Using Stems and Supported Inquiry to Help an Elementary Teacher Move Toward Dialogic Reading Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Classroom talk patterns are notoriously resistant to change. This article examines changes in one fifth-grade teacher's discourse practices and beliefs as she and the author engaged in inquiry-driven professional development. Discourse analysis of class discussions and qualitative analysis of transcripts of professional development sessions indicated that the teacher made three important shifts: opening the floor for student talk; offering responses that were more contingent on student contributions; and moving toward yielding interpretive authority over discussions. Supported, teacher-driven inquiry combined with introduction of semi-scripted sentence stems selected to address a teacher-identified concern helped the teacher move toward more fluid, unscripted, effective discussions.

INTRODUCTION

Facilitating effective discussion of texts is an essential task facing literacy teachers who aim to help students develop into thoughtful, critical readers. Opportunities to respond to literature, grapple with textual interpretations, and collaboratively build arguments about texts apprentice students into important literacy practices. Many scholars agree that more dialogic approaches to classroom discourse are needed for students to think critically, connect the new to the known, and engage deeply with academic content (Alexander, 2008; Boyd & Galda, 2011; Nystrand, 1997; Wells, 2007).

In contrast to teaching that follows a "recitation script" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) where teachers pose questions requiring factual answers and evaluate student responses, dialogic interaction is dynamic and fluid. Within a supportive classroom environment, participants (including the teacher) listen carefully and build on one another's ideas (Alexander, 2008; Mercer & Littleton, 2004). Ideas do not simply accumulate; they are explored and wrestled with (Barnes & Todd, 1995; Wilkinson & Son, 2011).

Dialogic teaching is purposeful, promoting student learning in part by helping students link their existing knowledge to academic content (Boyd & Markarian, 2011, p. 519). Teachers engaging in dialogic instruction listen carefully for the thinking inside student contributions, rather than simply evaluating them. They offer contingent responses—comments and questions that take up student contributions and set students up to explore, elaborate on, and connect ideas (Boyd & Galda, 2011). Dialogic teaching runs counter to the pre-scripted, tightly controlled instruction specified in many elementary literacy curricula. It is spontaneous, fluid, and responsive to the ideas that arise in the moment.

Underlying a teacher's approach to classroom discussion is his or her instructional stance. A teacher taking a monologic stance orients toward knowledge as transmitted from teacher or text to student, whereas a teacher taking a dialogic stance is willing to yield interpretive authority and consider student interpretations, even when they are unconventional (Aukerman, 2008; Nystrand, 1997). At the heart of a dialogic stance lies a sincere belief that student ideas are interesting and merit careful examination. While authentic and open-ended questions might be more common in the classroom of a teacher holding a dialogic stance, and "test questions" more common where a teacher holds a monologic stance (Nystrand, 1997), teacher stance cannot be reduced to categorizing talk moves (Boyd & Markarian, 2011; O'Connor & Michaels, 2007; Wells, 2007). Teachers' stances toward classroom discourse and student learning serve as compasses that orient them as they travel the unpredictable waters of classroom talk. Thus, it is not enough simply to train teachers to adopt talk practices associated with dialogic teaching; meaningful, sustainable movement toward dialogic instruction requires teachers to shift not only outward practices, but also inward perspectives.

Although dialogic instruction is unscripted, this article asserts that professional development (PD) rooted in teacher-driven inquiry, coupled with the introduction of semi- scripted talk tools, can help teachers progress toward more dialogic practices and stances. In the context of inquiry, such talk tools can serve as scaffolds (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) for teachers to open up classroom talk for manipulation and analysis in ways that prompt important shifts in their teaching and thinking. This descriptive case study sought to answer the following research questions: How do teacher and student participation in text discussions in one fifth-grade classroom change as the teacher engages in inquiry-based PD focused on text discussion? How does the teacher's instructional stance change? The study examines transformations in one accomplished fifth-grade teacher's discourse practices and her instructional stance as she engaged in intensive PD with the author. During weekly examinations of videos of classroom text discussions, with the author's support, the teacher identified a problem of practice she wanted to address and engaged in an inquiry around it.

This article builds on research into discourse-focused PD and teacher education for literacy teachers, which offers valuable frameworks for improving classroom talk. Scholars have created tools for assessing talk quality and used these as a basis for coaching teachers (Roskos & Boehlen, 2001; Wilkinson, Reninger, & Soter, 2010). Kucan (2009) engaged students in a Master's course in analysis of text discussion transcripts from their own classrooms to teach them to implement specific discussion approaches (such as Questioning the Author) effectively. Robertson, Ford-Connors, and Paratore (2014) coached teachers to use evidence-based instructional practices for reading and improve their classroom talk through a range of approaches, including discussing observed lessons, video of observed lessons, and lesson transcripts, and by asking teachers to transcribe and analyze their own instruction. For our PD process, I drew on some of the coaching strategies used in prior research, such as examining video of instruction and creating and analyzing transcripts. In contrast to these previous approaches, our process was designed to be more open-ended and teacher-driven to maximize teacher engagement and ownership. Rather than developing a talk assessment

tool or selecting target practices before beginning the study, I encouraged the teacher to identify a problem she wanted to address as we reviewed multiple videos of discussions in her classroom. The participating teacher's observations, interests, and needs guided the PD process.

I aimed to make the analysis of classroom talk manageable for the teacher. As we studied videos of text discussions in her classroom, we focused analysis at the utterance level, examining particular talk moves because utterances can position speakers and listeners in powerful ways. Utterances can open up or close down opportunities to explore ideas in the moment, and utterances are a concrete, graspable unit for a teacher to work with (Michaels & O'Connor, 2015). Focusing teachers' attention on utterances can help them make sense of patterns emerging in talk, an important first step toward making positive changes.

In their work promoting the use of particular teacher talk moves designed to promote academically productive talk, Michaels and O'Connor (2015) found that simply presenting their sets of talk moves to teachers (making them concrete) did not result in meaningful changes to teacher discourse practices. These scholars have since reframed each set of talk moves as a group of tools used for solving particular problems and helping students share their thinking, listen to each other, deepen their reasoning, and engage with others' reasoning. When Michaels and O'Connor introduce the moves, they explain what problems in discourse (such as not understanding what a student means) those moves solve. In the current study, the teacher discovered her own problem of practice (lack of cohesion across student contributions) through initial analysis and requested help in identifying practical approaches for addressing the problem. The semi-scripted talk moves (sentence stems for students to use) that became the focus of our inquiry were thus framed intentionally as tools for addressing the problem the teacher herself had articulated. The PD approach described here aimed to help the teacher both adopt and act upon a more dialogic stance.

METHODS

This study was situated in two intersecting contexts or activity settings (Cole, 1996). One was a fifth-grade classroom at Glenwood Elementary[1], a Title I school located in the Pacific Northwest. The second setting was a semester-long, individualized PD experience involving the classroom teacher and the author. Because we wanted to disrupt conventional power relationships between university-based researchers and research participants (Wells, 2011), we framed the PD experience as a process of teacher-driven inquiry. The teacher's inquiry into her classroom discourse practices evolved through an iterative process during which I acted as a "critical friend" and a guide to some tools of discourse analysis. This approach was explicitly reflexive in that we were "researching issues that are mutually defined by researcher and participants—[engaging in] an ongoing cycle of feedback with the participants" (Rogers, 2004, p. 251). Over the course of the study, we adapted the content and process of the PD experience to suit the evolving motives and interests of the teacher-researcher. [See McElhone & Tilley (2013).]

PARTICIPANTS AND CLASSROOM CONTEXT

The focal fifth-grade teacher, Barbara Hollister, was in her ninth year of teaching. She was well respected by colleagues and parents as a capable, warm, effective teacher who builds strong relationships with students. Barbara, who is a white teacher, had taught in classrooms from primary to middle grades and had won two awards for exceptional service to students of color. She was pursuing a doctoral degree at the author's institution (in a different department).

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[1] School name is a pseudonym selected by the author. Teacher and student names in the article are self-selected pseudonyms.

During literacy units, Barbara's 32 students alternated between whole-class lessons and independent work, such as independent reading, partner reading, and word work. She taught comprehension strategies during whole class sessions that regularly involved class discussion. Differentiated reading support was offered through small, leveled guided reading groups, which also incorporated text discussion. During most of the data collection, Barbara focused her teaching on helping students make defensible inferences and interpretations with texts.

Student reading levels ranged from first grade to well above grade level (per assessments, e.g., Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills [DIBELS] and Developmental Reading Assessment [DRA]). The class was nearly evenly split between male and female students, six of whom identified as Latino/a, one as African American, one as mixed race, and the rest as white.

DATA SOURCES

Data collection for this study operated at two levels. First, I observed literacy instruction and recorded field notes once or twice weekly throughout one semester. Each literacy session was video recorded, for a total of approximately 30 hours of video. Seven students representing a range of reading achievement levels, English proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds were interviewed using a semi-structured protocol addressing their views of themselves as readers, of reading, and of the norms for classroom discussions of texts.

Second, the teacher and I participated in a collaborative PD process, which began with a semi-structured teacher interview early in the school year. The interview addressed Barbara's experience of the school context for literacy teaching, the expectations of and constraints on her teaching, and her goals for her students as readers and participants in discussions. Each week, in audiotaped 2.5- to 3.5-hour PD sessions, we watched the classroom videotapes and discussed the evolving inquiry project. During some sessions, we analyzed transcripts of classroom talk that I created or collaborated to transcribe segments from the videos. After each PD session, we each independently wrote reflection memos regarding the content of the videos and the content and process of the PD experience. Each of the PD sessions was fully transcribed, including transcription of the portions of classroom videos viewed during these sessions.

DATA ANALYSIS

The PD experience was designed to provide the teacher-researcher with basic tools for analyzing discourse to help deepen her inquiry into discourse processes in her classroom. The approach to discourse analysis discussed in the PD context and used to analyze data in the study "'hover[s] low' over the immediate data" (Street, 2005, p. ix) while still extending beyond analysis of form-function relationships into examination of social practices and patterns of participation. Following Bloome and his colleagues' (2005) analytical approach, in some sessions, we analyzed some segments of video by message unit to examine patterns of participation and positioning in class discussions. In other sessions, we examined turns of talk. We watched video segments multiple times, coding for frequency of participation by individuals, use of particular talk moves modeled by the teacher, elaboration of individual contributions, relationships among sequential talk moves, and efforts by teacher and students to position self or others as a particular type of reader, student, or participant in discussion. We also conducted analyses in which we tracked observable indicators of engagement by particular students and traced the development of student propositions across a discussion. During data collection, student interviews provided a backdrop that helped us interpret student contributions to discussions.

After the PD process concluded, we analyzed the transcripts of the PD sessions and the written reflections using a recursive thematic coding process focused on the

teacher's appropriation of practical and conceptual tools for teaching and research; her observations of classroom talk; and her stance toward the goals of class discussion, the location of valid knowledge about texts, and the roles of teacher and students in discussion. We mapped our codes onto a chronological data display (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that enabled us to track important developments in the teacher's discussion practices and stance across the semester. Throughout the process we wrote and discussed descriptive and analytic memos, allowing us to integrate researcher and teacher perspectives as we synthesized key themes.

FINDINGS

Three important changes in Barbara's practice and thinking suggested that she made progress toward more dialogic instruction and a more dialogic instructional stance over the course of the PD experience. First, early in the semester Barbara had raised concerns about the degree to which she was offering space for student contributions, and the findings indicate that she increasingly opened the floor for students to participate. As a result of our collaboration, she taught students talk moves tied directly to the line of inquiry she had selected (discussed below). The students took up the talk moves, which helped them take more control over text discussions. As she analyzed videos of discussions evolving from student use of these talk moves, Barbara was motivated to cede even more control to students, eventually removing herself physically from discussion by sitting against the wall outside the circle of students. Second, Barbara began to use more contingent responses to student contributions. She prompted students to connect to and elaborate on one another's ideas and began to pursue individual students' ideas further with longer exchanges. Third, through supported examination of her teaching, Barbara recognized her attachment to having "one right answer" to ostensibly open-ended questions and began to allow students to entertain unconventional interpretations. By the end of the PD process, she had started to reconsider her own interpretations of texts and student responses, increasingly yielding interpretive authority to students. Barbara's instructional practice, thinking, and beliefs about learning and classroom talk (her stance) were influenced by all three of these changes.

IDENTIFYING THE FOCAL PROBLEM OF THE INQUIRY

Early in the semester, as we watched videos of her instruction, Barbara noticed that students did not appear to be listening to or responding to one another's comments. In conversations about texts, each student contributed an isolated opinion or proposition. As a result, classroom talk remained largely superficial because the investigation of each proposition was usually only one turn-of-talk deep. Barbara was concerned about this issue and decided to focus her inquiry on how she could help students develop connected strings of talk that would explore a single idea or interpretation more deeply. As a part of a unit of study on using schema and textual evidence to construct inferences, she was also interested in students providing evidence to support their claims.

Barbara requested concrete, practical support to help her address these concerns. While no particular set of practices or talk moves was selected as a focus prior to the start of the study, Barbara's desire to help students link ideas suggested that teaching them some concrete talk moves they could use for this purpose might be a productive next step. I shared with Barbara a set of semi-scripted student talk stems associated with the "Accountable Talk" approach described by Wolf, Crosson, and Resnick (2005), Michaels, O'Connor, and Resnick (2008), and others, and offered some initial background information about the approach.

From the first day of school, Barbara had established an expectation that each speaker in a discussion would stand up to speak, move to the edge of the group, and wait for all eyes to focus on him or her before speaking. After contributing one comment, the

speaker would sit down. Barbara added the target sentence stems to existing norms for participation in her class and told the students that when they wanted to "join the conversation," they would need to use one of the following "Ways to Enter the Conversation" presented on an anchor chart:

- I agree because _____.
- I disagree because _____.
- I also noticed _____.
- I'd like to add _____.
- What you said made me think about _____.
- I have a question: _____.

To give students some practice using the sentence stems, Barbara had the students engage in a debate about whether "Silly Bands" (stretchy bracelets played with by many students) should be banned. She involved herself in the discussion, explicitly modeling use of a sentence stem, and directed students to phrase their contributions using the stems provided. The conversation that unfolded thoroughly explored the topic of a Silly Band ban, but was somewhat awkward and halting, as might have been expected in a first attempt at using a new participation structure.

TOWARD DIALOGIC READING INSTRUCTION: OPENING THE FLOOR

In the first few PD sessions, Barbara observed that she tended to close down opportunities for her students to participate, both in whole class and small group settings, and particularly when she was working with students who struggled with reading. After an early session, she wrote:

> Today we began looking at the discussions I had with my guided reading groups, and it became clear that the responses from my first group of students [lower-achieving readers] were less detailed than those of the second group. I began wondering if this has something to do with the way I interact with the first group…do I give them enough time to share (allowing for pauses for thinking, etc.) or in an attempt to keep them on task do I push them along before they have an opportunity to show their deeper thinking?

Implementing the new talk stems and inquiring into how talk was changing helped Barbara open the floor more for student voices. Over the course of several weeks, Barbara continued to use the anchor chart to guide student participation in discussions of texts and to remind students to be "accountable to one another." She defined this accountability as listening to the speaker, not talking over the speaker, and joining the conversation by using the sentence stems to build on the contributions of prior speakers, with an emphasis on the I agree/ I disagree stems. For the first few weeks working with the approach she called "accountable talk" with the students (though we had explored only some initial, practical ideas about Accountable Talk), Barbara led discussions by explicitly prompting students to use the sentence stems and to name the person with whom they were agreeing or disagreeing.

The changes in Barbara's talk pattern and in the participation structure of the classroom clearly impacted student discourse patterns. The students began to use the sentence stems, particularly the I agree/I disagree stem. At first, students' use of these stems felt robotic, and the pace of discussion slowed. Gradually, the students became more comfortable with the talk moves and participated more frequently and enthusiastically, building on one another's comments and offering more elaborated contributions (often involving textual evidence or explanations of their reasoning).

We were especially excited when the members of Barbara's guided reading group of struggling readers (reading between two and four levels below their chronological grade level) began to stand up and participate in whole class text discussions.

These students also participated more in their small group discussions. For example, Barbara explained: "Felipe is just on fire. Like, he wants to talk constantly in that group now. He's just, 'I want to talk about this, let me share about this; this reminds me of.' You know?" As we compared discussion videos from early and late in the semester, Barbara noticed that in the beginning, "I asked a question, I took an answer, and I kind of took one from one kid and then asked another question and then took one from one kid kind of a thing, and in a later lesson it's much more a dialogue."

Over the course of the semester, Barbara shifted her role in discussion, supported by student use of the target sentence stems and motivated by her observation that she was taking the vast majority of talk turns in discussions. Gradually, she began to downplay her role by asking each speaker to select the next speaker (rather than selecting speakers herself), and even by physically removing herself from the discussion. She described such an instance during a PD session.

Dot:	Do you feel like they're engaging with each other rather than [directing their comments to you (the teacher)]?
Barbara:	Yes, and in fact, the other day I tried– I said I'm going to– I pulled myself way out of the thing and I said, "Your job now is you're going to share your thought and as soon as you're done, kids are going to raise their hand and you are going to call on somebody and that kid is going to pop up and they're going to talk and then that person is going to call on the next person who is going to participate," and I just completely removed myself from it and the conversation just happened.
Dot:	Where did you position yourself in the room?
Barbara:	I was still at the front area there, but a lot of kids came up. I had kids standing right in front of me [with their backs to me], but I pulled my chair all the way back to the wall and kind of into that corner and I did very obvious body language. You know, I crossed my legs and I kind of leaned back so that they knew that I was not, and I had kids stand in front of me and they took it and they had a great conversation.

By handing control over who would speak to the students, Barbara positioned herself as an observer of the discussion, rather than the leader or facilitator, and thus opened up empowered positionings (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) for her students. She made it possible for students to see themselves as independent (or interdependent) contributors to conversation, rather than as dependent on the teacher. The combination of supported inquiry and a practical talk tool (semi-scripted sentence stems) selected in response to her concerns about a lack of coherence across student contributions helped Barbara think differently about opening up the floor for student voices and adjust her practice to make it happen. These were strides toward a more dialogic stance and more dialogic instruction.

TOWARD DIALOGIC READING INSTRUCTION: CONTINGENT RESPONDING

Introduction of the sentence stems and ongoing inquiry into changing classroom talk patterns also helped Barbara move toward more contingent responding to student contributions, an important feature of dialogic teaching. Incorporating the sentence stems into her teaching set Barbara up to replace evaluations and series of display

questions with responses that encouraged the group as a whole to continue exploring, elaborating on, and connecting ideas. She frequently invited students to agree or disagree with classmates as a means of building ideas together.

Approximately two weeks into their work with the talk stems, the students discussed an untitled short story about a girl who has to decide whether to attend a party hosted by a "popular" classmate or go to the movies with her best friend (who is not invited to the party) as she does every weekend. Barbara initiated with an open-ended question (see Transcript 1). Transcript 1 (See Appendix A for transcription symbols.)

1. Barbara:	What should the title of this story be? And I want to know what the text	support <gesturing fist into open hand on "text" and "support"> that you have for that. If you got to title this story right now, what would it be and why:? Ryan, what would you title this story?
2. Ryan:	*<Stands up and moves to edge of carpet. Waits for students to face him before speaking. All subsequent student speakers also stand, move to the edge of the carpet, and wait for students to face them before speaking. Each speaker remains standing for the rest of the conversation.>* I would probably title it "Best Friends" because	uh she didn't go to the party and she stayed with her best friend cause it said in the story that she were– she was best friends with her
3. Barbara:	So you're using text evidence. She didn't go to the party, the story tells us that, because she chose to stay with her best friend– . . . Okay, what do you guys think? "Best Friends"? Decent title? Why or why not? Would you add on? Would you change it? What would you do Billy?

In turn 3, Barbara revoiced Ryan's contribution and encouraged his classmates to build on what he said, "opening up the scope of the conversation and eliciting divergent responses" (Boyd & Galda, 2011, p. 18), which is an important function of contingent questioning. After Ryan offered his initial response to Barbara's question, six more students participated in the discussion and all of them explicitly linked their comments to those of other students. Two students linked by agreeing with the previous comment (turns 7 and 23); three linked by disagreeing (turns 13, 21, and 27), and one student linked by articulating how a previous student's comment made her think differently (turn 47). Barbara was heavily involved in this discussion, taking 21 of the 47 turns of talk (as she had not yet begun to position herself outside of discussions). She explicitly prompted two students to "agree or disagree" with comments made by others (turns 12 and 20), a move she made regularly after introducing the sentence stems. In turn 22, Barbara asked, "Who would like to join the conversation?" This question, which she had not used prior to the implementation of the sentence stems, became a "go to" prompt in discussions organized around the stems. It implicitly asks students to agree, disagree, or otherwise build on prior student contributions using the stems. Even though most class discussions began with questions from the teacher, Barbara's responses to students communicated a sense that the students were engaged in conversation and thinking with one another, rather than in performing correct answers for the teacher.

Prompting students to use the sentence stems served as a straightforward practical talk tool for Barbara. Using this tool, she posed questions that were more contingent on student contributions and opened up ideas for further exploration, particularly by the group as a whole, which signaled a move toward more dialogic practice. At the same time, the prompts were generic and somewhat scripted (drawing from the semi-scripted sentence stems). Barbara could ask students to agree with, disagree with, or

build on nearly any contribution, regardless of its content. While she was responding in the moment, the decision to prompt students to use the talk stems was made before discussions began. In these ways, teacher responses driven by the sentence stems did not fully embody contingent questioning as presented by Boyd and Galda (2011). These scholars describe contingent questioning as unscripted and explain that effective teachers "anchor the questioning scaffolds in student contributions and provide necessary support within the questions they ask" (p. 18). Barbara's generic prompts to use the stems encouraged coherence and exploration, but did not provide the kind of substantive support connecting academic knowledge and experiential knowledge that Boyd and Galda seem to have in mind. Later in the semester, other shifts in Barbara's thinking (described in the next section) supported her movement toward more substantive contingent questioning.

The ongoing PD sessions offered Barbara opportunities to observe, analyze, and rethink her responses to students, and thus to adjust her stance. As the semester progressed, she began to consider engaging in more extended interchanges with individual students to help them develop their own ideas before asking others to weigh in. For example, after viewing an interaction with Derek about how readers use metacognition, Barbara and I had the following exchange:

Barbara:	I wish – can I do an I wish?
Dot:	Yeah, great, yeah.
Barbara:	I wish that I would've taken them a little bit farther right there. I had an opportunity to really discuss that.
Dot:	Okay.
Barbara:	And it flew right by me.
Dot:	If you, so he just said that, what would you say?
Barbara:	I would've said why do you think that's important? Why is it important that we think about the things we're thinking about?

After this conversation, Barbara began to try out posing more follow-up questions to individual students, yielding lengthier exchanges typically designed to help a student reason toward the text inference Barbara had in mind.

The next section highlights some of the thinking work Barbara did in PD sessions. Analyzing class discussions reframed her perspective on student contributions and the value of students' experiential knowledge. These developments set Barbara up for continued growth in the area of contingent responding by making it possible for her to pose more substantive questions that help students build bridges between existing knowledge and new learning.

TOWARD DIALOGIC READING INSTRUCTION: YIELDING INTERPRETIVE AUTHORITY

Through her participation in this inquiry, Barbara made important advances in her thinking about "correct" answers and interpretations. She began to consider yielding interpretive authority to her students, which represents an increasingly dialogic stance. Toward the beginning of the semester, Barbara actively funneled each discussion toward a predetermined conclusion, even as she invited students to participate more fully. In the PD context, she regularly referred to students as "getting it" or "not getting it" and referred to right and wrong answers as inference and interpretation questions. Barbara's emphasis on "right" answers was understandable, given the larger social and political context. Glenwood Elementary had struggled to meet Adequate Yearly Progress goals specified by NCLB for the previous four years and was situated in a district facing severe budget cuts and teacher layoffs. These factors intensify the pressure on teachers to produce strong scores on standardized state tests. Further, the administration at Glenwood expects teachers to use a packaged core reading program.

During the year of data collection, Barbara and another fifth-grade teacher decided to clandestinely abandon the core program in favor of designing instruction with authentic texts around the strengths and needs of their students. These teachers took this risk out of a commitment to serving their students and promoting lifelong reading. However, the specter of the state reading test, with its particular (narrow) message about what counts as knowledge and comprehension, still loomed. In this context, students did articulate, challenge, and defend multiple positions about texts in class discussions, but in the end, Barbara used coaching moves and sustained challenges to unconventional interpretations to guide the class toward the conventional interpretations likely to be valued on standardized tests.

A particularly clear example of this pattern emerged in a discussion with a small group of boys identified as struggling readers (see Transcript 2). The boys were reading Stone Fox (Gardiner, 1980), rather than the leveled texts associated with the tier 2 intervention program, which one student had described sarcastically as being about "The chicken crossed the road. Yay!" In this discussion, Barbara somewhat forcefully steered the boys away from their unconventional interpretations of why a stranger might be standing on Willy and his grandfather's porch when Willy returns home one day. (It turns out that the man is a state official there to demand payment on an overdue tax bill, which puts the protagonists in danger of losing their farm, setting up the key problem of the novel.) At this point in the story, the author has shared that Willy's grandfather is ill and that they are low on money. The students became attached to the idea that the stranger was a robber. While Barbara did open the floor for students to voice their opinions during this exchange and did press some students to use the sentence stems to link their ideas together, provide both background knowledge, and offer text evidence to support their claims, she also mounted a sustained challenge against the unconventional interpretation that the stranger was a robber.

TRANSCRIPT 2

21 Barbara:	No. We know this guy is on the front porch and what we know about robbers is they're usually pretty sneaky guys.
22 Ryan:	Mm-hmm.
23 Barbara:	They don't hang out on the front porch, right? . . . They hang out, they're sneaky. But this guy's obviously– he's tapping his foot, which tells us he's what? Cody?
24 Cody:	Um | uh | not a robber or something? Or not a very smart robber.
25 Fred:	<*giggles*>
26 Barbara:	. . . Okay, are we thinking he's a robber at all?
27 Cody:	Kinda.
28 Fred:	Yes. Could be.
29 Barbara:	Okay.
30 Cody:	'Cause he's–
31 Barbara:	. . . Okay, are we thinking he's a robber at all? But here is– I'm going to ask you guys to hang on a minute. | What do you know about robbers? Joaquin, what do you know about robbers? And want everybody sitting up and I want everybody–
32 Joaquin:	Sometimes there's–
33 Barbara:	listening to Joaquin because if you're going to join this conversation – shut your book, put your book marker where it's supposed to be . . . put it so it's not distracting you. Joaquin, what do you know about robbers?
34 Joaquin:	I think that that robbers are sneaky and they don't, they lie a lot.
35 Barbara:	In your schema of robbers, would there be a robber standing on your front porch waiting for you?

36 Joaquin: Could, because sometimes robber always be sneaky and then pretend they're take– like, like pretend they're like like taking care of the house, but they're not, they're just going to steal maybe stuff or um...

Barbara was frustrated by the way this discussion unfolded, and we spent considerable time examining it. Before we viewed the video, she explained, "I was just spinning my wheels trying to figure out how to get them to come to the conclusion that it wasn't a robber." We discussed the challenge of finding a balance between letting a discussion "spiral" and "reining it in," and I offered the possibility of having a conversation "where the kids are like, 'It's a robber;' they are really convinced it's a robber, [and] we just move on." The focus of our analysis as we watched the video and examined a rough transcript I had made was to track propositions about the text.

We identified the claim each student was making about the text and the ways subsequent comments related to that claim (i.e., challenge, support, extend, or offer a new proposition). Whereas we started the semester by focusing analytical attention on types of questions, patterns of participation, and student engagement before and after introducing the talk stems, and on whether students were using the stems, here we delved deeply into the substance of student contributions. Using the more straightforward talk stems as a focal point of analysis in earlier sessions had served as a scaffold for Barbara, and she was ready to explore more nuanced aspects of classroom talk.

As we viewed the portion transcribed above, at turn 36, after Joaquin started his contribution with, "Could," I suggested: "I mean there could [conceivably be a robber waiting on your porch for you]." Barbara's response indicated an important shift in her thinking.

Barbara: You know what? Yeah. **This is a classic case of me trying to give them the answer I want and I'm not hearing enough of what they're saying.**

Dot: Why do you think--because I think of you as someone who listens to—them-- why was it harder? I'm assuming it was harder right now to hear their ideas.

Barbara: It was harder during this time?

Dot: Yeah, I mean, it's not your M.O. not to listen to them, you know what I mean? But it sounds like from what you said, you had this idea and it was hard to hear what they were saying. Do you know what made that harder?

Barbara: I think, I mean, I thought that this was going to be a quick, easy question, we were going to get reading, and I realized that it was hijacking our reading time.

Dot: Yeah.

Barbara: And I think in my mind I was just like go, go, go, and I was like, no, it's not a darn robber, and I just wanted someone to say, no, it's not a robber because I'm already waiting on your porch. So, **I had this idea and I was married to it, and I mean listening back to it now, they aren't, I mean the fact that it's a robber is off base, but they aren't terribly off base with what Joaquin just said.** He's like maybe or could be that a robber would be waiting and **I guess that's true**, you know?

In this exchange, Barbara was challenging her own practices and assumptions. I aimed to simultaneously introduce alternative perspectives and co-construct a safe environment for risk taking by honoring Barbara's strengths and her perspectives.

Barbara's use of the phrase "classic case" signals that she was identifying an important pattern in her own discourse.

As her inquiry into classroom discourse processes progressed, Barbara became more aware of the tension between opening up the discourse to multiple interpretations of texts and preparing students to succeed on tests that posit one "correct" interpretation. She began to consider the ways her attachment to conventional interpretations positioned her as powerful and as holding authoritative knowledge, thus positioning her students as less powerful and less knowledgeable (Aukerman, 2006; Berry, 1981). Barbara started to recognize that although students were speaking up more often and arguably more thoughtfully in discussion, her efforts to steer them toward predetermined interpretations closed down opportunities for dialogue. By spending substantial time each week carefully analyzing video recordings of classroom conversations, Barbara came to listen differently to her students and to consider the logic informing their unconventional interpretations.

The conversation about chapter 4 of *Stone Fox* continued for several minutes after the excerpt transcribed above, and we carefully examined all of it in the PD setting. After reading some of the chapter, the students realized the man on the porch is not a robber. He introduces himself as "Clifford Snyder, State of Wyoming" and says he is there on "official business." The boys offered multiple unconventional interpretations of the phrase "official business," largely centered on the idea that Clifford Snyder was there to help Willy and his grandfather with their financial difficulties. Barbara paused the video at this point.

Dot:	What are you thinking?
Barbara:	Maybe they just don't . . . have that schema of foreclosure and people take your– I mean, I wonder how many of these kiddos have families that own homes or how many of them rent. I wonder how many of them hear parents talking about mortgage payments, you know what I mean? Like, I don't know. They may have zero schema on this idea that when you don't pay your bills, taxman comes out and gets you. You know?
Dot:	Right. It seems like with that in mind, they make some good attempts . . . because it's also like when you don't have any money, social services sometimes comes out to help you.
Barbara:	Exactly. See, I didn't even think about that.
Dot:	It's hard– I mean, what we're kind of getting to is like how do we as readers know which parts of our schema are relevant?

Over the last few sessions, Barbara increasingly critiqued her own discourse moves when she realized that she was insisting on one way of thinking about a text. She looked for windows into students' thinking and began to give students the "benefit of the doubt" more frequently, yielding interpretive authority to them, a change powered by deeper, more focused listening. The fact that through the PD process Barbara devoted attention to deeply listening to student contributions and trying to understand their unconventional interpretations implies that she traveled some distance down the road toward a place where what counts as knowledge is "negotiated between student and teacher" (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995, p. 452). This kind of listening opens up the possibility of offering more scaffolding, content-rich, contingent responses that help students build bridges not only across ideas in a discussion, but from prior knowledge to new knowledge. The changes in Barbara's stance toward student knowledge and listening represent important steps toward truly dialogic instruction. Only by recognizing hers as one of many potentially valid interpretations and by investigating

how the knowledge students (and teacher) bring with them from the various spaces in which they live inform their interpretations of texts can a teacher hope to create a social space where each participant's ideas are available and open to challenge and change. This shift toward a more dialogic stance, made possible by the combination of teacher-driven inquiry and the support of accessible semi-scripted talk tools, may be the most important outcome of our study.

DISCUSSION

Descriptions of teachers engaging in model dialogic teaching practices, such as those offered by Boyd and Markarian (2011), Boyd and Galda (2011), Aukerman, Chambers Shuldt, and Moore Johnson (2011), and others, are highly valuable to teachers and teacher educators. This article adds to such descriptions by outlining one possible pathway by which teachers and teacher educators might move from monologic toward dialogic practices and stances.

In the context of teacher-driven inquiry, with the support of practical talk tools selected to address a teacher-identified problem with classroom talk, Barbara made strides toward more dialogic practices and a more dialogic instructional stance by opening up the floor for student voices, offering more contingent responses to student contributions, listening more carefully to student ideas, and beginning to yield interpretive authority to students, even when they offered unconventional interpretations. Some readers may be concerned about the ramifications of yielding interpretive authority to students and allowing students to pursue unconventional interpretations of texts, such as aimless discussions and "inaccurate" text comprehension.

Aukerman (2008) argues that when teachers step out of evaluative roles and allow students to explore non-standard interpretations, students can come to view reading as a process of making meaning, grappling with ideas, and making decisions with texts—processes that are more cognitively demanding than accurate recall. Over time, as students engage in authentic dialogue about texts and struggle together to make meaning, they will challenge one another to make defensible, if not conventional, interpretations. Dialogic text discussions are not "anything goes" affairs; they are academically rigorous experiences with the potential to help students investigate texts closely and critically.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While developing thoughtful, critical readers in schools depends in large part on helping teachers transition from primarily monologic toward more dialogic reading instruction, and doing so is a significant challenge in an instructional context dominated by pre-packaged curricula, Barbara's experience is encouraging. Her strides toward more dialogic reading instruction were facilitated by two key supports in the PD process: a safe context for inquiry and concrete, practical talk tools offered in response to her interests and concerns. Practical tools for inquiry, such as videos and transcripts, and conceptual tools for inquiry, such as coaching about potential questions to ask of videos (e.g., How is knowledge being located in this segment of discussion? How is the speaker positioning self and others?), gave Barbara a new window into classroom talk. Through that window, she was able to examine the gulf between her intended and enacted talk practices (Cazden, 2001). Taking a dialogic approach toward the PD process itself created the space for me to offer a set of practical talk tools in direct response to the problem Barbara wanted to address. We believe that this responsiveness drove the success of our PD process and made it possible to address both Barbara's practice and her stance.

There is nothing magical about the particular set of talk stems introduced in this study or the idea of using student talk stems at all. The findings presented here suggest that

when offered in response to teacher-identified concerns and in the context of ongoing, supported analysis of talk, any of a range of practical talk tools could be helpful. For example, in response to a teacher concern that students seemed to be trying to guess what answer the teacher is looking for, rather than really thinking about the text, a teacher educator might suggest a focus on authentic questions (Nystrand, 1997). If a teacher observed that students tended to contribute ideas "off the tops of their heads" without much thought, a teacher educator might suggest posing high press follow-up questions (McElhone, 2013, 2012) that ask students for clarification, elaboration, evidence, or examples. Such questions prompt students to think further about their own ideas. Our professional development experience suggests that teacher educators striving to respond to teacher concerns with relevant practical tools may be most successful when they take a pragmatic, eclectic stance (Morgan, 2007) toward the range of available approaches, drawing on those that meet specific teacher needs, rather than holding allegiance to a particular approach.

Part of what made the PD process outlined in this study effective was that it helped the teacher move beyond initial implementation of practical tools and into critique and reflection so that she could come to own her practice in a new way. When teacher educators can offer a practical approach directly tied to the local classroom context and to the issues a teacher is motivated to address, they increase the likelihood that teachers will implement it in the short term. However, for a PD experience to yield lasting changes to both practice and instructional stance, the process must be iterative and reflective (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). The findings presented here suggest that practical tools may be most effectively framed as problem solving tools and also as scaffolds toward unscripted, fluid text discussions. The history of "role sheets" in the Literature Circles (Daniels, 2002) discussion framework can serve as a relevant cautionary tale for teacher educators. Daniels intended the role sheets to be temporary scaffolds to help students and teachers get started discussing literature. Students completed these pre-designed activities prior to attending small group discussions. Their efforts to select favorite passages or depict parts of the story were meant to be springboards toward fluid discussion for the first few sessions. In many classrooms, teachers kept the role sheets in place all year and students simply took turns reporting on their work, rather than engaging in dialogue about their reading. Many of these teachers may have learned about the practical tool (role sheets) without engaging in the kind of ongoing critique and reflection that made the PD process in this study so effective.

The fact that Barbara made substantial shifts in her instructional stance over the course of one semester indicates that stance can be malleable and suggests that teacher educators should consider countering the current administrative emphasis on checklists, scripts, and instructional recipes (Jaeger, 2006) by foregrounding instructional stance in their courses and PD. At its heart, a dialogic instructional stance is about listening: listening to what students are saying and to what they are not saying, ferreting out the valid thinking in what may seem like confusion or error. Our experience signals that teacher educators should consider making it a priority to help teacher candidates develop a dialogic stance that rests on this kind of listening. At the same time, as O'Connor and Michaels (2007) point out, "It is easy to claim an ideological affinity with Dialogic discourse [stance], but it is more difficult to understand how to enact this stance in one's classroom talk and interaction" (p. 277). If all we had attended to in our PD sessions were stance and beliefs, Barbara could have walked away from the experience with a new perspective, but without new practical tools to *make change happen* in her classroom. Effective teacher education around text discussion strives to develop adaptive expertise (Hatano & Inagaki, 1986), the ability to implement key practices while simultaneously understanding, navigating, and solving novel problems.

The positive results of this study suggest that offering teachers a focused, supportive context where they can take the risk to examine the discussions gone haywire, to consider that the way they have always interpreted the text may not be the only right way, where they can venture out on the tightrope between monologic and dialogic practice knowing there is a net underneath them, is necessary if they are going to integrate stance and practice. Readers may wonder how this kind of intensive, individualized PD can be scaled up. Clearly, it is not possible to engage in this process with every teacher, but that does not negate the value of such efforts.

Like teachers, teacher educators can fall into the trap of valuing efficiency over effectiveness (Boyd & Galda, 2011). Whereas the efficient line of attack might be to present a set of talk moves or an approach to a school staff, taking the time to let individual teachers explore ideas about text talk and crafting practical suggestions targeted to their own needs may be more effective. Such experiences can plant seeds that take root not only in participants' own classrooms, but also across entire schools and beyond. In our case, Glenwood Elementary as a whole was affected by Barbara's efforts. Colleagues and administrators took notice of the way her students were developing ideas through talk together in reading, other content areas, and even on the playground. Several teachers chose to observe Barbara's class and asked her to share what she was learning. The school site council adopted a talk-focused annual school improvement goal in direct response to Barbara's work. In the year following our study, a middle school teacher was so impressed by the way Barbara's former students engaged in discussion that she emailed to find out about Barbara's approach. Encouraging the teacher to use her own questions to steer our PD experience and waiting to select focal practical talk tools until she had identified a problem she wanted to solve enabled our work to impact Barbara's practice, her stance, and her school community. Our experience suggests that prioritizing effectiveness over efficiency, taking the risk to invest a great deal in one teacher, may yield positive outcomes at a surprising scale. ∎

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