"They Reflect Back What's Important to Us" Working with P-12 Partners to Redesign Teacher Preparation

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ABSTRACT: Using the tools of autoethnography, this paper revisits our efforts as program leaders to collaborate with PK-12 partners in the redesign of our university-based teacher education programs. The PK-12 Advisory Group met quarterly to guide and advise our faculty redesign team. Through dialogue, they expanded our understanding of what new teachers need to know and be able to do. In short, they helped us see our work through fresh eyes and reflected back to us those things we held as most important. Through our collective work, we are better able to realize our goal of an innovative and clinically-rich program that is deeply committed to social justice and equity in schools.

PDS ESSENTIAL #7: A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection and collaboration.

The room filled with laughter and anticipation as area teachers and administrators grabbed dinner and greeted one another. This group had gathered to help redesign our university-based teacher education programs. As everyone settled in, the faculty member leading the initiative brought everyone's attention to the opening PowerPoint slide. Projected at the front of the room was a simple question: "What are you looking for in a new hire?" The room burst into conversation. Not only did the group talk about ideas like content knowledge and effective instructional routines, they also raised the importance of fostering respectful relationships with students and their families; addressing students' ever-growing social-emotional needs; and building equitable and safe classroom cultures.

Suddenly, the question was not so simple. Our goal was to ask the honest question, to invite others to help us build a relevant program—one that would prepare them for the work that actually lay ahead, not the work that we imagined as former classroom teachers. We did not want to make assumptions about what today's PK-12 school administrators or teachers cared about, what they dealt with, and what challenges prospective teachers would face. Still, it was clear we were not completely prepared for the answers.

Over the next three years, the PK-12 Advisory Group met quarterly to guide and advise our faculty redesign team. Through structured feedback sessions, they gave critical and timely input on our emerging plans. Through dialogue, they expanded our understanding of what new teachers need to know and be able to do. In short, they helped us see our work through fresh eyes and reflected back to us those things we held as most important.

Leading Change: Redesigning Teacher Preparation

Using the tools of autoethnography, this paper revisits our efforts—as program leaders—to collaborate with PK-12 partners in the design of new university-based, undergraduate education programs. One of us (Danielle Ligocki) served as the faculty lead during the four-year redesign process. Another (Patricia Bills) was hired and transitioned to the role of elementary education coordinator, while the third (Cynthia Carver) served as a department chair during that same time period.

Conceptualizing a new teacher preparation program is complicated and nuanced work. There are teacher preparation standards, accreditation standards, and university policies to consider, as well as the needs of surrounding school districts and the children they serve. From the beginning, we knew that our traditional model of individual courses with loose connections to the field needed to go. Our aim was to create a curriculum that was situated in a deep and meaningful commitment to social justice and equity (e.g., Emdin, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014; Love, 2019; Milner, 2015), as well as the authentic practice of teaching (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, 2018; Grossman et al., 2009).

Relatedly, we knew this new curriculum demanded supervised and embedded clinical experiences that linked directly to courses and rested on a reciprocal relationship with our PK-12 partners (e.g., AACTE, 2018; Burns & Badiali, 2018; Burns, Jacobs & Yendol-Hoppey, 2016). We further hoped that this new curriculum would provide candidates with a coherent learning experience, beginning with their first class and

extending through their internship (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust & Shulman, 2005; Hammerness, 2006). As summarized in an early text written to guide our program redesign, "teacher candidates [will] experience authentic, practice-based learning opportunities that are coherent and scaffolded within the contexts of well-aligned coursework and fieldwork in collaboration with all stakeholders."

To ensure the emerging structure and curriculum of our new program was relevant, we reached out to local stakeholders for help. The PK-12 Advisory Group was formed in 2017 with the goal of meeting three times annually to offer feedback on the developing program, and to also nurture reciprocal partnerships as a mechanism for meeting continuous improvement goals (CAEP, nd). With the ultimate aim of positively influencing children's learning and development in surrounding districts, the Advisory Group has proven pivotal to the redesign of our program. Through our collective work, we are better able to realize our goal of an innovative and clinically-rich program that is deeply committed to social justice and equity in schools. Our further hope, through this redesign, is that schooling will become more democratic, participatory, and inclusive for the children, families, and communities we serve.

Reflecting back on the first three years of the PK-12 Advisory Group and our ambitious goals for this work, we wondered how our leadership words and actions may have influenced redesign outcomes, but also how the three of us—as leaders—were shaped by this experience. This wondering became the impetus for this paper, which tells the story of what we learned about ourselves, our work, and our commitments by looking back at the agendas, discussions, and decision-making that resulted from three years of PK-12 Advisory Group meetings. Ultimately, we are hopeful this process of looking back will positively impact how we, as leaders, transition from program planning to program implementation, and how we continue to strengthen our partnerships with PK-12 stakeholders.

Using Autoethnography to Look Back in Time

We used an autoethnographic approach to inform our inquiry of PK-12 advisory data collected during the program redesign process (Behar, 1996; Finlay, 2002; Reed-Danahay, 2009; Wall, 2006). In particular, our inquiry has been reflexive in nature (Finlay, 2002; Reed-Danahay, 2009), in that we sought a clearer understanding of the PK-12 Advisory's role in our program redesign, and in our own process of personal and professional change. Specifically, we draw upon our personal experiences to develop a greater understanding of what we learned during this inquiry, as leaders of the redesign effort, to inform our future work. Autoethnography allows us to step out of our roles as leader-insiders—if only briefly—to look at our work through data (e.g., notes, meeting minutes, and outcomes) as researchers (Finlay, 2002; Reed-Danahay, 2009; Wall, 2016). The questions we explore in this paper are: (a) How did our words and actions as program leaders influence the outcomes of the elementary program redesign? and (b) How were we, as change leaders, shaped by the experience of working with the PK-12 Advisory?

Notably, our interest grows beyond understanding our roles in the redesign process, to also understanding our relationships to the work and to those who informed the outcome of the new program revision. We thus use autoethnography as our method and as our theoretical framework for looking at these relationships. As Reed-Danahay (2009) reminds us, "our scholarly production takes place in the context of particular social fields within which we operate as social actors" (p. 32). To that end, we next identify our roles as "social actors" in the context of this study. We continue with a description of the program, data sources, and approach to analysis.

Authors' Positionality

While an autoethnographer works toward objectivity in the analysis, she must also be responsible to those with whom she works, and how her particular personal and professional history plays a role in the work (e.g., data collection) and the interpretation of the data (Finlay, 2002; Reed-Danahay, 2009; Wall, 2016). In this piece, we write as social scientists and education researchers, and we also write as education leaders with different histories. We acknowledge that our positionality to this work shaped both how the work proceeded, as well as our interpretation of that work.

Danielle Ligocki, Faculty Lead for Redesign Effort. Prior to her time in higher education, Danielle spent 11 years teaching junior high school, with 8 of those years in a high-needs school. It was at this school that Danielle developed her commitment to social justice and equity in education, and it was also there that she realized how deeply embedded inequities are in the public school system. Because of these experiences, Dr. Ligocki entered the teacher preparation program with a commitment to preparing transformative educators who would be ready to make change in their future classrooms and school systems. Being a first-generation college student herself, Danielle deeply identifies with the struggles her junior high students faced, as well as the experiences of her current undergraduate students. With this in mind, Dr. Ligocki sees the need for strong school-university partnerships in order to better support the needs of both PK-12 and university students.

Patricia Bills, Elementary Program Coordinator. Patti's authorship in this paper is from the stance of the Elementary Program Coordinator in the teacher education program highlighted in this paper. Dr. Bills writes through her current leadership role, but also through her experience as a former elementary teacher who spent 13 years teaching in underserved communities, both rural and urban, with students in poverty and from historically marginalized populations. Patti has mentored new teachers, conducted teacher education development and research for over 15 years, and has researched several issues central to a socially-just approach to developing future teachers. As a White, cisgender, queer-identified person and teacher educator, Patti

has devoted her professional and personal life to developing inclusive spaces for all children, teachers, and teacher educators. Dr. Bills brings these perspectives to her current work in elementary teacher education programming and policy.

Cynthia Carver, Department Chair. Dr. Cynthia Carver, a White cisgender female, has worked in multiple teacher preparation programs over the past two decades. Today, Cynthia serves as chair of a department that staffs five unique initial certification programs. Across her career, Dr. Carver has made a point of remaining closely connected to area schools and especially teachers. Cynthia has taught classes in area schools, supervised interns, coordinated field sites, and served as the university's first Scholar in Residence with a local elementary school. The PK-12 Advisory meetings thus presented an opportunity to network with local teachers and administrators, thereby informing the vision Dr. Carver held for the department and its programs. Across her career, Cynthia has gravitated toward working in schools that are under-resourced, but rich in diversity.

PK-12 Advisory: University Faculty, Staff and PK-12 Partners

Our university-based teacher preparation programs, located in an affluent midwestern suburb, enroll roughly 700 students. Nearly 600 of these students are in the undergraduate elementary education program. Like the greater teaching population, our students are predominantly white, middle-class females who not only attended suburban schools, but often take teaching positions in these same schools upon graduation. Although our program was once considered cutting-edge with multiple field placements leading up to student teaching, few changes had been made in the past twenty years. While many faculty members ground their work and teaching in a commitment to social justice, this focus was not explicit in the program's curriculum. Moreover, the vast majority of students reported wanting field experiences in "their own backyard" where they felt most comfortable, limiting their potential for diverse experiences. Through proposed revisions, our aim as program leaders was to create stronger curricular alignment across coursework and field work; engage our partner schools more authentically; and ground the work of equitable and just teaching practices throughout the program. To guide this work, the PK-12 Advisory was formed.

Led by Dr. Ligocki, the Advisory Group consisted of practicing teachers, building principals, central office administrators, and instructional leaders from the surrounding tri-county area, as well as faculty and staff involved in the program redesign. These individuals had a long-standing relationship to the program, or a past working relationship to someone on the redesign team. By year three, the group had grown from fewer than 10 to 38 members. In total, we met eight times from Fall 2017 to Winter 2020 (the Spring 2020 meeting was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic). These meetings were generally two hours long and held in the evenings with a light dinner provided. Meeting topics included the role of the new program in preparing teachers to work with students identified with special needs; in using instructional technology effectively; and in helping candidates make the most of their field experiences. As explained to partners at the outset, the group's dual purpose was to provide input on key features of the proposed program, and to identify potential gaps and missing elements. As program leaders with a long history of working closely in and with schools, we trusted the group to help us design a program that was relevant and responsive to the needs of local schools.

Data Sources and Analysis

Primary data sources for this autoethnographic account come from observation notes taken during roughly 16 hours of Advisory Group meetings, as well as meeting artifacts (e.g., agendas, slide shows, participant-generated materials, and summary reports provided at program planning meetings). This information was filtered through our individual recollections for accuracy and bias, which we discussed at length from our overlapping roles as authors, researchers, and program leaders (Miles et al., 2018). For example, in a discussion about the very first advisory meeting (highlighted above), we first discussed our perspectives as individual participants in that meeting, then came to a consensus about its meaning to our inquiry. This process occurred in layers over the course of ongoing research meetings, where additional notes were developed. Ultimately, we approached this work with a genuine sense of wonder about how our leadership evolved over the course of the three years, how we might use this information to move the work forward, and also to learn about ourselves as reform leaders.

As leaders, our primary interest was to review the data for examples of poignant moments when critical decisions were made or collective insights voiced. We expected to see mounting evidence of shared understandings and commitments, but were there also moments when an interaction or conversation sparked a change in our thinking or redesign plans? We further looked for confirmation that our efforts to co-construct the new program's curriculum were successful. Ultimately, we coded these instances as "critical moments", looking specifically for evidence that either confirmed or shifted our original thinking and plans.

Critical Moments: How Key Events Impacted Redesign Work

Faculty responsible for the redesign process quickly identified authentic engagement with school partners as part of their vision. As noted in an early program document, "with support from a range of professionals, candidates will be provided with multiple, scaffolded opportunities to practice their emerging skills and receive feedback in courses and field settings." The language of "support from a range of professionals" was intentional; faculty knew they needed the skills and expertise

of school and district partners as true collaborators. As reform leaders, it was easy to rally around this vision. A commitment to schools, teachers, and the importance of clinical practice during teacher preparation has animated all of our careers. But were we always in sync with our PK-12 partners? In the sections that follow, we introduce four critical moments that impacted us and the redesign work we were leading: (a) the importance of addressing students' social emotional learning; (b) the value of building respectful relationships and classroom culture; (c) the suggestion to be more intentional in our design of field-based assignments; and (d) the role of hindsight in shaping leaderful actions.

Making Visible Social Emotional Learning Skills, Strategies and Understandings

> *There should be a social-emotional thread pulled through all the courses. This is critical to successful teaching. – Advisory Board Member*

The interest in social emotional learning in PK-12 schooling has grown significantly over the past decade, such that many elementary and even some secondary schools have adopted programs designed to foster social emotional competencies (CASEL, nd). As faculty leaders, we cautiously support these efforts. Done poorly, we worry that social emotional learning (SEL) programs become tools for behavior manipulation, rather than an organic way to help students flourish as human beings by developing the knowledge, skills, and behaviors they need in order to build healthy relationships; navigate their own feelings and emotions; and make responsible decisions. Thus, when our Advisory Group partners shared their perspectives on SEL, we experienced a series of critical moments that proved important to our redesign work.

To illustrate, Advisory Group members repeatedly shared what they saw as a dire need for teachers: development and enactment of the tools and skills necessary to support all aspects of a student's academic, social, and emotional development. Specifically, Advisory Group members confirmed that our new teacher education programs should help prospective teachers cultivate relationships, communicate with parents, mediate conflict, ask peers for help, understand school culture, appreciate differences in socio-economic status, manage their emotions, and balance social emotional learning with continuing instruction. While some of these ideas were not explicit in our redesign efforts, they aligned with the knowledge and skills we felt were important for future teachers, and thus acted as a moment of confirmation.

In addition to confirming our thoughts regarding SEL, PK-12 partners also drew attention to SEL as a priority concern. In one of our early meetings, when prompted to share the issues most affecting them that week, participants spoke at length about the limited availability of school counselors and the impact that has on teachers who need to pick up the slack. Partners then asked what we knew about trauma-informed education – a topic that was coming up more and more in their buildings. They were looking for us to be experts, a resource for their schools. In response to this emergent need, Carver joined the state's Social Emotional Learning Collaborative to learn more about the state's vision for SEL. With their help, she later conducted a descriptive survey on how the state's teacher preparation programs are addressing SEL content (Carver & Corwin, 2021)—information she now uses to inform her work with program faculty. Moreover, as a result of discussions with the Advisory Board, all three of us have become more mindful of the need to address SEL content in coursework, and are more intentional about looking for concrete ways to address SEL competencies across the curriculum.

In a related example, it was a rare meeting where participants did not raise the importance of also addressing children's sense of belonging and agency as members of a classroom community. Partners spoke passionately on behalf of teaching pre-service teachers learning "how to" address cultural differences and attend to the needs of diverse students. Partners asked that candidates be exposed to diverse and different field experiences across the program, and that we include content related to systemic biases in all courses. As a result of these conversations, Dr. Ligocki and Dr. Bills were energized to use their leadership roles to elevate and make more visible themes of diversity, equity, and justice as the new program's course syllabi (from foundations to methods) were drafted and later revised. Moreover, both continue to seek opportunities to work side-by-side with school partners while engaging in this vital work. For example, Dr. Ligocki is currently collaborating with a local middle school teacher and Advisory Board member on a shared research project related to adolescents, reality television, and the need for critical media literacy in PK12 education (Ligocki & Sturgis, 2021).

In sum, as program leaders we were reminded that when PK-12 partners repeatedly put ideas like this front and center (e.g., social-emotional learning; children's sense of agency and belonging), we need to listen carefully. Although we thought we had sufficiently addressed issues of SEL and equity in our new program, our partners wanted extra reassurance that we saw these issues as a priority. Ultimately, the notion that we might be missing an important aspect of teaching in PK-12 schools acted as a critical moment for us as program leaders, prompting us to first learn more, and then to make topics related to SEL and equity more visible in our curriculum, as well as with students, faculty/staff, and school-based mentors.

Building Relationships and Classroom Culture

> *Don't bring personal biases into the classroom.* –Advisory Board Member

As highlighted above, we each felt strongly about designing a program that was explicitly committed to teaching for equity and social justice, even if that focus was more visible to us than

to the Advisory Group. For us, this focus meant drafting curriculum to ensure all pre-service teachers engaged in identity work before entering the classroom (e.g., identifying layers of privilege; naming who you are and what you believe; inspecting your own biases; and working to understand the ways in which schools and classrooms act as mirrors of society). We were missing, however, equal and corresponding attention to the practical application of building respectful relationships and positive classroom cultures.

With specific regard to the new elementary education program, one of our lingering concerns was candidates' observed difficulty building strong relationships with students and their families, especially when working with students who did not look like them. We also knew many struggled to create a welcoming, safe, and equitable classroom culture. Early in our work, Advisory Group members from all kinds of schools—but especially those in racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse settings—shared that pre-service teachers (and even new practicing teachers) often lack the skills necessary to build authentic relationships with their students. These novice teachers frequently bring their own biases into the classroom, and would benefit from explicit instruction in restorative practices and trauma-informed instruction. Other partners mentioned the need for new teachers to learn how to be proactive, rather than reactive, in their use of classroom routines and procedures. Comments like these confirmed our thinking and encouraged us to ensure that core practices such as "building respectful relationships" (MDE, 2020; Teaching-Works, nd) were embedded in coursework that spanned the entire program, rather than one stand-alone class.

Hence, our partners largely confirmed what we already knew regarding helping pre-service teachers develop the skills and dispositions to build relationships with their students, their families, and in their communities. Comments from the Advisory Group, however, also highlighted areas where we had not developed these ideas far enough. While the redesign of the program had planned for the development of relationship-building skills across multiple semesters, it did not fully account for our partners' comments regarding training in the use of restorative justice, or even the very simple idea that all families experience and value education in different ways. Our candidates needed opportunities to skillfully apply what they had learned through coursework. As the faculty lead for our social foundations coursework, Dr. Ligocki found these comments helpful as she led revisions at the course level, including the design of supervised field experiences attached to these same courses. Relatedly, Dr. Bills began thinking about how relationship-building skills could be reinforced in methods courses, including those embedded or taught in local schools. In fact, Dr. Bills is now leading an effort to develop and recruit robust placement sites where students will work in a single building for each of their Junior and Senior years.

In short, the Advisory Group helped us, as program leaders, see the importance of not just introducing our candidates to critical skills, but giving them time to develop and master those same skills in increasingly complex settings over time. The Advisory Group also reminded us of the tremendous resources we have in our partners. Our partners have the pulse of what's happening in schools, and they have access to a multitude of things that we cannot recreate at the university, e.g., real families to interact with, and relevant training programs designed and delivered for practicing teachers. While we are often accustomed to seeing ourselves as the experts, the Advisory Group taught us the importance of humility and the value of looking to our partners as allies and resources.

Assessing the Quality of Course Assignments in Clinical Practice

> *This is a poor example of assessment*. –Advisory Board Member

As a faculty group, sharing our work with the Advisory Group had the potential to evoke high levels of discomfort and vulnerability, as we were looking for critique and feedback on work that we believed was already quite strong. This vulnerability was highlighted during a critical moment that brought to light just how much work our field assignments needed. In the second year of our Advisory Group meetings, we spent one entire meeting talking about course tasks or assignments that directly correlated to the field. Our hope was that these assignments would help pre-service teachers connect what they are learning in the field with what they are learning on campus.

When these assignments were shared in a structured activity with the Advisory Group, however, we received surprising feedback. Partners shared how these assignments felt disconnected from what was happening in the field, suggesting instead that pre-service teachers needed new and different experiences. One assignment was critiqued for simplistic thinking. Another received pushback because students would need far more background knowledge on the context of the classroom and school to complete it successfully. Still another assignment was critiqued for making far too many assumptions about norms of the classroom and the backgrounds and abilities of the students being observed. By the end of the evening, partners were sharing their ideas for new field assignments. We listened, humbled by their feedback, eager for their ideas, and wanting to respond as quickly as possible. In that light, we took the feedback to the larger faculty committee doing the work of program redesign and began further revisions to these assignments, and in some cases, we created completely new assignments that reflected the feedback of the Advisory Group.

While comments such as these were not easy to hear, critical feedback was necessary for us to improve. In this instance, partners did not just confirm our thinking; they shifted it in dramatic fashion. It took some time and elbow grease from each of us, leveraging our differing roles as best we could, but our field-based assignments are now better structured with clearer goals and guidance for mentor teachers. This moment, and the

action that follows, speak to our willingness as leaders to being vulnerable and open to critique. In a university setting, where we are often viewed as the experts, we could have easily discounted this feedback from the Advisory Group, but that would not have aligned with the co-construction and reciprocal relationships we were trying to build and maintain.

The Value of Hindsight

The critical moments described thus far are specific to the Advisory Group meetings, and as such represent direct and immediate insights we took away from those events. Still other critical moments occurred when we looked back at our work holistically and over time as program leaders. One such instance occurred when we started to notice the little things that facilitated the work of the Advisory Board. Another came as we realized our failure to visibly elevate our commitment to diversity and inclusion, and a third resulted from our growing awareness that truly collaborating on the design of a new program was going to take more than a few advisory meetings each year. Ultimately, we discovered how important the Advisory Group was to our redesign work. As Dr. Bills remarked during one of our research meetings: "They reflected back what's important to us."

The Little Things: Participant Numbers, Agendas, Vulnerability. The Advisory Group spent roughly 16 hours together with two primary goals: (1) to give feedback on the redesign of our teacher preparation programs, and (2) to identify gaps and omissions in the new program. As expected, the nature of these meetings and the depth of the partnerships changed and evolved over time. In its first year, ten area teachers and administrators were invited to participate in the PK-12 Advisory Group. These individuals were not only vocal advocates for our program, but represented districts we had worked with for many years. But PK-12 teachers and administrators are busy people: some meetings were well attended and others were not. As a result, university redesign team members consistently outnumbered our PK-12 partners during the meetings. This concerned us, however, as we did not want a perceived power dynamic to negatively influence the open conversations we sought.

As we approached the second year of working with this group, we expanded our membership to be more representative of the region. We looked for individuals from the urban, suburban, and rural districts we served. We were intentional to bring educators of color into the group, as well as more men. We also tried to find a balance between elementary and secondary perspectives, and between teachers and administrators. As a result, we ended up with an expanded Advisory Group that had a range of experience with our program. Some were graduates, but many were not. Some had been mentors, and some only knew of us by reputation. With these new voices, the ratio of partners to faculty members was now two to one. Instantly, the conversation grew richer and more nuanced.

This shift in representation resulted in discussions that were charged, positive, generative, and critical. Not only was this shift in membership intentional, but so was our shift in the critical eye we brought to our goals for each meeting. With this new membership, we were more intentional about centering their voices with structured agendas designed to invite critical feedback. We were careful to always revisit work that was done since the previous meetings so Advisory Group members could see how their feedback was being addressed. Additionally, we brought work to the group that was personal and important, such as when we shared our field assignments.

Looking back, we realized that these intentional actions also required a level of vulnerability we had not anticipated. This led us to believe that it is not enough to simply invite partners to collaborate, but that these partners need to feel safe in the conversational space; that their voices can and should take center stage; the agendas we create need to genuinely ask for critical feedback in a way that is acknowledged and revisited; and that faculty members must show vulnerability if they are looking for partners to provide honest feedback. This level of vulnerability was one that was new for many of us. So often, educators and leaders believe that they must always be calm, in control, and sure of themselves. While this may be true, without a willingness to be vulnerable—to listen with open minds, to recognize when answers weren't always clear to us, or even necessary—the shifts in our thinking and in our approach that occurred over time would not have taken place. While the vulnerability we showed as leaders was uncomfortable at the start, looking back, we realize that our end result would not have been nearly as strong. It was through vulnerability and a willingness to accept critique, learn from it, and use it as a catalyst for change that we ended up with a newly designed program of which we are quite proud.

Missed Opportunities: Where are Social Justice and Equity in the Conversation? All three authors are deeply committed to social justice and equity, and were clear on the need to be explicit in this commitment when redesigning the new program. However, as we look back on the data, it appears that outside of an opening presentation in our first year of work together – where we didn't invite feedback or input – we may be guilty of overlooking this thing we care so deeply about. We see this as a massive missed opportunity.

Upon reflection, it is not entirely clear to us if we assumed that this message was always evident, or if we unintentionally steered away from direct conversation about how these concepts fit into the program. Regardless, the data show a lack of deep engagement around justice-oriented teaching by the Advisory Group. We now ask ourselves: What does it mean for us to move beyond talking about what we believe and putting it into action; to codify practices together as partners in the work of teacher education?

Our beliefs regarding pre-service teachers and their lack of comfort with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion were frequently echoed by the Advisory Group. They reported seeing pre-service teachers who were ill-equipped to deal with children who looked different from themselves. They also mentioned the changing needs of their current students, and the desire to have

novice teachers explicitly instructed in the areas of social-emotional learning, as well as diversity, equity and inclusion. With the redesign of this program, we wanted to ensure that the program was not only clinically rich, but that course work was centered on culturally-relevant teaching and pedagogy—that pre-service teachers understood the need for and commitment to social justice and equity; and that we worked in an intentional way to lead our students out of their comfort zone as a means of becoming transformative educators for all students. As a result, we have now instituted a seminar course that our candidates will take every semester in our program which addresses issues of teaching across difference, meeting the diverse needs of students, and becoming clearer about one's own cultural and linguistic biases and histories.

Reflecting back on this aspect of our work, we recognize that both faculty leaders and K-12 partners must do our own work first. To have substantive, change-making discussions as a group of education professionals means that we have to recognize and begin the process of dismantling the norms of Whiteness that unintentionally drove program design more than two decades ago (Diangelo, 2018; Love, 2019). To that end, we have instituted a number of professional learning opportunities for faculty (full and part-time), school partners, and field-based mentors centered around topics of diversity and inclusion.

Interrogating Co-Construction

As leaders who believe in equity and honoring the voices of those who are in schools on a daily basis, we want to be able to say, without reservation, that this redesign project was one steeped in co-construction. However, true co-construction is more complicated and nuanced than it is written about in the scholarship and promoted by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, nd).

While our efforts with the Advisory Group were successful on many levels, we are hesitant to claim co-construction. "Co" implies an even exchange of ideas, but this is not possible given the inherent power dynamic that exists between university faculty, staff, and PK-12 stakeholders. We hold the power, asking partners for confirmation. Yes, the Advisory Group drew our attention to issues and needs that helped drive our redesign efforts, but the reality is, even though we set out to co-construct, without clearly defined ideas about how to enact a democratic process, there can still be an imbalance as it relates to partnerships. For example, through self-reflection, we discovered that our pattern of interaction was to bring pieces of our program plan to the Advisory Group for feedback, then listen carefully to their recommendations. Yet the design of the program was never in their hands. For example, none of the Advisory Group members joined the team doing redesign work back on campus. This was not going to be their program. They were, simply put, advisors. As teacher educators working in a traditional, predominantly White institution, we recognize the tendency to live and work inside of what has typically been, instead of pushing the inertia toward change with more energy and commitment. Co-construction, as we learned, necessitates a critical consciousness around our collective participation in systems that were not conceived with democratic partnerships in mind (Beck, 2020). Co-construction demands both an acknowledgement of the power dynamics between university-based teacher education programs and P-12 school partners (Beck, 2020). While we all each understood this internally, we did not adequately address it among ourselves or with our Advisory Panel. We now recognize that a democratic process, which necessarily pushes against entrenched systems, takes conscious and deliberate effort from the outset of any similar project. One example of the outcome of the lessons we learned is that we are now establishing a network of educators (e.g., PK-12 administrators, mentor teachers, university faculty) who are learning together about the particularities of supporting novice teachers in their development and enactment of the high-leverage teaching practices and teaching and learning for diversity, equity, and inclusion (Barton et al., 2020)—two hallmark constructs in our new program.

Concluding Thoughts

As faculty leaders, working with the Advisory Group changed us in subtle, yet profound ways. We found multiple examples of critical moments that indicated times the Advisory Group either confirmed or shifted our thinking regarding the redesign of our university-based teacher preparation programs. Some of these instances were immediate and in the context of Advisory Group meetings; others occurred to us much later, following deeper reflection. While we did not approach our Advisory Group meetings with the intention of seeking confirmation, looking back we saw how many of our PK-12 partners' ideas about teaching pre-service teachers aligned with our thinking. Research has shown that there is often a disconnect between university-based thinking about teacher education and the messages pre-services teachers receive in the field (Bain and Moje, 2012; Hammerness, 2006), so it was important to us that we centered the voices of our PK-12 partners in order to design a program built on reciprocal partnerships, rather than contradictory messages from two often siloed sides.

Additionally, there were several meetings where the Advisory Group unearthed aspects of their lived reality which fundamentally shifted our priorities as faculty leaders, thereby highlighting concepts we had thought about, but had not fully implemented in the new program. Recognizing these shifts was vital to the redesign process. If we were truly working towards reciprocal relationships with our partners, we needed to do more than recognize these shifts in thinking, we needed to implement these shifts into the redesign effort.

The Advisory Group taught us a great deal about how to reform the way we currently prepare teachers. We invited and listened to feedback, then were brave enough to hear the feedback and use it to create a stronger program built upon mutuality and interdependence. What matters here is not just that we had a group, or went through the motions of having a

group. Rather, we truly used the group to influence our work over time. We shared updates, invited feedback, and genuinely integrated that feedback into our redesign efforts. As leaders, we learned to step back and let someone else take the lead and we learned that true growth and change comes with the ability to be vulnerable.

The Advisory Group also helped us become better reform leaders. That is, we (Ligocki, Bills, and Carver) each re-focused and deepened our commitment to building different parts of our program. For example, our PK-12 partners steered our attention toward the lived reality and priorities of teachers today. It's no longer enough for teachers to know and teach academic content. Increasingly, as our Advisory Group reminded us, teachers are asked to attend to students' social and emotional health; develop trusting and respectful relationships with students and their families; and advocate on behalf of all students, especially those who have been marginalized. A robust curriculum for learning to teach the whole child must address these new understandings, and their requisite skills. Although this is admittedly a large task, our school partners are expecting us to graduate well-started novices who are prepared to make an impact on day one. With that in mind, as leaders, we each learned how to more carefully use our voices in order to further draw attention to the needs of our PK-12 partners. For example, Dr. Ligocki is now a part of an initiative on campus seeking to eradicate racism in educational spaces and conduct educational sessions on what this looks like in practice. Likewise, Dr. Bills refocused her work toward researching and building the new clinical program with a visible, clear, commitment to democratizing the partnership work by creating a formal network that will involve all stakeholders (e.g., faculty, staff, and P-12 teacher educators) in regular professional co-learning opportunities.

Through the Advisory Group we also learned the value of meeting agendas that moved quickly from reporting out, to structured opportunities for offering feedback. We learned that power dynamics change when the number of PK-12 partners exceeds that of university-based faculty and staff. And we learned how important modeling vulnerability was for fostering trust. Ultimately, we learned how to be better partners in this joint work of teacher preparation. To listen more carefully. To check our assumptions. To welcome critical feedback. To come prepared. To engage as leaders, and also as learners.

The PK-12 Advisory Group meetings became a vital part of our redesign work, from informing the new curriculum, to nurturing relationships with our partners. While at the beginning, meeting with our external stakeholders felt like the "right" thing to do, reviewing the data helped us better understand why. Although the program redesign is complete, we intend to continue our Advisory Group meetings into the indefinite future. There are extrinsic rewards for doing so, from expectations for clinical practice and partnerships, to the co-construction of curriculum and programming as prioritized by national accrediting bodies like CAEP. More importantly, there are intrinsic rewards for continuing these meetings. As an institution that is committed to practice-based teacher preparation and reciprocal partnerships with our PK-12 stakeholders, these meetings will continue to act as a space for collaboration, communication, and ongoing learning. And if we get it right, our students and their future students are sure to benefit. SUP

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