'm Going" exit slip from each student as they leave the classroom. I will determine if students have met the objectives based on their written responses as well as their group and class discussion responses.
Standards	• Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, . . . building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively	• Listen critically and respond to others in small and large group situations
Text(s)	• Anticipation guide • Transparencies of statements to agree/disagree with	• Completed discussion guide • [Town]'s Wikipedia page printout • Revised Wikipedia page assignment sheet
Abbreviated Plan	1. Hook: Respond in journals to prompt "When I am told not to do something I want to do, it makes me feel…." 2. Individual completion of anticipation guide for Romeo and Juliet – 7 agree/disagree statements (e.g., Fate determines a person's life; Rivalries never die) 3. Large-group discussion on each statement 4. Individual completion of Romeo and Juliet prediction worksheet 5. Explanation of homework: describe how your perspective on a social issue changed as a result of today's discussion	1. Hook: Small-group sharing of completed responses to discussion guide (e.g., When did your family come to [town]? Have you ever lived anywhere else?) 2. Small-group review of [the town]'s Wikipedia article 3. Small-group creation of new Wikipedia content and/or sections 4. Individual responses to prompt: What are your future plans? Do you plan to stay in [town]?

and content knowledge and relied upon the vehicle of small groups to help her students construct knowledge and meet discussion standards, her lesson plan evidenced a level of curricular complexity that was not yet evident in Marcie's lesson plan.

Deep grounding in the local community. Anna and Rudy were two student teachers placed in the same urban school district—Anna in a middle school and Rudy in a high school, about ten miles away. Both Anna and Rudy independently chose to have their students describe and reflect on the communities to which they belonged and explicitly indicated that they hoped this experience would help build a sense of community in their classrooms, a goal commonly held among social justice educators (e.g., Fecho & Allen, 2003). The similarities, however, end there: a side-by-side comparison of their lesson plans demonstrates the extent to which Anna's lesson was grounded in nuanced understandings of both her school's community and her grade's ELA texts and concepts, a characteristic that Rudy's lesson lacked at this point (see Table 2). In her lesson plan, it is clear that Anna's understanding of her students and their community was complex enough for her to ground her social justice goals in locally meaningful contexts. For example, in her lesson, Anna incorporated two multimodal texts, whose authors are ethnically similar to her students, and expected students both to define and use the literary devices these texts demonstrate in ways that matched her school's content area standards. Rudy's lesson plan, in contrast, includes no standards or texts.

Other aspects of Anna's and Rudy's Communities Projects can provide additional insights concerning these differences. While Anna's project contained multiple photographs of her school's neighborhood over an almost ten-block radius and referenced a significant amount of time spent in conversation with students, teachers, and community members, Rudy references only time spent observing students in his classroom, and his local knowledge was limited. The beliefs/rationale sections of these student teachers' lesson plans demonstrate this contrast in their knowledge as well as their sense of purposefulness in achieving their instructional goals. Anna, for example, wrote that

> Although my students and I grew up in the same city, the larger [school] community is vastly different world from the parts of [the city] I know. By composing "Where I'm From" poems, I hope to gain a better understanding of their world through what they choose to share. By composing poems about people, places, and memories they care about, they will be challenged to articulate important experiences.

Anna indicated elsewhere in her Communities Project that she placed great importance on providing her students with the opportunity to write about themselves, given the amount of worksheet completion and test-preparation writing her students were typically expected to complete.

Rudy's statement indicated a lower level of purposefulness and narrower sense of context:

This lesson will have no context, which is why I am dreading having to teach it. My meeting that was scheduled with my teacher got cancelled, so I don't know when I'm teaching it or what he will be teaching at the time. When I meet with him next week, I will be given a context and then adapt this lesson plan to that

Table 2
A Comparison of Anna's and Rudy's Lesson Plans

	Anna's	Rudy's
Grade level	8th grade	11th grade honors
Class length	70 minutes	90 minutes
Objectives	Students will be able to • identify poetry terms in George Ella Lyons' "Where I'm From" • reflect on and express personal experience relating to their hometowns. • compose their own "Where I'm From" poems	Students will be able to • recognize and subsequently analyze the multiple communities they belong to
Assessment	I will assess the students by their "Where I'm From" brainstorming and rough draft responses	The students will turn in their writing as the assessment
Standards	• write expressive pieces • participate effectively in a discussion •recognize and interpret figurative language and literary devices and differentiate between literal and non-literal meanings.	None listed
Text(s)	• Kanye West's "Family Business" radio edit • George Ella Lyons' "Where I'm From" • Photographs of three local parks	None listed
Abbreviated plan	1. Hook: Listen to West song; pick one of the photographs being displayed and write about your experiences in this setting 2. Share responses 3. Segue: "We're going to use what we've learned to write a poem about the places and people we come from; they're called 'Where I'm From' poems." 4. Review poetry devices/terms 5. Listen to, read, and discuss Lyons' poem using poetry terms 6. Complete template for own version of poem using poetic devices 7. Create final copy of poem for classroom display	1. Hook: List all of the communities of which you are a part. 2. Share responses and list on the board. 3. Write in any genre about any of these communities. "The purpose is for you to reflect on lives and write something about your life that is important to you. In other words, I want to get to know you a little better." 4. Share responses 5. Submit responses

> context. This lesson does fit into my educational beliefs, though. I think building a classroom community is very important. Yesterday a student did not want to work with a partner because all her friends were already paired up. Rather than working with someone she doesn't know very well (she explained it would make her uncomfortable), she threw a temper tantrum: she cussed out the teacher, threw her book, and stormed out of the room. I think these classes could benefit from some community building exercises.

Here, Rudy indicates that he intends for his lesson to help build a sense of community among his students. However, his approach to instructional planning is limited by his understanding of his students' identities and communities as demonstrated within the classroom rather than as emerging from a much larger network of communities outside the classroom.

Anna's and Rudy's lessons serve as a reminder that numerous variables come into play when student teachers are getting to know their students and beginning to plan their instruction. As Rudy's account indicates, the cooperating teacher's availability and investment can be significant factors, as many scholars have argued (e.g., Awaya, McEwan, Heyler, Linsky, Lum, & Wakukawa, 2003; Cochran-Smith & Paris, 1995; Gore, 1991). In addition, these examples confirm that not only is the student teacher's own background significant, but the amount of time they invest in the process of getting to know the local community also makes a great difference in the quality of their instructional planning.

Clarity of justice-oriented goals. Tony and Marshall student taught at the same high school, two years apart. Each of them, like Marcie and Summer, expressed deep concern about the overwhelming changes brought about by their rural town's transition to a suburban area. Each student teacher included photos of quaint downtown buildings and construction, atop former farmland, of new housing developments, roads, and big-box stores. In their research, each also noticed that the number of Black and Hispanic students in their school had been steadily rising, that these students were scoring lower on standardized tests in both English and math, and that the school-age population was much more ethnically diverse than the staff.

Both Tony and Marshall chose to focus on the changing nature of their school's community in their lesson plan; they also opted to have their students engage in non-expository writing as a way of responding to these changes (see Table 3). Interestingly, though both of these student teachers received 5 out of 5s on all three of the focal NCATE standards, their lesson plans evidence very different levels of clarity with regard to their social justice goals. Tony, for example, anchored his lesson with a short story in which one character who moves away and changes is contrasted with members of his family and his home community, who don't change. His plan called for his students to review their understanding of the plot details and then to discuss the theme of change as a whole class. Tony's students then would spend the rest of the time writing a narrative around one of three possible prompts—one concerning personal change, one concerning familial change, and

Table 3
A Comparison of Tony's and Marshall's Lesson Plans

	Tony's	Marshall's
Grade level	10th grade honors	11th grade honors
Class length	50 minutes	90 minutes
Objectives	Students will be able to • discuss the theme of change • write their own narratives relating the theme of change to their own lives	Students will be able to • involve themselves in their local community and make an impact on it • produce a persuasive project that reflects their personal culture as well as that of their classmates
Assessment	If students turn in an assignment that follows the prompts and relates to the concept of change, they will receive full credit for the assignment	Students will be informally assessed via the MLK assignment and the exit slip. They will receive grades on their persuasion project
Standards	Students will be able to: • write persuasive, informative and expressive texts • demonstrate an overall understanding of literary texts by identifying the story elements	Students will be able to: • write persuasive, informative and expressive texts • understand social and political issues
Text(s)	• "The Son from America" by Isaac Bashevis Singer	• Photographs of [the town] • Local newspaper articles and letters about Wal-Mart coming to town • Printouts/video of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Why I am Opposed to the War in Vietnam"
Abbreviated plan	1. Review plot of the short story assigned for homework, then ask students for their responses to it. 2. Discussion of the theme of change in this short story and what conflicts relate to this theme. 3. Segue: Discuss the questions "What is change? Is change a good thing all the time? Is change necessarily bad? Is change inevitable?" 4. Students individually write a narrative in response to one of the following prompts: (a) When was a time that you realized that you had changed from who you previously were? (b) Write about a tradition that you have in your family. What would happen if someone tried to change that tradition? (c) Write about how [your town] has changed from when you were younger to now. 5. Student volunteers will share their narratives.	1. Hook: Students will stand up and move to 1 of 4 corners of the room according to which of the 4 pictures from [the town] they identify with the most. 2. Class discussion about the hook. What would you like to see in town? What would you identify with if it was here? Why isn't it here yet? 3. Teacher-led discussion of examples of local persuasive writing regarding Wal-Mart coming to town. Students identify persuasive techniques. 4. Students read/watch Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech, identify persuasive techniques, then compare these to their townspeople's. 5. Group project: produce a persuasive argument in any genre in which you attempt to convince a business or organization to come to town. You will actually send this to the addressee.

one concerning community change. Tony's Community Project lesson concludes with the opportunity for some student volunteers to share their work.

The primary justice-oriented goals that Tony sought to meet through this lesson were the connection of texts to students' lives and the importance of students' individual voices. As he wrote in his Communities Project,

> This lesson fits into my educational belief that writing essays is not the only way to express important ideas and concepts in English classes . . . . Writing a narrative is a great way of expressing feelings that can be limited by writing an essay. I also believe that each student's . . . life experiences are an excellent way of demonstrating someone's viewpoint. Sharing some of these stories in class would allow students to look at the world through another person's point-of-view; in a changing setting like [our town], looking at the world through another person's lens may prove to be enlightening.

Although the development of individual voice and the written expression of voice are clearly important aspects of justice-oriented curriculum (e.g., Christensen, 2000), they are not distinct from ELA curriculum that does not aspire to be justice-oriented. In other words, a more clearly justice-oriented lesson might require students working on the development of voice and/or the theme of change to use their voices in order to consider matters of justice or equity. The second lesson plan in this pair, by Marshall, illustrates this difference.

Marshall's lesson, in contrast, began by asking students to move to one corner of the classroom, based on which of the four local photographs displayed there they most identified with; this activity then segued into a class discussion about the downtown area, particularly what is present and absent there—and why. Following this discussion, Marshall then provided students with examples of local articles, essays, and letters that displayed various viewpoints concerning the arrival of a Wal-Mart in the town. Students identified the persuasive techniques used by these local writers, then examined the persuasive techniques that Martin Luther King, Jr., used in his "Why I am Opposed to the War in Vietnam" speech. In the culminating project in Marshall's lesson, groups were required to create a text in any genre in which they (a) identified a small business or cultural organization not yet established in the town but for which they see a potential local market, (b) attempted to convince this business or organization to come to town, and (c) sent this piece to the addressee.

Marshall described his goals with regard to this lesson as follows:

> I believe in this lesson because it helps students to make an impact on their community and produce work for a purpose beyond the classroom. When students produce work for non-academic audiences, they are more likely to be motivated because of the fresh audience. Student motivation also goes up if it's something they "can actually use in their lives," and this project makes a connection between what they are doing and similar works people in their community have produced.

Here, the contrast between the clarity of Tony's and Marshall's social justice goals is apparent: While Tony's lesson focuses solely on the development of student voice and the relationship between students and texts, Marshall's lesson goes beyond these objectives to require students to use their voices and draw on their understanding of textual relationships in order to consider and engage in local matters in which questions of equity and representation matter.

The Suitability of Current Standards for Social Justice Goals

This study also considered the suitability of current standards in supporting teacher candidates' ability to create community-based, justice-oriented lesson plans and whether different standards are needed to better support the development of this ability. The data demonstrate that the 79 student teachers in this study overwhelmingly met the given content-level standards for this assessment; 98% scored a 3 or higher on standard 2.2; 92% scored a 3 or higher on standard 2.5; and 96% scored a 3 or higher on standard 4.4. Among the smaller sample of 13, 92% scored a 3 or higher on standard 2.2; 85% scored a 3 or higher on standard 2.5; and 85% scored a 3 or higher on standard 4.4. For NCATE purposes, these teacher candidates were considered highly qualified. In an even closer look, the scores of the four student teachers whose work was discussed here met NCATE standards: Summer, Anna, Tony, and Marshall scored all 5s; Rudy's scores were 3, 3, and 5; and Marcie's scores were 2, 3, and 3.

As the earlier description of the candidates' lesson plans indicates, however, while those who earned high scores on the NCATE standards also demonstrated the skills involved in justice-oriented lesson planning, the students who earned lower scores did not. Further analysis indicates that among the sample of 13 candidates, those who earned scores of 4 or 5 on at least two of the three standards demonstrated an ability to identify and plan instruction that focused on issues of equity or justice, whereas the others did not. For example, student teachers earning scores of 3, 4, and 4—or 2, 4, and 5—demonstrated these planning abilities; however, students earning scores of 3, 3, and 4—or 2, 3, and 4—did not. What these patterns indicate is that despite this assessment's focus on local communities, candidates could still perform satisfactorily on it without indicating a concern with equity or justice within those communities. On the other hand, while existing NCATE standards do not encourage or support justice-oriented objectives, they are broad enough to allow for them.

Implications

In an era of nation-wide standardization and systems of accountability, explicit attention to issues of social justice has the potential to energize the role teachers play as community builders who can forge connections between local communities and the classrooms within them. Teacher educators' role in developing such connection-makers should thus be embraced; if we explicitly equip teacher candidates with the

skills of identifying and integrating local knowledge/perspectives in their teaching, we implicitly and explicitly value community as much as content, as Cochran-Smith (2010) has urged us to do. This study's finding that the most highly rated lesson plan projects exhibited strengths in three distinct areas (complex understanding of content standards, deep grounding in the local community, and clarity of justice-oriented goals) suggests that teachers may need to be proficient in at least these three specific knowledge/skill sets in order to engage in pedagogical planning that is justice-oriented. While this study examined only written lesson plans and not their actual implementation, the three-prong framework for planning social justice-oriented instruction described here not only provides a useful structure for teacher educators across content areas but also encourages educators at all levels to be agentive in analyzing their unique contexts and determine ways to achieve social justice ends via standardized means.

The framework delineated here also suggests one way to reconcile accreditation boards' need for definable terms and measurable outcomes with teachers' and teacher educators' need for standards that value and support their efforts to work in equitable ways with the local community. With this important opportunity to carefully recast standards that include justice-oriented ends, policymakers can assert the connotation of "public interest" into the concept of "public education" and forward the notion that teachers, our nation's most important "public intellectuals," teach not only subject matter but children—children who live in communities. Toward this end, this study suggests that standards such as "possesses broad and deep knowledge about students and the students' and school's communities, particularly the concerns they identify," "is familiar with locally-valued and locally-produced texts," "is able to develop students' content knowledge and skills in ways that address locally identified concerns," or "meaningfully integrates content and local knowledge" would be suitable additions to the slate of standards for teacher candidates. Such standards would certainly support Cochran-Smith's (2010) belief that "respect for social groups" is one of the necessary components for social justice in education. However, the findings reported here indicate that we ought to aspire even further, to standards that speak to the two other components for which Cochran-Smith advocates: equity of learning opportunity and acknowledging and dealing with tensions. Such standards could include—drawing from Ladson-Billings (1995)—"develops critical perspectives and skills that challenge inequities both inside and outside schools" and—drawing from Cochran-Smith (2010)—"acknowledges and deals equitably with tensions that result from competing interests."

The results of this study demonstrate that while it is possible to build and use assessments that can help pre-service teachers develop an awareness of and an individual, professional response to local community concerns, we need standards that not only address the specific knowledge and skills that teachers need to develop such an awareness and response but also support the realization of teachers' justice-oriented goals. Having carefully constructed standards to facilitate and value this work may prove to be an essential part of re-energizing the notion of schools

as community centers, de-marginalizing teacher education (Jones, 2010), and demystifying the concept of "social justice" itself.

Notes

[1] Because this data is based on existing NCATE ratings, it may be skewed slightly toward the NCATE standards as they currently exist.

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

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