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Teacher education is a key part of the education system. Through recruitment, selection, preservice preparation, and support for experienced teachers, teacher education institutions contribute to the quality of P-12 instruction, and ultimately to student learning. The design and conduct of teacher education is shaped by state and federal policies, by work of P-12 educators, and of course by the faculty and administrators in teacher preparation institutions themselves.

The current practices in teacher preparation have been informed by decades of research on teaching, teachers, curriculum, the contexts of education, and on teacher preparation itself. What prospective teachers learn for teaching particular subjects, for example, has been influenced by decades of research on what knowledge is most important for successful teaching (e.g., Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; McCrory et al., 2012; Shulman, 1986). Likewise, the ways in which pedagogical practices are taught has built on studies...
of “methods” courses and field experiences (Clift & Brady, 2005). Yet much needs to be done to strengthen the research base for teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015).

The emerging field of improvement science holds promise for accelerating the pace by which systematic empirical work indicates directions for addressing persistent problems in teacher education. This volume offers summaries of discussions at a meeting of teacher educators interested in working together to use approaches from improvement science (Bryk, 2015) to advance teacher education in Michigan. Improvement science can accelerate progress by focusing on particular problems of practice and taking advantage of variations in how these problems are being addressed. Networks of practitioners can learn from each other by examining the differences between practices that are most effective and those that are less effective. Network members can develop routines based on effective practices, which can be tried out, again examining variation in success to work towards more and more effective solutions.

In the conference’s keynote address, Anthony Bryk argued that the improvement science approach, which is being widely adopted in P-12 education, can also lead to accelerated improvements in teacher education. Moreover, it is consistent with Standard 5 of the teacher education national accrediting body, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. That standard calls on teacher preparation institutions to support “continuous improvement that is sustained and evidence based.”

Following the keynote, conference participants, drawn from 17 Michigan colleges and universities, met in small groups to begin discussions of what problems of teacher education practice should be starting points for work that would examine the varying approaches the institutions have taken. This volume describes the general problem areas addressed by the groups, then records the ideas that came from these groups about specific problems that might anchor network improvement.

Conference participants appreciated these discussions, but recognized that longer-term collaboration will be needed. The improvement science model calls for repeated cycles of varied practice, examination of outcomes, and revision of practice. Challenges for teacher education include agreeing on focal problems, designing processes for documenting practices intended to solve the problems, setting up systems for measuring outcomes, and maintaining robust network communities over time. The enthusiasm shown by conference participants should be harnessed to meet these challenges. This summary document can serve as one basis for moving forward.
References


Over the last decade, colleges of education have been buffeted by a variety of external forces. In the wake of declining enrollments, changing federal regulations and shifting accreditation standards, many institutions have acknowledged the need for improvement. In Michigan, the national story has, unsurprisingly, had its own distinctive trajectory. As faculty members at one of the largest programs of teacher preparation in the state, employees of a land-grant institution, and researchers who are also teacher educators, Michigan State University (MSU) professors regularly consider how they can best respond to the needs of the state, nation, and globe as the demands of public education have evolved and continue to evolve.

It is in this spirit of continuous improvement that MSU faculty from the Department of Teacher Education came to the idea of organizing the Reimagining Teacher Preparation in Michigan (RITEM) conference. Like most states, Michigan has a wide variety of university-based teacher preparation programs that differ significantly in terms of size, history, areas of focus, as well as geographic location and range of programs. In the past, it has often seemed that teacher education programs were more
Introduction: Samantha Caughlan, Margaret S. Crocco, and Corey Drake

different than similar, with each operating in relative isolation. Increasingly, program leaders have come to realize that with the pressures of accreditation, and as a result of the forces described above, benefits might accrue from conversations across institutions offering certification programs and with stakeholders inside and outside institutions of higher education.

Meetings sponsored by the Michigan Department of Education under the auspices of Directors and Representatives of Teacher Education Programs (DARTEP) and the Michigan Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (MACTE) have brought together representatives of the 33 teacher preparation programs in the state; these meetings have deepened the conviction that many of the challenges to teacher preparation in Michigan have their roots not only in the particular situations of individual institutions but also in the economic, historical, and demographic conditions that influence both P-12 and higher education institutions across the state. We hoped that such conversations would help us learn about what other institutions across the state were doing in response to these challenges. We also hoped that this knowledge would allow us to create collaborative efforts across institutions that would respond to current conditions while still honoring the character and orientation of individual institutions.

In the spirit of accelerating this process of change, the leadership of MSU’s Department of Teacher Education decided to host a working conference in which we invited representatives from each of the teacher preparation programs in the state, along with P-12 school partners and Michigan Department of Education representatives, to come together for a day at MSU that would help us envision the ways in which these communities could help us in “Re-Imagining Teacher Education in Michigan.” Our awareness of the similarities and differences in programmatic responses to common challenges led us to the idea that the development of “networked improvement communities” (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow & LeMahieu, 2015) might support us in collaboratively addressing some of the most persistent and critical of these challenges. We might learn both from our common approaches and, as is suggested in the book that guided the conference’s design, Learning to Improve: How America’s Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow & LeMahieu, 2015), from the variations in our responses to these challenges.

The senior author of this book, Dr. Anthony (Tony) Bryk, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, delivered the keynote address, “Preparing All Teachers to Succeed: An Aspiration in Search of a Method.” Dr. Bryk has worked for a number of years on establishing generative partnerships between university researchers and educational practitioners to solve problems of practice in P-12 schools and higher education institutions (HEIs). He became involved in this work while at the University of Chicago, where he was instrumental in establishing the Consortium on Chicago School Research, a model for both researchers interested in improving how schools function and school personnel looking to make best use of data and research findings. Since moving to Carnegie, Dr. Bryk has continued this work, developing a systematic approach to establishing and implementing networked improvement communities (NIC) that bring together educators from a range of institutions according to principles of improvement science, which he described in his talk.
Dr. Bryk immediately addressed an issue much on the minds of teacher educators in Michigan and around the country: meeting the standards of the Council on Accrediting Educator Preparation (CAEP) as they relate to assessment and continuous improvement. He pointed out that if we already knew how to reliably improve our performance we would be doing it. In other words, it is not due to a lack of caring or commitment to high-quality teacher preparation that teacher educators have sometimes reacted to reform initiatives with little enthusiasm. As with school reform, reform of teacher education has suffered from similar gaps in the research base that might inform change at the local, i.e., university level.

Bryk presented a thoughtful critique on the dominant school reform efforts of the last fifteen years: the performance-based management movement (e.g., NCLB: using accountability measures to drive change); the evidence-based practice movement (e.g., the What Works Clearinghouse - using randomized control trials to evaluation innovations, but paying too little attention to conditions of variation); the school-based learning communities movement (good focus on varied contexts, but not generalizable). None of these has provided a method for studying how, where, and why change results in improvement. As he pointed out, we aspire to great things - “all children reading at grade level by grade 3,” or “preparing all teachers to succeed” - but lack a method for moving past our habituated modes of working to make reliable progress towards those aspirations. Efforts towards continuous improvement need to be analytical, empirical, and social - qualities found in NICs as described in improvement science.

The framework he presented is based on five principles: 1) Be problem-focused and user-centered; 2) Attend to variability; 3) See the system; 4) Embrace measurement; 5) Learn through disciplined inquiry; and 6) Organize in networks. The first three principles are necessary for slowing down and analyzing systems in order to identify the causes of the unsatisfactory outcomes we perceive, as most negative results are the results of systemic problems rather than individual failures. These outcomes are not the same for everyone: It is important to attend to variability in contexts and processes, to see how and why things worked very well for the top ten percent and, conversely, what went wrong with the bottom end. In these circumstances, the mean is not a very useful construct for thinking through problems.
Bryk and his team have developed and refined a set of tools useful at this initial stage; the Driver Diagram is one of these tools, and perhaps its most significant affordance is that it allows members to focus attention on the primary and secondary causes of problems. For example, using this diagram allows one to note that the high drop-out rate in developmental math courses in community colleges is a product of perceived lack of relevance, student failure to persist due to histories of failure, and instructional issues. Given a theory of change, such a tool leads one to the productive question of what can be developed and enacted to disrupt failure and move toward better outcomes?

The next two principles -- embrace measurement and learn through disciplined inquiry -- result in the development of rapid iterations of “Plan-Do-Study-Act” (PDSA) cycles, where innovations are implemented, data are gathered from a range of perspectives and quickly analyzed, and changes made to the model before the next iteration. Starting small (for example, with one school or classroom) and then expanding into different contexts, partners can glean from the data the influence of changes made as well as the complicating factors of new contexts. A significant aspect of the new learning that results is the recognition of what in the new process is core to improvement, and what can and should be modified to meet local conditions.

The final principle, organizing in networks, acts to intensify the impact of the other principles. Structured networks provide a source of innovation in and of themselves, as well as providing opportunities for accelerated testing of PDSA cycles and dissemination of results. Dr. Bryk spoke of Engelbart’s (1992) concept of A-, B- and C-level learning to explain how this acceleration of learning works. Learning at the A-level represents the individual practitioner learning from his or her own practice; B-level learning occurs among participants in a single context or system; C-level learning takes place across different contexts. C-level learning enables members of a network to see patterns in data that might otherwise seem specific to a single context, and to participate in learning exchanges. Bryk pointed out that education is very conducive to NICs, as hundreds of thousands of educators at different levels engage in similar activities simultaneously across the country. Traditionally, we have tended to stay within our own silos, but we do not have to continue to work that way.

Questions from listeners at the end of the talk focused on practical matters of what can go wrong, the challenges of leadership negotiation and of choosing problems with a proper grain size. In his responses, Dr. Bryk acknowledged the challenges, but pointed out how the learning improvement model takes such obstacles as givens, and works to mitigate them over time.

The final evaluations from the conference indicated that Dr. Bryk’s address was well received. Many comments on the rest of the conference as well as observations made in the chapter summaries that follow provide evidence that his message resonated widely with participants. Broad circulation of these conference proceedings is intended to assist individuals who attended the conference in establishing NICs and also to serve as a resource for other stakeholders interested in continuing the process of reimagining teacher education in Michigan.
References


ABSTRACT:

Teachers are beginning to include the online universe, digital and social media, play and games in considering communicating and learning. Yet many of these forms of learning have scant interaction with the world of teacher education. These methods require an orientation toward continuous learning about new media, youth culture, and alternative learning spaces. In an era of continuously accelerating change, how does teacher education prepare candidates for encouraging educationally worthwhile engagement with youth culture and new media? What research-practice partnerships could we launch in Michigan to address these questions?
Literature Review

Today’s youth are enacting sociocultural literacy practices within a context increasingly mediated by online modes of communication. For example, a recent study by the Pew Research Center found more than 92 percent of teens reported accessing the Internet on a daily basis (Lenhart, 2015). An increasing number of youth access the Internet via cell phone, with 88 percent of teens reporting that they either own or have access to a smartphone or cell phone, and 91 percent report using cell phones to at least occasionally access the Internet (Lenhart, 2015). Of teens owning cell phones, Lenhart (2015) found 85 percent of Black youth reported having access to a smartphone, compared to 71 percent of both White and Latina/o teens. While online, youth are engaging with social media. A full 71 percent of teens reported using more than one social networking site, with Facebook topping the list as being utilized by 71 percent of teens ages 13 - 17 in the US. Instagram and Snapchat were also cited by youth as popular social networking sites, with more than 50 percent of teens reporting they used Instagram, and 41 percent reporting they used Snapchat (Lenhart, 2015). Given the accelerated pace of growth and shifts within the digital media realm, one might reasonably expect continuing shifts in the intervening years since these data were collected.

Yet even as youth enact literacy skills of reading, writing, editing, analyzing, discussing, and collaborating, educators are negotiating tensions about whether, how, and why they might support the new media literacy practices of their students in school contexts. Nationwide, schools have enacted policies seeking to limit youth’s access to smartphones and cell phones, even as the use of school-sanctioned technology is promoted -- yet not always taken up -- by youth. For example, Philip and Garcia (2013) found that even as youth were provided with cell phones to support their literacy learning in school, many youth did not see the devices as authentic to their online experiences and did not utilize them to the extent anticipated.

To assist us in considering the tensions we experience in incorporating these increasingly popular youth modes of communication into our own work with preservice and student teachers enrolled in our undergraduate and graduate level education courses, as well as the P-12 students with whom they work, we examined two scholarly articles: “Digital Youth in Brick and Mortar Schools: Examining the Complex Interplay of Students, Technology, Education and Change” (Peck, etal., 2015), and “Becoming Facebook Friendly: Social Media and the Culturally Relevant Classroom” (Marciano, 2015). We chose these works of scholarship as a way to enter into the conversation about whether and how youth’s modes of communication might be incorporated into our work as teacher educators for two reasons. First, they took up strengths-based perspectives of youth at a time when youth, particularly youth of Color, report their encounters with deficit-oriented perceptions of their engagement with technology within and across school contexts (see Marciano, 2017). Second, we appreciated the questions raised across both works of scholarship and hoped they might support participants in our session in considering what tensions, if any, exist in their considerations of whether and how they might incorporate youth modes of communication into their own teaching and learning.
Pre-conference questions posed to participants included:

1. How can we use new technologies to build off children’s life experiences and engage them?

2. How are we censoring students when we don’t allow them to use modes of communication that feel familiar and comfortable?

3. In an era of continuously accelerating change, how can teacher education prepare candidates for encouraging educationally worthwhile engagement with youth culture and new media?

Status of the Issue in Michigan

Connecting students’ lived experiences to the curriculum and pedagogy of our classrooms is essential for bridging the gap between home and school that many youth continue to experience. Across the state of Michigan we benefit from an increasingly diverse student population, and opportunities for learning alongside youth as they make sense of and negotiate their access to and use of evolving technologies. We are uniquely positioned to collectively consider tensions and innovations emerging with and from youth’s technology use across nuanced contexts of rural, suburban, and urban school contexts.

Eleven individuals participated in this working group, which met only once. Participants included professors at a variety of ranks, from a range of colleges throughout Michigan, with one participant coming from outside of the United States. One participant identified as male; the rest identified as female.

Opening Questions

In seeking to position the working group as an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and ideas, as well as challenges and opportunities around issues of preparing teacher candidates to incorporate current and future youth communication modes in teaching, the planning team arranged for an interactive session. We began the session by asking participants to share their name, role, institutional affiliations, and their response to the question: What brought you to this session today?

Participants reported varied and complex reasons for participating. Most prevalent was a desire to learn how other academics are implementing the use of youth communication and digital media into their instruction with preservice and student teachers. Among several other topics, participants expressed an eagerness to investigate how modes of communication vary across age groups and platforms; how educators may produce authentic writing opportunities to expand purpose and audience; how to enhance the experiences of those who might have specific learning disabilities; how to support educators’ and students’ critical media literacy skills; how to apply research on active learning while incorporating youth communication modes into teaching; how to build community within and across contexts of schools and communities through the use of social media; and how to tailor various modes of youth communication to appropriate learning opportunities.

We then transitioned into an icebreaker, in which all participants, facilitators, and recorders responded to the prompts on Poll Everywhere, an interactive
The first question we posed was a yes or no question, “Do you use Twitter on a regular basis?” Just over half of participants, 54%, responded yes.

The second question was open-ended: “What are some digital modes of communication you use personally?” (Figure 1). We then generated a Wordle, wherein the more responses a word gets, the bigger that word becomes. That is, terms like “Facebook” and “Google” were entered by more than one participant, making those terms larger than the others.

Our third question posed to participants was, “How do you feel thinking about this topic of incorporating youth modes of communication into teaching?” and participants had to indicate their feelings on a 5-item Likert scale ranging from sad to happy. One participant chose the middle, neutral, face. Five chose the somewhat smiling face, while four chose the smiling face.

Our fourth question was another open-ended question that asked about challenges participants saw in utilizing digital technologies, and elicited 25 responses including “fast pace of change,” “connecting to students’ lived experiences,” and “making sure students are on task.”

Our final warm-up question was a closed question with 5 possible responses—“Which of these technologies are most important to consider incorporating into teaching?” (Figure 2).

We chose to use the interactive technology of Poll Everywhere for two reasons. First, we wanted to model ways to incorporate new communication modes for our participants. Second, with this new mode, we were able to find out which technologies our participants were using regularly (questions 1, 2, and 5) as well as their feelings towards the topic we were going to discuss for the day (questions 3 and 4).

For the next fifteen minutes of the session, participants discussed the successes and challenges they experience when incorporating current and future youth communication modes in teaching. Participants described their ideas for future instructional approaches, both within teacher education and in the classroom of pre-service teachers with whom they work. The discussion of tensions and opportunities integrating teacher education and youth digital cultures contributed to participants’ raising of questions about practices for incorporating youth communication modes in teaching, and potential research-practice partnerships in Michigan seeking to address these questions.

Session Themes

After seeing the ways participants viewed ideas of youth communication modes through introductions and ice-breaker activities, we used those initial ideas as a jumping off point for a deeper discussion.

Successes in university settings. There are several ways in which participants noted success in their integration of youth modes of communication into their work with preservice and student teachers. For example, preservice and student teachers have responded favorably to the task of note-taking.
SESSION OVERVIEW

collaboratively using Google Docs, a practice that allows them to share the responsibility for capturing main ideas and perspectives, take notes in an interactive way that builds upon their familiarity with using technology to communicate across space and time, and create a resource for classmates not present during class. Additionally, participants noted their work with preservice and student teachers who preferred social media outlets like Facebook to institutional platforms such as Blackboard when engaging in collaborative discussion connected to their work. Moreover, Facebook was cited as a resource used by participants to share news of current events and perspectives related to issues of education, particularly when shared within closed groups accessible only to a particular group of preservice teachers or students.

What is perhaps worth noting about this is that it aligns to the technologies the participants indicated they were most comfortable with using in the second question we posed (see Figure 1) -- that is, participants indicated they were most comfortable with technologies such as Google and Facebook. This also partially aligns to the fifth icebreaker question responses, when participants responded that the top three technologies to consider in teaching are Google, Twitter, and Facebook (again, see Figure 2 above).

Successes and possibilities in P-12 settings. Participants expanded on this idea of using digital technologies in ways that work for students in P-12 classrooms as well, aligning the work they wanted to do with their preservice and student teachers with what they could do with their P-12 students. Participants shared success stories of how students as young as kindergarten can be assigned the role of managing the class Twitter or Facebook account for the day, which would allow them to take photos and write brief entries about activities. The textual nature of today’s social media exceeds that of even a generation ago, when youth were talking on telephones for hours but not activating the same skills. The general consensus seems to be that the possibilities are endless in this arena and that figuring out ways to incorporate these digital technologies is important for both participants, as well as their preservice and student teachers, as they considered potential implications for P-12 learning.

Challenges in university and P-12 settings.

Although there are many opportunities to use youth modes of communication with both college and P-12 settings, such use is also accompanied by certain challenges. Chief among them is the fast pace of change in the methods

![Figure 1. Wordle of Responses to Question 2.](image-url)
preferred by youth and young adults. That is, participants shared how even though they felt Facebook, for example, was a relevant technology to use in their work with preservice and student teachers, such technologies seemed to be archaic for use by their university students; just when the participants felt they got a handle on one technology, a new one (Snapchat was shared as an example) would come along that preservice and student teachers seemed to prefer. While participants felt that Twitter was one of the top three technologies to consider in teaching, preservice and student teachers did not necessarily feel the same. Although participants shared that preservice and student teachers seemed open to using Twitter to receive up-to-date news and other content, others were more reluctant to adopt it, particularly because it has not been a primary medium for them in the past. Although participants were just now beginning to either adopt or think about adopting Twitter as a medium of communication, preservice and student teachers were already past it. Another challenge is that schools and districts can often pose barriers to accessing social media technologies like Twitter or Facebook with stringent firewalls, unreliable Internet, or physical infrastructure that is prohibitive for Wi-Fi. Moreover, participants shared that in the P-12 contexts with which they were familiar, most (if not all) schools seemed to have policies that prevent youth from accessing cell phones during the school day. So even if participants helped preservice and student teachers think of ways to incorporate youth modes of communication such as Facebook, P-12 schools might have policies limiting or prohibiting the use of social media and the devices used to access them (e.g. cell phones).

Considerations, Tensions, and Further Questions

When it comes to guiding preservice and student teachers in their own (or future) classroom practice, participants shared many considerations for which they must account. One consideration is needing to know which modes of communication are privileged by P-12 students with whom the preservice and student teachers will be working. Besides that, access to technology in field placements is important to consider, and can vary widely by community. Participants shared how important it is for both them and preservice and student teachers to become familiar with the hardware and software that is available to them in the community and then plan and model the meaningful use thereof with their students.

Participants also raised a number of key questions that should be considered by both university faculty working with preservice and student teachers, as well as future teachers working in P-12 settings, such as: What is the appropriate balance between sharing personal and professional information
online in places where students, their families, and other educators or colleagues may find it? What are the most promising strategies for helping preservice and student teachers to promote P-12 students’ critical consumption of online sources and services? How can preservice and student teachers improve dispositions towards empowering P-12 students and dismantling the hierarchy between educators and learners? These questions were not answered per se in the session, but were raised as important considerations to be made--both by university faculty as we continue to think about ways to incorporate youth communication modes into our own practices, and for preservice and student teachers to consider as they prepare to work in P-12 school settings.

The concept of using youth modes of communication in digital spaces is also fraught with tensions that are external to the immediate classroom space, whether in P-12 settings or beyond. Some participants discussed the tensions that exist when teachers or classrooms are equipped and willing to utilize new digital technologies in their pedagogy, but infrastructure is not there--many talked about lack of reliable Wi-Fi in school buildings and the ramifications--without a wireless connection, these points are moot. Or, as one participant observed, there are economic considerations to be made in those spaces as to who has access to data plans and who does not.

For professors of education, multiple perspectives related to whether, how, and why youth modes of communication should be taken up across contexts of teacher education. As participants shared, this may create uncomfortable tensions. Some participants shared that they were comfortable and had experience using such modes of communication, while others were hesitant or uncomfortable about using these modes. Another factor participants noted as influencing their decisions as to whether and how they incorporate digital modes of communication was to consider ideas of access; that is, some participants noted that they feel there is often an economic divide in who has access and to what degree students have access to both hardware (like phones or tablets) or even data plans, especially for schools with weak or no Wi-Fi. Others shared that there are also some preservice and student teachers that are not as inclined to use technology as their professors may suppose. Youth and young adults may, for instance, own and use a laptop’s most basic functions but not be intimately familiar with troubleshooting techniques or the more advanced capabilities that their devices possess.
The questions that emerged from the session include the following:

- How can we ensure transfer from preservice to elementary/secondary teaching contexts?
- How can we maximize transfer from P-12 contexts to higher education?
- How can we evaluate whether or not a tool is effective?
- How can we keep our preservice teachers up to date with what P-12 schools are doing?
- How to handle misunderstandings that show up in “documents” that are created via these media (concern about critical consumption of information)?
- Can we search for tech grants for teacher preparation programs? Our PSTs need 1:1 devices too!
- How can we create and sustain a culture of sharing best practices?
- How can we align the priorities and practices of researchers and school districts, in order to promote school policies that engage youth modes of communication?
- How can we authentically and actively engage youth in the efforts (by researchers, teacher educators, school administrators, and teachers) to learn about their modes of communication?
- We uploaded the conversation of the Working Group to create a “Wordle” (www.wordle.net). This created a picture of which words were said most often. Words said more often appear larger in the picture. We narrowed the picture down to exclude common American English words (e.g., the, and, of, etc.) and limited the picture to the top 80 words, which we share below (see Figure 5).

What is exciting about the Wordle is the size of the words “students” and “use”—it seems to reflect that participants were really centering ideas discussed on students—either preservice or student teachers, or P-12 students and how to “use” these modes of communication we were discussing throughout the session. While there is no context in the picture itself, looking at the words in this “Wordle” in tandem with our discussion above seems to paint a clear picture of the conversation we had with our participants.

**Possible Partnership/Network Possibilities**

The participants discussed the possibility of continuing the conversation beyond the RITEM conference, as well as the need to further refine the questions being asked (e.g., addressing teacher education and teachers’ classroom practice separately). The facilitators will follow up with those who attended the session in order to gauge interest and availability. We also discussed possibilities for organizing ourselves in smaller groups based on topics of interest to us so that we may consider opportunities to engage in collaborative scholarship and practice. Specifically, we plan to continue...
contributing to a shared Google doc we created before the conference and utilized throughout our session. We also plan to communicate via email to continue to share resources and ideas related to this topic, and to propose additional meetings focused on identifying shared areas of interest for future collaborative study.

Conclusions and Implications

Our discussion highlighted multiple tensions and innovations emerging from our previous attempts to incorporate youth’s modes of communication into our work with undergraduate and graduate students across contexts of education. In addition, multiple possibilities were generated in considering future opportunities for continuing in this work. For example, we only have just begun to consider how our decisions about incorporating social media and technology into our work with our students may influence their own decisions about whether and how to build upon their P-12 students’ interests and engagement with new media, social media, and digital literacies practices. We are hopeful that our continued collaboration across institutions of higher education in the state of Michigan and beyond might contribute to increased understandings of how and why we might further build upon youth’s modes of communication in our teaching and learning to better serve our students, and their students.

Figure 5. “Wordle” of conversation
References


Marciano, J. (2017). “We’re friends, we have to be in this together”: Examining the role of culturally relevant peer interactions in urban youth’s college readiness and access. The Urban Review 49 (1), 169-187.


Group 2: Preparing Teacher Candidates to Work with the Diversity of Students in Their Classrooms

Facilitators: Vaughn Watson and Terry Flennaugh
Scribes: Matt Deroo, Cierra Presberry

ABSTRACT:

In general, the population entering teaching is White, female, middle-class, and English-dominant, so that the composition of the teaching force does not reflect the composition of the student body in most public schools today. The extent of diversity transcends the race and class (e.g., school lunch) data collected by states and researchers. How can programs promote candidates’ awareness of the historical and cultural bases of difference in U.S. schools, and provide opportunities for them to instruct a range of students before joining the teaching force? What research-practice partnerships could we launch in Michigan to address these questions?
The extent of diversity in U.S. public school classrooms is more complex than might be suggested by the school lunch data often presented in research and policy documents. For example, students of Color surpassed White students in the U.S. for the first time in Fall 2014 (Maxwell, 2014). Furthermore, one in five students speaks a language other than English in the home (Camarota & Zeigler, 2014).

Given the radically shifting student demographics in the U.S. school-going population, this working group was organized around the questions: How can teacher-education programs promote candidates’ awareness of the historical and cultural bases of difference in U.S. schools, and provide opportunities for them to instruct a range of students before joining the teaching force? What research-practice partnerships could we launch in Michigan to address these questions?

The morning and afternoon working group attendees were individuals from a variety of backgrounds and institutions including a P-12 public school teacher, a certification officer, a doctoral student from a research intensive university, assistant professors from both research-oriented and teaching-focused institutions, a department chair in a college of education and a dean for a college of education. Working group members were majority female, and self-identified across a range of racial identities. One of the working group members was visiting from India and provided an international perspective. Another was a professor with an international background teaching at a small institution in Michigan.
The rapidly shifting P-12 U.S. school-going demographic provides a host of opportunities for teacher educators and others such as school personnel, state-based educational administrators and so forth invested in the work of teacher preparation to support the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds that students bring with them to their learning. However, one of the longstanding challenges facing schooling in the US is the disparity in the academic outcomes of marginalized communities of Color when compared to the academic outcomes of White students. Until the 1950s and 1960s, scholars had been able to point to segregation and the unequal allocation of resources to schools that serve communities of Color and the poor as the driving factor for these disparities.

After Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, the United States engaged in a grand social experiment that prioritized the integration of schools based on the idea that all students are equal and that no student should be denied access to a quality education based on certain identity markers. How policy translated into practice was a monumental effort at the federal level to get students of Color into schools in communities (that happened to be predominately White) where they were significantly more likely to gain access to more educational resources. Also worth mentioning within the context of this conversation is the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act that recognized the obligation schools have to meet the needs of students with special needs, and Title IX which sought to ensure that no child should be discriminated against on the basis of sex. There are a number of important court cases that have established that students who are linguistic and religious minorities (though the term minority is become less useful over time) must be protected in U.S. schools and an increasing number of cases guaranteeing equal protections for students in the LGBTQ community.

Given these efforts, which have been ongoing for over a half a century, what can we say about the education outcomes of students from marginalized communities today? How are students of Color, women, low-income, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, and LGBTQ students doing in schools today? How are they doing in Michigan schools? In framing the context for the working group discussion that followed, Dr. Flennaugh noted that the reason why we still see these disparities is because an important part of the narrative that often gets less attention is the resistance, both historical and contemporary, that each of these efforts aimed at providing all students with a high quality education has received. We don’t often talk about the resistance to busing programs, the school funding equations that give more resources to affluent communities, the passage of legislation aimed at abolishing bilingual education, etc. When presented in this manner, it might be really easy to say that the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse students is just too big with far too many variables for us to take on. However, we believe being an educator is great because optimism is a prerequisite for the work that we do.

In his morning plenary address to conference attendees, Dr. Tony Bryk noted, “A chasm is growing between our rapidly rising aspirations - optimism - for our
educational systems and what schools can routinely accomplish.” This led our working group(s) to consider:

- How do we think about our aspirations vs. current performance?
- How do we think about how these notions are historicized in our teacher preparation work?
- How do we think about “diversity” and “equity”, including contested notions of equity, for whom and by whom in teacher education?
- Furthermore, we sought to connect these points and consider the interplay of three of the six design principles Dr. Bryk noted:
  - “Be problem focused and user centered:” For starters, what may it mean to “trouble” or build upon the notion of “user” and think about roles that educators, families, community-based organizations, peers and others have as collaborators in students’ lives.
  - “See the system:” How may we think back to structural levels of discrimination and systems of privilege?
  - “Organize as networks.”

The need to refocus and re-imagine the possibilities for teacher education in regard to student diversity in the classroom was reinforced by working group members across institutions who noted that feedback from university-specific program evaluations and state surveys revealed that teacher candidates found their teacher-preparation programs did not adequately prepare them to work with and teach culturally and linguistically diverse students.

As we engaged in conversation and dialog across the morning and afternoon sessions, our working group members raised a number of issues currently in place in Michigan that make teaching for diversity challenging. Some of the challenges participants identified included:

- Assets-based versus deficit-based views of students
- The limitations of diversity courses alone in preparing students to work with diverse students
- The disconnect between course content and putting course learning into action in both pedagogy and practice
- The complexities of teaching about race and the need to build capacity for those who teach diversity courses
- The role that accreditation and certification tests and other ‘gates’ to the profession such as GPA requirements have on preventing teaching candidates, especially teaching candidates of Color, from moving forward in their programs
- The troubled legacy of school district/university research partnerships where the result was too often universities taking from schools rather than giving back or seeking to honor the relationship through reciprocal exchanges of ideas, information, and learning.
The following extended comments emphasize the barriers the profession faces that are noted above. For example, one attendee stated: “Things keep changing and how do you realize the richness that students bring to the classroom?” He called for teacher educators to help candidates recognize “the broad richness...that parents and students and faculty all have something to contribute and build upon.” While this participant’s line of questioning revealed an assets-based orientation, working group members noted that teacher candidates who hold deficit views of students persist.

A different working group member noted that teacher-preparation programs at varying institutions have different levels of success with diversity initiatives. She contributed this difference to broader demographic differences for the composition of undergraduate students at different institutions. She reflected that students at a large university more readily took up dispositions towards justice and equity from a diversity course than the students she was currently teaching at a smaller institution. Extending upon this, a session attendee noted the need to build capacity to have more faculty and mentor teachers addressing issues of race and equity. She noted, “One thing is faculty capacity and comfort talking about race and racism directly and not just at an up-here level that’s abstract, who will build and develop that capacity; and for our mentor teachers, it does and does not exist, that capacity [and comfort talking about race and racism directly].”

In regard to supporting teaching candidates through the accreditation process, one teacher educator noted, “In certification, students can’t enter student teaching without passing the professional ratings exam, which is being replaced by the SAT, which is historically biased. There are ways programs can get around certain things, but this is an absolute in law, things students can’t get to [student teaching] unless they pass this test.” In referencing the need to address and change an arbitrary minimum GPA requirement for teacher education students at his own institution that primarily affected students of Color, Dr. Flennaugh noted, “We have to think about the gates we have and the reasoning behind them so they align with points of equity and diversity.”

The working group also noted that school districts have excellent reasons to be skeptical of working with universities, give the propensity of schools of education to come in, take data and then talk poorly about the district’s practices. Furthermore, a group member noted, “One of the obstacles is that we have different goals in P-12 than [the] university.”
In an effort to conceptualize new ways to engage in teacher education and re-imagine possibilities for the field moving forward, session attendees raised a variety of potential approaches for shifting the ways in which teacher-education has traditionally been enacted. The group noted that there was a need to move beyond established structures, especially those that could be considered stand-alone approaches, ones that did not integrate teacher preparation holistically across coursework, placements, and partnerships.

Placement

Field placement offers students in teacher-preparation programs an important opportunity to apply theory to praxis. In some cases, methods courses may require several hours per week of field work, while student teaching places teacher candidates in the P-12 classroom full time. Whatever amount of time is required, exposure to these “real world” learning experiences has a significant impact on how teacher candidates develop an understanding of how school and society are intertwined, and subsequently what can be done to address the needs of students. It can be argued that these experiences lay the foundation for the pedagogical beliefs of teacher candidates and therefore have a substantial impact on how students in P-12 classrooms will be served.

Throughout our discussion, many participants expressed concern over how and where students in teacher-preparation programs were placed in P-12 classrooms. In some cases, students are more comfortable being placed in districts similar to the ones they previously attended. In other cases, teacher candidates are cautioned by family members to seek a “safe” placement, such as a school in a suburban area with presumably fewer societal issues than one of its urban counterparts. Therefore, the pressing question facing teacher-preparation programs is what can be done to help preservice teachers move beyond locations and settings where they feel ‘comfortable’ teaching. One response to this is to expose students early and often to districts with which they are unfamiliar, which would seemingly broaden their perspectives. However, even if these experiences are fine-tuned or explicitly crafted to showcase the importance of working with diverse communities, some placements may inadvertently reinforce previously held prejudices and stereotypes if students are not able to critically examine the societal factors that impact how urban schools are viewed and served. The ability to do so starts with critical conversations on sensitive topics such as racism, patriarchy, ableism, and other factors that negatively impact the lives of marginalized students. Unfortunately, as our participants pointed out, teacher-preparation programs have much work to do in terms of effectively facilitating these discussions. One working group member noted the need to build capacity for individuals, not just people of Color, to engage in difficult conversations around race and matters that preservice teachers or their mentors are less comfortable talking about. If more faculty are expected to engage students in critical conversations, there should be support for them in this area.
Even if they are able to acknowledge the specific needs and assets of diverse communities, actually working toward ensuring student success through action such as culturally relevant instruction and the development of trusting and caring teacher-student relationships may still be a challenge. Some students may opt for field placements similar to their prior experiences because they feel ill-equipped to work with students in diverse settings. One participant pointed out that at his institution, “We have a consistent showing across the board for the last five to seven years that preservice teachers feel underprepared to work with English language learners, students of diversity, and special needs learners”. While critical conversations on societal issues that impact education are important, exposing students to specific and practical ways to address these issues is just as crucial. Equipping students with the instructional tools for working in diverse areas helps to turn the notion of doing this work from an abstract idea to a concrete practice.

Considering all of the aforementioned factors, field experiences can have a direct impact on the employment of teachers in more diverse areas. Carefully crafting field placements and offering better support to pre-service teachers as they work within these settings could help to dispel preconceived notions and encourage them to take up future work in such settings. As one attendee noted, in regard to field placements, we need to develop a mindset that such experiences are working to equip and prepare preservice teachers for greatness as they take up active roles across the profession.

**Partnerships**

With the importance of field placements in mind, creating and maintaining partnerships with and within schools is crucial. Doing so allows for a chance to gain insight into the needs of all who are involved. Partnerships help to demystify the needs of different groups, which, in turn, could help to stop the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. Further, as many teacher-preparation programs are made up of primarily White students and faculty, forging partnerships helps programs to avoid what could be construed as a “White savior complex” by actively involving those who are served instead of making assumptions about what is best for them. Relationships are important in order to produce common goals for schools. Tony Bryk points this out in his description of Networked Improvement Communities, which can include students, teachers, parents, researchers, school district leaders, and state education leaders.

At the heart of any school, whether P-12 or university, are its students. Fostering genuine partnerships across universities, P-12 schools, communities, and students is critical. However, the goals of these partnerships could vary. One participant pointed out that her organization often has trouble aligning its goals with those of the university. However, she also added, “We can say we really care about these youth and that they have opportunities. That is a galvanizing force that everyone can get around.” Another participant remarked, “Saying you want to partner with me as a teacher is saying you want to partner with all of it. You can’t just partner with me without partnering with our students”. Viewing students as a focal point can help schools, communities, and teacher-preparation programs look for ways to ensure their goals are aligned. In other words, centering students is a way that partnerships can be sustained.
Also, as teacher-preparation programs work to develop partnerships in order to conduct research and to find appropriate placements for students in schools, educational researchers must be mindful of the impact that they have on the local context. Ensuring reciprocity will be important. As P-12 schools benefit teacher-preparation programs by allowing access, it will be important for these programs to consider how they will benefit schools. This entails learning and understanding university-based needs and goals while finding ways to ensure school-based needs and goals are not exploited. If the goal of teacher-preparation programs is to improve education for both teachers and students, continuing one-sided relationships that only take from schools harms any attempts at reform.

It is also important to remember that schools are situated within communities, and in many cases, these communities have meaningful relationships with their schools. Therefore, partnerships between teacher-preparation programs and P-12 schools may also mandate that these programs forge partnerships with surrounding communities. By attending to issues of reciprocity and care, more humanizing stances across teacher education can be realized.

**Holistic Integration**

Considering the aforementioned themes, structuring teacher education programs in a more holistic way could be beneficial. Instead of combining varying isolated and disparate initiatives together over time, our conversations suggested the need for holistic, integrated approaches across teacher education. For example, group members re-imagined recruitment and pedagogy as a pipeline that spans from pre-college opportunities for teacher recruitment to support for beginning teachers in the induction stages of their program. With a more integrated strategy, this pipeline could address issues that may arise with a more collective approach, involving multiple stakeholders at a time.

As mentioned earlier in regard to developing partnerships, students should be at the center of this holistic integration. Considering their needs is what drives schools, communities, and teacher-preparation programs. Therefore, it is only fitting that developing a holistic approach start with our goals for students, and perhaps more importantly, the goals that they have for themselves. This does not involve giving students voice, as they are born with the wherewithal to express themselves, but instead, students should be given opportunity and be meaningfully positioned as stakeholders in their own education in order to make their aspirations known.

As school and society are inevitably intertwined, it will also be important to seek out resources beyond schools and universities. Community and nonprofit organizations often have similar goals for students and could offer unique perspectives and solutions to challenges schools may face. Further, as schools involve other stakeholders, it can help to dispel the notion that they operate in isolation. For example, a working group member highlighted the partnership
between her research university and a local refugee development center in order to support the education of newcomer students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Working together, both institutions were able to meet the socio-cultural learning needs of youth.

In order to maintain a holistic approach, it will be important to ensure that beliefs and dispositions are aligned across groups. While it is beneficial to involve different types of stakeholders in this re-imagined pipeline, it is imperative that different entities are selected in a thoughtful, strategic manner. By intentionally considering and even vetting the alignment of beliefs and dispositions across partners, more fruitful relationships have the potential to be formed. Hastily establishing partnerships or joining with organizations that are not united in the same cause could result in well-intentioned help that ends up as harm. However, one working group member cautioned that even in cases where placements and partnerships are less than ideal, those engaging the work of teacher education with a focus on equity and justice for students should not give up on collaboration, but rather work to celebrate the growth and successes present even if they are less robust than in other settings. By focusing on care for each member of the holistic partnership, we might take up the notion of teaching as love.

**Funding and Marketing**

Although funding and marketing might be considered tangential to the above discussion, a recurring point of discussion was related to this aspect of teacher education. One idea expressed in different ways by members of our group was the need to offer incentives for preservice teachers. For example, a classroom teacher who had had financial need when he was an intern noted how financial assistance granted to him in the form of a fellowship supported his teaching during his year-long internship. To help offset the costs an intern incurs during their internship placement, the group floated the idea of establishing a residency system for interns in which universities purchase property in urban settings in order to provide housing at affordable rates for interns working in areas with diverse populations.

One working group member called for broadly positioning teacher-preparation programs in more desirable ways. She referenced how alternative certification programs, while problematic, cultivate a strong message about pathways to the profession via marketing materials that sell the profession. She questioned how the field might work to reorient its message in order to pitch the profession in ways that better connect with the general public.

**CONCLUSION**

While we understand that our interactions with teachers, administrators, researchers, policy makers, and other educational professionals were limited to a series of conversations at one conference on one day, we are hopeful that the ideas expressed above by the members of our working group can truly push the field to reimagine productive new ways to equip preservice teachers for work with diverse students.
References:


ABSTRACT:

Teacher educators have long faced the tension between crafting a coherent program and preparing teachers for a range of possible placements, including teaching and learning in high-poverty urban and rural contexts, among others. This range is increasing, given the emergence of online/virtual and charter schools, informal learning opportunities in museums and after-school programs, and other proliferating alternatives. In many areas of Michigan, new schools such as these are hiring a larger share of the less experienced teaching force. With this in mind, can schools of education afford to continue one-size-fits-all designs? What changes are needed in schools of education to address the range of schools? What research-practice partnerships could we develop and launch in Michigan to address these questions?
Teacher educators have long faced tensions associated with providing a coherent program while preparing teachers for diverse school placements. This range of teaching contexts is increasing, and is not limited to high-poverty urban and rural schools, but extends, for example, to new forms of formal learning environments such as online and virtual schools, public and for-profit charter schools, as well as informal learning opportunities in museums and after-school programs. In many areas of Michigan, an increasing share of the new teaching force is finding employment in contexts such as those mentioned above. Our group discussed the following questions: can schools of education afford to continue offering one-size-fits-all designs? What changes are needed in schools of education to address the myriad challenges that accompany the growing diversity of teaching and learning environments? What research-practice partnerships might we develop and launch in Michigan to address these questions?

INTRODUCTION

Current predictions regarding future employment opportunities suggest that almost half of current jobs are in danger of becoming automated, although “jobs that require non-routine interpersonal and analytical interactions” are in the least danger (Kamenetz, 2016). This is just one of many motivators leading some P-12 schools to redesign classroom spaces in ways that encourage and deepen communication among students and teachers, potentially preparing students for the complex and interconnected work opportunities of the present and future (Edutopia, 2015). These realities underlie the need to develop strategies that enhance the preparation of teachers, particularly with respect to meeting...
the needs of the many different venues in which P-12 teaching occurs. For example, museum-based experiences have been demonstrated to have substantial learning value for both students and teachers (Coffey, Fitchett, & Farinde, 2015), and partnerships have developed between more traditional teacher preparation institutions and museums and nature centers. In fact, some museums now offer accredited teacher certification programs. (One example is the American Museum of Natural History in New York City: http://www.amnh.org/learn-teach/master-of-arts-in-teaching/) Online learning environments are also growing exponentially. All 50 states offer P-12 online learning opportunities, with Michigan among those now requiring online learning experiences before graduation. Still, only 1.3% of teacher education programs indicate that they place preservice teachers in field experiences in online classrooms or schools (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012).

A central tension exists between teacher education’s focus on developing core concepts and practices of teaching that apply across contexts and the development of teacher preparation programs with a targeted and context-specific focus. This tension prompts several related questions: In what ways are core ideas and practices of teaching context-specific? Can preservice teachers develop their understanding of big ideas and skills relevant to teaching first, and then apply them to different contexts? Or, must preservice teachers be prepared differently for the specific contexts in which they may find themselves as practitioners? Exploring the importance of context and how context presents a multiplicity of perspectives with regard to content and pedagogy requires more conversation and attention than available through this Working Group session, and should be revisited to consider future implications by individuals interested in this topic.

Participants in the session included education scholars, administrators, and professionals from across Michigan: professors from teacher education programs, Michigan Department of Education officials, and university certification and teaching internship coordinators. Eight of the participants were from colleges of education that enroll fewer than 300 teacher candidates a year while the other five colleges represented in the discussion enroll more than 300 teacher candidates per year. Both private and public universities were represented, many through attendance of their teacher preparation program directors, deans, or chairs.

Session Discussion around “Preparing Teacher Candidates for a Wider Variety of Educational Contexts”

The session focused on reimagining teacher preparation possibilities for settings beyond the traditional P-12 school context. Specifically, session participants began the conversation by considering: What learning contexts, besides traditional schools and classrooms, and related educational goals are of interest to Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) for consideration as part of educator preparation efforts? Three major contexts emerged from this discussion: online learning environments, extension and enrichment settings, and high-poverty learning environments.
Preparing Candidates to Teach Online

Participants identified online learning environments as the most common nontraditional context for which teacher candidates should be prepared. Several challenges were mentioned as associated with online environments: Participants indicated that teacher candidates must be prepared to build and leverage community in online settings; future teachers need to be able to engage students in learning goals, provide effective feedback, and effectively assess students in the online context. Accomplishing these goals may require preservice teachers to experience clinical placements online as part of their educator preparation programs, and this has implications for teacher educators. One participant indicated that their institution had already begun piloting a program of teacher preparation for online schools.

Participants also considered the importance of equitable participation by online students, recognizing that not all students find access and ease of use with this platform. To this end, preservice teachers need to understand and be able to evaluate the cognitive load related to online tasks, matching it to the experiences, ages, and individual needs of the students in their virtual classrooms. Preservice teachers need to be aware of the different kinds of online delivery platforms and be able to select and manage these along with the varied needs of their students.

Preparing Candidates for Extension and Enrichment Settings, Including Nature Centers and Museums

Participants identified what have traditionally been extension and enrichment settings--such as nature centers and museums--as emerging learning contexts for which preservice teachers could be prepared to teach. More generally, however, these settings are viewed as contexts in which teacher candidates can find opportunities to practice their craft and/or to serve as supplementary educational settings through field trips sponsored by traditional schools. Teaching and leading groups of children on museum tours, for example, provides preservice teachers with practice with some of the skills and approaches relevant to P-12 teaching. Similarly, settings such as after-school programs provide opportunities to practice instructional approaches and relationship-building with small groups of children. IHEs in partnership with informal learning institutions can leverage opportunities that benefit teacher candidates, children in the community, their families, and the extension facility and its programming. As part of the general interest in what has been called “informal learning” opportunities, teaching in such settings may be attractive to individuals who pursue formal teacher preparation but decide, for one reason or another, not to pursue teaching positions in traditional PreP-12 schools. A growing knowledge base concerning pedagogy related to object-based learning might be used to provide specialized course or courses for individuals interested in such settings.

Preparing Candidates to Teach in High-Poverty Contexts and to Engage in Equitable Teaching and Learning

The session also raised the issue of whether teacher preparation programs might want to consider focusing their energies and tailoring their programs as having a particular emphasis on a population, such as high-poverty groups or English Language Learners, or geographic contexts, such as urban or
rural contexts. For example, Alverno College in Milwaukee was mentioned as having a singular focus on urban education in that city. A program at Ball State University also was mentioned for its recent move, in partnership with a nearby urban neighborhood, to provide substantial community-based learning experiences for its elementary teacher candidates, supported by course-based instruction. (See, for example, Zygmunt-Fillwalk, Clark, Clausen, & Mucherah, 2014).

Reimagining teacher preparation in IHE-based programs might support strategic development of preservice teachers’ understanding of inequities in education and the impact of these inequities on student opportunity. Specifically, session participants discussed the broadly shared need for preparing candidates for teaching positions in high-poverty and other kinds of settings that differ from those experienced by candidates themselves as students. In this light, teacher preparation could be viewed as highly contextualized, although many participants noted that they saw their programs as comprehensive rather than tailored in the fashion of an Alverno or Ball State. Session participants noted the importance of supporting candidates in recognizing and understanding how P-12 students’ backgrounds and communities might influence the preservice educators’ teaching and employment preferences. Additionally, they noted that preservice teachers should be encouraged and provided structured opportunities in their programs to explore where their students live and what local opportunities exist for extending classroom learning.

Along with these major themes, participants also noted that preservice teachers are generally well-prepared for public P-12 schools in Michigan, according to feedback from their graduates via the Michigan Department of Education’s satisfaction surveys. The question was raised about whether students should be specifically prepared for private, religious, or charter schools. Session participants also discussed preparing teachers for and through international teaching placement opportunities since international schools, like private or charter schools, often have unique cultures, preparation for which, in the preservice program, can be helpful to making an adjustment to these settings in the first year or two of teaching.

As previously noted, participants discussed the importance of context and sought to complicate how teacher preparation programs have viewed place, space, and context. They shared examples of programs that connect content across contexts as well as those that intertwine the particularities of context and content. Some Michigan universities, for example, offer, even require, content-area online courses for preservice teachers, providing programming that connects across contexts. Another Michigan university has embedded online preparation through semester-long clinical internships with online instructors. Participants mentioned an innovative interdisciplinary program at one university, where understandings about social and natural sciences are intertwined with learning from and about indigenous groups in the area. These examples could serve as models of innovation that other Michigan colleges of education might use as they consider their own needs in reimagining their future as teacher preparation institutions.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS
In discussing the enactment of these ideas, session participants underscored the importance of time, money, goal setting, and ongoing communication and collaboration in support of forward movement toward innovation and improvement. A crucial component of such a common vision is the development and maintenance of partnerships, including those among IHEs here in Michigan. These cross-institutional partnerships are key to the development of deeper understanding aimed at improvement. So, too, are partnerships among colleges and disciplines within each university and among an institution’s multiple campuses. All of these partnerships provide opportunities to share, enhance, and expand model programming and best practices.

Participants further suggested building partnerships with organizations across the community. Teacher preparation programs might partner in novel ways with museums, recreation departments, and other extension and enrichment entities to enhance educational activities and develop innovative pedagogical practices in ways that are not yet imagined and that address context or population specific ideas in new ways.

Participants brought a sense of urgency to the topic of the importance of preparing teachers for high-poverty urban and rural environments and the need to provide teacher candidates with experiences in varied teaching contexts prior to certification. One way to provide preservice teachers with diverse practice is through universities partnering with multiple schools for field experiences of shorter or longer term duration. Specifically, session participants suggested identifying schools and practitioners in non-traditional settings who might provide insight, expertise, and stimuli for reimagining teacher preparation through the infusion of perspectives from these settings.

Developing intentional partnerships affords the opportunity to disrupt traditional ways of thinking about teacher preparation. However, session participants recognized that there will be challenges and that change will take time; we will not be able to do everything all at once and do it all well. We will need to consider what contexts, populations, and innovations ought to be prioritized and what sort of networks would facilitate moving forward. Implicit in this discussion, although not a preoccupation of the group, was the role of accreditation in shaping teacher preparation programs towards standardization rather than customization. Such pressure raises questions such as: What possible sequences of experiences or courses or innovative foci might work best within which sets of parameters? For example, do some new ideas lend themselves best to undergraduate or graduate programs? Are there fundamental elements around teaching and learning that ought to be present no matter what the intended group of learners or educational setting? Put another way, are the ways we teach and understand concepts and big ideas generalizable across contexts?

Although the Working Group discussion established some foundational elements to build upon, it is clear that participants believe that many more nuanced conversations concerning contexts, goals, populations, and programs are needed to fully reimagine teacher preparation in Michigan.
References


ABSTRACT:

Teacher educators are working to attract a more diverse student body. Some teacher education programs have begun to recruit minority candidates as early as middle school through outreach and summer programs; other minority candidates enter teaching through alternative certification routes. However, novice teachers from non-dominant groups leave the profession in higher numbers than the average. What can teacher education institutions do to recruit diverse candidates and contribute to their success and retention in public schools? What research-practice partnerships could we launch in Michigan to address these questions?
INTRODUCTION

Teacher preparation programs across the country are working to attract a more diverse student body. The challenge to recruit and retain that diversity is further confounded by an increase of teachers leaving the profession, with teachers of Color leaving the profession in higher numbers than the average. It is clear that attempts to both attract and then for schools to retain a diverse teacher workforce have, at best, resulted in a status quo that continues to provide a disservice to schools and students alike. These realities were the impetus for three questions that guided the discussion for our focus on Recruiting, Preparing and Retaining a Diverse Teacher Workforce:

1. What are the challenges and opportunities that exist in recruiting and enrolling a diverse composition of candidates in our teacher preparation programs?

2. What are the challenges and opportunities that exist in retaining a diverse teacher workforce, and what is the role of teacher preparation programs in meeting this goal?

3. What do our collaborative efforts need to focus on to address these realities?

PARTICIPANTS AND BACKGROUND

A total of 28 participants took part in one of two different sessions to address these questions. Almost all the participants were from higher education teacher preparation programs. There was a cross representation of participants from higher education institutions in the state, with a predominant number from large R1 universities, and a smaller representation from small public and private colleges.

The sessions began by framing the issue of recruiting all students to teaching as well as specifically, teacher candidates of Color. As a nation, we have reached a low point in those incoming college freshmen choosing to study education. In 2016, 4.2% of incoming freshmen were interested in studying education, a significant decrease from 11% in 2000 (Flannery, 2016). One fact that is important to highlight is that in 2014 the majority of U.S. P-12 students were non-White for the first time (Klein, 2014), while only 17.3% of all teachers nationwide were teachers of Color (Watson, Bristol, White, & Vilson, 2015).

The issue is brought closer to home when comparing the national numbers to those specific to Michigan. In 2013-14 for example, there were 11,287 students enrolled in teacher preparation programs in Michigan, down from 18,483 in 2011-12. 84.6% of those teachers in Michigan are White (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). One interesting item to note is that the number of students enrolled in alternative routes to teacher certification increased and then stabilized during this same period.
The second part of the session opened up with a discussion of the data that describes inservice teacher turnover and attrition. The teacher attrition rate in the United States hovers around 17% (Di Carlo, 2015). Eight percent of all teachers leave the profession before retirement age (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). The top four reasons teachers leave the profession are: compensation, preparation, mentoring & induction, and teaching conditions (Sutcher, et. al, 2016). Each of these areas were analyzed during the session discourse which is summarized below and resulted in some emerging themes and next steps the Michigan education community could embark on to move to a more sustainable and diverse teacher workforce.

**PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS**

What, then, are the challenges and opportunities that exist in recruiting and enrolling a diverse composition in our teacher preparation programs?

The largest obstacles, identified by a representative of a large R1 university’s teacher education program are that students of Color will be working in predominantly White schools, and tuition for preparation is expensive. Both a field coordinator and professor of teacher education from different institutions agreed that there is a decline in students choosing teaching as a profession and much of that has to do with the de-professionalization of teaching. The de-professionalization of the teaching profession, it was expressed, keeps many students from going into the field. Also, several session participants posited that teaching does not have the same prestige as a career in law or in the medical field. The field coordinator mentioned that many parents and even teachers themselves tell young students not to study teaching, sending the message that they should choose a path of less resistance to monetary and social success and gratification. The education department chair of a major R1 university added that many young people interested in social justice work, for example, choose lower paying professions such as social work because they feel they may have a larger impact. She added, though, that this is not necessarily the case. The teaching profession could be branded in such a way as to emphasize the social change agency teachers possess. The consensus among the participants in the room was that if we could accomplish this, we could take charge of the narrative and shift it to be more inspirational to all students, including multilingual students and students of Color. It was agreed that teachers need to know how powerful they are capable of being, and how they can be change agents at their respective schools.

Building on the idea of how to market teaching to incoming students and particularly students of Color, it was noted by the facilitators that sometimes this can be problematic. Most often, the argument made is that we need teachers of Color to teach students of Color. However, it was noted by an associate dean of teacher education at a large R1 university that this can no longer be the case. In fact, it was agreed by session participants that we need to emphasize that teachers of Color can (and should) be great teachers for White students as well.
A brief discussion occurred in both sessions about policy makers; it was noted by several session participants that those making policy decisions are often not educators themselves. This makes it very difficult, but not impossible, to overcome the de-professionalization of teaching.

What are the challenges and opportunities that exist in retaining a diverse teacher workforce, and what is the role of teacher preparation programs in meeting this goal?

The session also focused on the reasons why teachers leave the profession and participants had much to say on this topic. The facilitators pointed out that compensation does not necessarily mean pay levels only. This also included things like opportunities for development and advancement, including professional development, for example.

It was agreed that preparation, while important, is an entirely different--yet vast and important--conversation. An associate dean of a teacher preparation program focused on the problem that a first-year teacher might not feel that the teacher preparation program they graduated from adequately prepared them for the experience they discovered as a first-year teacher. Many session participants agreed. Several participants added that many new teachers predicted that their teacher preparation would lead to a feeling that teaching wouldn’t be what their program suggested it would be like, leaving the first-year teacher disillusioned and motivated to find a profession for which they feel better suited. Session participants agreed that new teachers want to succeed, but are often not properly trained for the realities they face. Rather, they are trained for an ideal which is rarely found in any educational setting today.

The lack of mentoring and induction led to a most interesting conversation. The main idea behind this reason for leaving the teaching profession is that teacher preparation programs may prepare students in a high-quality program, but once they graduate and move into their careers, teachers never hear from nor are supported by their respective teacher preparation program. A professor of teacher education at a large R1 university pointed out and was supported by most session participants that traditionally, induction has been
within the purview of schools and school districts, not teacher preparation programs. While there was some individual and anecdotal evidence that teacher preparation programs do stay connected to their recent graduates, there were no teacher preparation programs that provide long-term or systematic and structural support for their recent graduates. The one exception was shared by a representative of small, private, liberal arts college who shared that they have begun to reach out to recent graduates, not only to see where their students ended up in their careers, but more importantly, how the graduates’ experiences can improve their own teacher preparation program.

In addition, it was suggested by a professor of teacher education at another small, private, liberal arts college that most schools make the evaluation process of new teachers more punitive than supportive. A field coordinator shared that compounding the problem is that there are many different understandings of what mentoring looks like and what induction means from administrator to administrator and across school districts, noting that this process looks different in every school. The director of a mid-size public university’s teacher education program suggested that part of our future work should include training administrators and mentor teachers so that the induction phase is part of learning process rather than solely an evaluative one.

Finally, the idea of teachers leaving teaching because of the conditions in which they work was clarified by the facilitators to include not only the physical condition of the workplace, but also things like supportive administrators, workload expectations, professional development, and even evaluation systems. This area becomes even more important when talking about teachers of Color. Often, as the session facilitators pointed out, White administrators make common mistakes when dealing with teachers of Color, e.g. using them in an over-representing way and as a spokesperson for their race and racial issues. Many session participants agreed that they have witnessed this in schools with which they have worked.

**FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

All participants agreed that there is some role that teacher preparation programs could play in the effort to retain teachers; however, it was pointed out by a professor of teacher education at a large R1 university that this has traditionally been the responsibility of local schools. An assistant professor at another major public university suggested that the focus should be on developing lifelong learners who would, through their teacher preparation, be open and eager to continue to learn about and perfect their practice. In addition, a professional learning community might be developed, using technology, to bring new teachers through the induction phase into a more meaningful, statewide, supportive community. This community could also be an avenue for new teachers to share resources and experiences with each other, providing an opportunity for those struggling with similar challenges to help and support each other. The use of technology can offer creative and interactive ways to create this community accessible to all, regardless of the physical distances that separate these new teachers.
The director of a teacher education program at a mid-size university suggested that this could be a collaborative effort since graduates from all of Michigan’s teacher preparation programs are teaching side-by-side in schools across the state. It would make sense to develop a system and structure of support to these new teachers across the state through our teacher preparation programs. Through this process, a common language and discourse around these issues could be developed so that the support would not be diluted or confused across institutions and among new teachers from different teacher preparation programs who find themselves as new colleagues in the same school.

Finally, the fact that teachers of Color are leaving the profession at a faster rate than White teachers (Al Shanker Institute, 2015) helped to bring the focus of this session back to the challenge of retaining minority teachers. This is important because, as pointed out by a facilitator, we are facing an incredibly significant underrepresentation of teachers of Color in the profession. The fact that the placement of each teacher of Color is delicate and important makes the goal of retaining them that much more important. There is also the added struggle and challenge of helping teachers of Color be successful both in majority White teacher preparation programs as well as the predominantly White profession of teaching.

There was much agreement in these sessions on taking on a collaborative advocacy role with policy makers as well, with the suggestion that the Michigan Department of Education be a part of any collaboration we develop. However, there was some disagreement on whether government entities like the Michigan Department of Education should be full partners or take on a more advisory role.

These collaborations must also keep the big picture in mind and include private as well as public institutions, both large and small. It is imperative that in our discourse, teachers from all levels, including pre-K through 12th grade, be included in the process. The final ideas that might be taken away to form a future plan, it was noted, should include the following components:

- It is important to intentionally identify ALL stakeholders interested in the diversification of the teaching workforce including identifying the roles each can play in the ongoing work of this initiative.
- We can develop some common goals that we would like to collectively and collaboratively work towards and evaluate after determining ways to measure them.
- These goals should include developing a common campaign that would help to both professionalize teaching and recruit new students into teacher preparation programs, focusing on students of Color.
- We can develop common goals, language, and processes for the mentoring of new teachers during induction and create opportunities of support for new teachers, especially new teachers of Color. These opportunities should include a structure to share teacherly things (resources, lessons, management techniques, etc.) as well as more meaningful, personal, and professional support.
- We should develop a structure of communication between institutions that could serve as an avenue for public advocacy, both collectively and individually.
References


ABSTRACT:

Although it is generally agreed that school placements are centrally important in preparing teachers, the relationships between P-12 schools and universities often belie that belief. Putting the time and effort into creating strong partnerships is work that needs to be supported by both university and P-12 systems. Fostering dynamic and productive partnerships with communities and families can only help those efforts. How do we work together to create these partnerships, particularly in high-poverty settings? What research-practice partnerships could we launch in Michigan to address these questions?
Current partnerships between P-12 schools and universities focus primarily on placing and pairing preservice teachers in classrooms with mentor teachers. Whereas a large portion of preservice teachers and mentor teachers are White, many of our placements are located in communities of Color, poor communities, schools with large populations of English Language Learners (ELLs), high-poverty urban and rural sites, or a combination of these settings (Sleeter, 2001). In an effort to prepare teacher candidates for today’s classrooms, some universities make available community-based, cross-cultural immersion programs; offer site-based methods courses; require multicultural and diversity coursework and service learning; provide professional development at the local and state levels; and allow extensive lead teaching opportunities during placements. Additionally, there are growing concerns about the sustainability of preservice education, the lack of robust opportunities for all teacher candidates, the criteria for choosing mentor teachers, and the inclusion and involvement of the communities in which preservice teachers serve. Taken together, these concerns shed light on some of the issues that have impacted the quality and nature of building and maintaining relationships between P-12 schools, districts, and communities, and colleges and universities. As such, educators and administrators from both sides have recognized the need to work together to create a more cohesive picture of the purposes, goals, and expectations of high quality teacher preparation (Burns, Yendol-Hoppey, & Jacobs, 2015).

Researchers identify robust university-P-12 partnerships that include connections to communities and families as a means to re-imagine teacher education in ways that better serve youth in U.S. schools (Burns et al., 2015; Zeichner, 2010). Indeed, university systems and P-12 schools across the country have been able to build and maintain strong and trusting partnerships focused on teacher learning (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015; Walsh & Backe, 2013). Yet, these partnerships and depths of relationships vary from school to school, district to district, and university to university. While researchers have documented successful, long-running partnerships including professional development schools, community-based educator networks, and collaborative curriculum design, they also point to significant challenges for building and sustaining these partnerships, even the most successful ones (Zeichner, et al., 2015).

At their best, university-school partnerships promote shared learning and opportunities for transforming existing systems; yet, moving toward shared visions for partnership requires navigating often disconnected cultures. While university needs have typically driven university partnerships, teacher educators and researchers have, in recent years, begun to recognize the need to attend to P-12 schools’ goals and purposes for partnership. For example, Walsh and Backe (2013) suggest that while universities have long recognized the school based practicum site for student teachers as a critical need for the university, they should also do more to attend to how student teachers address
schools’ needs for additional staff and access to new instructional strategies. Likewise, Burns et al. (2015) highlight the potential of the Professional Development School (PDS) approach to unite schools and universities around shared goals for teacher preparation and continuous learning. At the same time, Zeichner, et al. (2015) call for a rethinking of the “epistemology of teacher preparation...and for the development of new forms of shared responsibility for preparing teachers among colleges and universities, schools, and local communities” (p. 123). To move in this direction, Zeichner (2010) argues, will require universities to let go of their typical hierarchical position in serving preservice teachers and forge partnerships grounded in shared concern for different ways of knowing and viewing teaching and learning.

FINDINGS

Using responses from several guiding questions, four themes emerged. The first theme addresses expectations of P-12 and university partnerships, while the second theme reveals the differing of values and purposes of preservice education and its impact on partnerships. In the third theme, discussants bring attention to the role of community in partnerships and preservice education. Finally, the fourth theme assesses how P-12 settings can provide supportive environments for students and mentor teachers.

Expectations of P-12 and University Partnerships

Participants from both P-12 schools and university systems agree that there is a gap between what is expected from universities and what is expected from schools. From a university perspective, some professors in education, teacher education, and content-specific courses related to teacher preparation and training have a very clear understanding of who is involved in P-12 schools and university partnerships and their role in it. For example, the dean of education of a small public university successfully navigates P-12 schools and university partnerships by ensuring “teachers and faculty work very closely with [the university] and the clinical coordinator works with the principals before [the university] accepts partnerships.” This way, expectations and goals were
discussed and laid out prior to teacher candidates entering the classroom. For others in the university setting, however, that may not be the case. An associate professor of Foreign Languages from a mid-sized, commuting university explains that she manages her students and their coursework, but “[does not] have a clear picture of what goes on [between the university and schools].” As a course instructor, she was unclear of her role and expectations in the university partnership. In this case, she was left to grapple with how she could best serve and support her preservice teachers with minimal discourse about the partnership in itself.

Like universities, inconsistent experiences within partnerships also exist within P-12 schools and between P-12 school districts and universities. In some P-12 settings, mentor teachers and administrators have contrasting expectations despite agreeing to the same partnership. A teacher educator from a large R1 institution observed that, “[mentor] teachers are being constrained by the perceptions of what they want to do and who they want to partner with by the kinds of things that the administrators perceive as important.” That is, what mentor teachers want to do and what they expect from their mentoring role does not always align with the needs of school or district administrators. As one city-wide field instructor coordinator noted, some administrators are “concerned with test scores” and “not messing up data,” while mentor teachers are focused on modeling, co-planning and teaching.

Despite sometimes competing expectations between mentor teachers and administrators, some practitioners have devised ways to meet the needs of their preservice teachers by bringing administrators to the table, so to speak. For example, a veteran 8th grade social studies instructor, who also served as a mentor teacher in a small, predominantly White school district, and a colleague, who is now an associate professor at an R1 institution, created a model that illustrated to administrators what the internship experience looked like without having to sacrifice the learning experience for preservice teachers and without compromising university expectations. As experienced educators, the pair focused on relationship building, collaborative learning and course-based instruction. For them, that was allowing teacher candidates the opportunity to “observe the same lesson [and] spend 45 minutes to an hour at the end of each day debriefing; working in small [learning] groups; co-teaching; and lead teaching.” This model of collaboration between preservice teacher, mentor teacher and administrator has also been proposed by others. As one assistant professor of elementary education suggested, “including P-12 administrators in curriculum development [and] having conversations about what courses should look like, allowing students, teachers, administrators, etc. to sit down and discuss [concerns]” so that everyone is on the same accord. Yet, expectations and understanding of preservice teacher preparedness and the perceptions of teacher candidates still remains an issue.

One professor of elementary education from a large R1 public university reiterated, “There is a disconnect between what teachers thought was prepared and what districts believe.” That is, as preservice teachers matriculate through their student teaching, some districts believe they are not well-prepared or prepared enough to face today’s learners. What has worked for some colleges and universities seeking to address teacher preparedness is seeking out what preservice teachers need from the candidates themselves. The dean of education of a small liberal arts college asks his teacher
candidates, “What do you feel you need to be more prepared in? ESL, diverse populations, and special education [are the areas] students are telling us they are not getting enough of.” Based on his conversations and feedback, he then addresses the issues from the university-side, creating and/or restructuring courses and opportunities that provide students with a more robust teaching experience. Another solution offered by an assistant professor of education is to pull focus groups of mentor teachers to help restructure the internship year. Perhaps a more sustainable and long-term suggestion to ensure teacher candidates are prepared for the field, as posed by a P-12 educational leader of a large urban school district, is to “have a tighter partnership earlier before they come into our schools [so that] we will have a better idea of what prepared looks like.”

Despite the ebb and flow of education issues that complicate P-12 schools and university partnerships, there is a shared focus within their partnerships. As one assistant professor of teacher education noted, “[we can’t] lose sight of why we are doing the work; our focus needs to be on the people---students and preservice teachers.”

DIFFERING VALUES AND PURPOSES OF PARTNERSHIP

Throughout the working group conversations, practitioners and teacher educators identified the need to explicitly address differing values and purposes driving the development of partnerships. One R-1 math teacher educator, who had previously served as a field supervisor for student teachers, identified challenges in negotiating that relationship. She said, “It was evident in some respects that the goals that the mentor teacher had for teacher education were different from the goals I had for teacher education; It was really a struggle to navigate stuff around partnership and coming to consensus around shared goals.” These differences, she went on to say, came about in part because of differing accountability structures for universities and P-12 schools:

What each side is accountable for is very different. I do my work as a teacher educator because it’s my teaching load, but when I turn in my annual evaluation, they are not looking at how I changed the schools in which I was working with. It’s about placing candidates and getting them jobs. I think it’ll matter at some point about how long our teachers [stay]. All this work I do with K-12 partnerships is out of my own commitments. On the other side, school administrators have accountability to their districts to increase test scores, to show improvement. Partnerships can affect pretty important change, but often it’s not about raising test scores. It’s incremental change . . . At the end of the day, they’re worried about tests. I think the external pressures have to change or we’ll keep fighting this battle.

Similarly, an elementary education coordinator for a large state university pointed to the university’s inability to sustain their PDS model because it
was not valued at the institutional level. She said, “The professors didn’t get rewarded for their time in schools so when money went away, they left. It’s a systems issue. We’ve tried to have the mentors come to campus for PD and collaborate with them—not give them PD but work with them and recognize the mentor teachers’ expertise.” This teacher educator’s comments echoed Zeichner, et al. (2015) in pointing to the difficulties of sustaining deep partnerships without broader institutional support. At the same time, she pointed to a way forward in seeking to collaborate with P-12 school partners, recognizing their knowledges (Zeichner, et al., 2015). Another state university elementary education coordinator also looked toward collaboration to improve their co-teaching partnerships with local schools. She said, “We struggled with placements but offered to bring research into the buildings’ co-teaching placements and track K-5 student performance.” In this way, the coordinator was able to bring two different purposes together for a more successful partnership: the school’s need for student evaluation and the university’s need for quality co-teaching placements.

Professional development also emerged as an area where more could be done to bring universities and P-12 schools together. For example, the same math teacher educator said that she received frequent calls from administrators and teachers asking for professional development on particular topics, but she was “often embarrassed to say ‘no’. What are we doing? We’re doing all this research on X and what people want is research on Y.” The social studies teacher from a local middle school’s comments supported her observations. He said, “We get PD from K-12 experts who flew out from California. Don’t get me wrong, they have awesome ideas, but if we’re building community, why aren’t we using our area colleges? Why are our keynotes and speakers coming from across the nation? We have resources here.” Another internship program coordinator suggested that being able to fill those professional development needs might lead to better partnerships grounded in deeper relationships. She said, “We used teacher quality grants to get into schools. We were working on math so our main goal wasn’t partnerships, but we really got to know those teachers.” Indeed, forming deeper relationships grounded in collaboration seemed to be the first step for a number of the participants in our working group toward developing more meaningful partnerships. As one professor at a private university located in a large, urban public school district said, “It’s relationship building. We can show up, be in the building, committed to doing extra--teacher meetings, inservice presentations, working alongside teachers.”
Zeichner et al. (2015) argue that communities and the knowledge that exists within members of those communities are also critical to teacher education. One assistant professor for elementary education at a university in an urban area highlighted this need: “More courses need to be community connected to get students out in the community . . . Students are blindsided by what is happening in the communities.”

Other teacher educators highlighted those efforts to partner with communities as what was working best for their teacher preparation programs. The chair of the education department at another state university pointed to the need for diverse placements. She said, “With more field experiences, we’re requiring more of our teachers so we’re trying to work through this. Trying to provide a smorgasbord of experiences. We have a faculty in residence with methods.” Even as she pointed to what her department was doing to improve community partnerships, she pointed to the need for community partners to help support their work. “We’re working with community businesses, grants, looking at ways to provide additional support.” In both supporting community efforts and looking for support from the community, she highlighted the notion of reciprocity and interdependence that punctuated the working group conversations.

For example, the acting dean of the college of education at a state university detailed that co-dependent partnership came out of their efforts to pair place-based education with curriculum reform. She said, “We’re getting grants to build parts and then the courses are offered there. Students become agents of change in those schools and become part of the community, but the challenge is that you have this wonderful experience, but how do you make this possible for all preservice teachers?” Indeed, scaling up community-based collaborations proved to be a challenge. A curriculum administrator for a large urban district highlighted their urban immersion program. “It’s outstanding,” she said. “How do you best service the students that you are seeing? But it’s such a small group each year. How do all teacher candidates get that experience?” One opportunity for building partnerships moving forward might be questions of scale and how collaboration within and across universities might serve more preservice teachers.

In developing community partnerships, another challenge seemed to be sustainability. As one associate professor at an urban state university said, “We have to make sure it’s a win-win for everyone involved to create sustainable partnerships.” One sustainable partnership included in her program is the Young Author’s festival, which brings parents, families, and authors to their campus to inspire kids to write. While the primary goal of the program is about youth and families, preservice teachers plan the festival as part of a course

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communities as what was working best for their teacher preparation programs.
and have access to ways to teach writing in their classrooms. What makes this program successful is that connection between the programming and the university curriculum, she said. Still, she wants to do more to create sustainable partnerships with families in the community. She said, “I’m very interested in collaborating with parents. We have so many first generation students and I’d like to find ways to collaborate with them—open our doors to family.” Across the working groups, there seemed to be desire to better collaborate with the community; yet, there was also uncertainty about how best to move forward in creating those partnerships.

SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Although the working groups considered various opportunities for school-university partnerships, particular attention was given to the practicum or student teaching experience. As the workshop participants considered what it meant to create supportive school environments for preservice teachers, one assistant professor at an urban state university said, “We need schools that understand that our student teachers are still learning. They aren’t first year teachers. They need a lot of mentoring and support.” Moreover, the teacher educators said the student teachers need more connection between the practical experiences in their mentor classrooms and the instructional practices university teacher educators promote. As one secondary English education coordinator and assistant professor noted, “I want to center teachers and their strengths; a lot of time, though, it seems like there is a real disconnect between what we at the university say we want to have happen and what our interns say is happening. It becomes a tension.”

Although there is no easy way to resolve those concerns, dialogue emerged as an important part of deepening the relationships between mentor teachers and university teacher educators. A social studies mentor teacher and close P-12 partner in the secondary social studies education program at a large state university said, “I want people to take my concerns into consideration...what can we do? It’s people who are willing to listen and say, ‘yes, let’s give that a shot’. It’s people who validate concerns from mentor teachers.” An elementary education coordinator who brought mentor teachers into conversation about their curriculum design and methods added, “We gained so much insight by having those conversations...talking to each other in a way that we haven’t done before.” One of the facilitators and the coordinator for MSU’s Detroit area internship program connected these ideas saying, “Perceptions, relationships, and reciprocity seem to be the key...the ability to reflect on what you needed as a mentor teacher and then what your students needed and put them together...then there is the risk factor, someone who is willing to step out of...
Moreover, a social studies teacher educator, who has developed a significant partnership with the mentor teacher who participated in the working group, said that university teacher educators “need to invest with the groups of teachers you have...there is plenty of skill and commitment within them.”

Still, the working group also considered how they might find and support high-quality mentor teachers. For example, the urban district administrator said that for teachers to be prepared to meet her students’ needs she needed more training for mentor teachers. She went on to say that she needed “more selection criteria in what the mentor should be doing...more emphasis on who you would like to see, qualifications, more than years of experiences.” She also suggested the universities should find ways beyond money to show their appreciation to mentor teachers. She offered ideas including conference attendance, co-writing articles, potential micro-credentials, and working alongside them to support their students. Along these lines, two elementary education coordinators for public universities pointed to specific supports for mentor teachers around co-teaching. While one coordinator said that her university offered little support to mentor teachers around what co-teaching looks like, another coordinator said that her university now offers co-teaching training for all of their partnership schools and at cost for schools who do not partner with them. By doing this, she said, mentors begin to see their preservice teachers as second teachers. Moving beyond co-teaching support, two teacher educators suggested that universities need to stay connected to their graduates. Providing them with mentoring and support beyond their student teaching experience would not only help them be better teachers, but it might also encourage them to give back as mentor teachers in the future.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

looking at how to create dynamic and productive relationships with P-12 schools, districts, families and universities. Beyond re-conceptualizing what partnerships could look like and entail, discussants also considered who should be a part of these conversations. P-12 educators, district leaders, community members, and institutions on the whole must put in the time and effort into creating strong partnerships: ones that transcend cultural bounds, district lines, and changing regulations and mandates.

While this is no small feat, “uniting schools and universities requires each institution to embrace a mission [and vision] that is greater than that of either one” (Burns et al., 2015, p. 59). It requires a shared understanding of expectations, values, goals and purposes between each system in spite
of the difficulties and pressures of sustaining deep partnerships without institutional support. A strong partnership also involves creating a larger role for community involvement and engagement; one that supports preservice education, provides opportunities to learn and build with communities, and allows students to become a part of the community, not just teach in it. School and university partners must think about how they can create more supportive, learning-focused environments for preservice teachers, their mentors, and the students whom they serve. While this conversation was a starting point for re-imagining partnerships in Michigan, they must continue because as one professor reminded everyone, “Every single day there are kids in classrooms that need support. It seems like there is a way we can show up, be consistent, and provide high quality support all the time.”

References


Group 6: Making Data Use Part of Continuous Improvement Culture in Program Evaluation

Facilitators: Kelly Hodges and Corey Drake
Scribes: Gregory Beaudine and Amy Ray

ABSTRACT:

Data collection should be parsimonious, relevant, valid, and reliable. Few programs have fully implemented the robust quality assurance systems required by CAEP standards, as faculty have largely not been prepared in program evaluation. The challenge of collecting valid and reliable data on a program’s impact on P-12 students is huge. How do teacher education institutions navigate the tensions between information that is easy to collect and information that teacher education faculty would find most valuable? What research-practice partnerships could we launch in Michigan to address these questions?
INTRODUCTION

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accreditation process raises the bar for teacher preparation programs’ (TPP) use of data and evidence to demonstrate program quality and conduct ongoing program improvement. The Re-Imagining Teacher Education in Michigan conference allowed university administrators, faculty, teacher educators, and practicing teachers an opportunity to share and compare experiences with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accreditation process. Participants also discussed broader ideas about using quality assessment practices in teacher education, and about teaching future educators about quality assessment practices. During the two meetings of this group, representatives from a wide range of public and private institutions including universities, colleges, and schools considered and brainstormed how teacher education across Michigan might be re-designed to improve three related outcomes: the teaching of assessment to future teachers, teacher educators’ own assessment practices, and effective assessment and data use in TPPs.

Black and Wiliam (1998) define assessment as “all those activities undertaken by teachers - and by their students in assessing themselves - that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities” (p. 140). In laying out this definition, Black and Wiliam specified roles for teachers and students in assessing student work and an implied role for teachers in thinking about and changing their teaching practices based on the use of formative assessments. However, while assessment can be viewed as a broad set of educational activities that allow teachers and students to make sense of and improve their learning, research in education has indicated that increased accountability often tied to standardized achievement tests has narrowed the types of assessments focused on and promoted in classrooms and schools (Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan, 2012; Schoenfeld, 2007; Swan & Burkhardt, 2012). More specifically, Swan and Burkhardt (2012) stated, “in a target driven system where examination results have serious consequences: What You Test Is What You Get (WYTIWYG)” (p. 4). In teacher preparation, increasing accountability demands may also have the potential to narrow the types of assessments used in programs. This narrowing of assessments could in turn shape the breadth and depth of the outcomes those programs pursue, with serious consequences for the future of teachers and their students. The intended outcomes for teacher preparation include complex, contextualized practices; focusing on a small number of assessments or particular types of easily-administered assessments could steer teacher preparation away from attending to that complexity. Thus, a challenge for all teacher preparation programs is responding to the call for greater accountability by making ethical use of a broad set of assessments that align with the full set of intended outcomes.

Shepard (2000) states, “Our aim should be to change our cultural practices so that students and teachers look to assessment as a source of insight and help instead of an occasion for meting out rewards and punishments” (p. 10). The cultural component of the forces that narrow the uses of assessment should not be underappreciated. These forces are felt by teacher educators (TEs) in interactions with their students (TCs), as well as by TCs in interactions...
with their students in K12. To counter the pervasive view of assessment as purely evaluative, both TEs and TCs need fluency with the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to support the multiple purposes of assessment identified by Wiliam (2007). Assessments are intended to support learning (formative), determine the potential/improvement/achievement of individuals (summative), and to evaluate the quality of larger systems (evaluative). Considering this range of purposes of assessment and the capacities that teachers need to enact them informed many of this group’s discussions.

To deal with these cultural and political trends, and to build educator capacity at all levels, recent work in education has promoted practices that align assessment more closely with the types of experiences students have while learning in the classroom and the full range of learning outcomes that were intended. Backward design, introduced by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) in their book *Understanding by Design*, is a planning and teaching process that focuses on teachers using assessment to guide instruction. In other words, teachers should start by clarifying the full set of intended learning outcomes, then move to designing summative assessments that match those outcomes. Only then should they design teaching and learning experiences, focusing on activities and formative assessments that build toward success on those summative assessments. For teacher educators, this is good advice. In their individual courses and across their programs, clarity about the full range of intended outcomes, skill at designing a set of assessments that measure those outcomes, and efforts to select learning experiences that build toward success on those assessments can be a strong defense each teacher educator employs against accountability pressures with potentially adverse effects on candidate preparation.

Similar principles underlie CAEP’s Standard 5: Provide Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement (CAEP, 2016). The focus on “valid data on multiple measures” required by the standard provides guidance to help teacher educators resist limiting the assessment of candidates to a small set of measures that inappropriately narrow the definition of quality teaching. Components of the CAEP standards enlist teacher educators in tracking the effectiveness of teacher candidate practices and impact on student learning over the time any individual teacher candidate is moving through the program (formative assessment), ascertaining teacher candidates’ achievement of standards of practice at program completion (summative assessment), and examining the impact of the program on the effectiveness of its graduates over successive cohorts of completers (program evaluation).

Two different groups of experts held very similar conversations with regard to CAEP accreditation, teacher candidates, teacher educators, and assessment. Much of the discussion centered on the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Progression for Standard 6: Assessment (InTASC, 2013).
PROGRESSION FOR INTASC STANDARD #6: ASSESSMENT

The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making.

1. The teacher uses, designs or adapts multiple methods of assessment to document, monitor, and support learner progress appropriate for learning goals and objectives.

2. The teacher uses assessment to engage learners in their own growth.

3. The teacher implements assessments in an ethical manner and minimizes bias to enable learners to display the full extent of their learning.

Both Working Group sessions were broken into two parts, each addressing the following questions:

What are the most significant challenges and tensions related to preparing teacher candidates (TCs) to meet InTASC Standard 6 and the associated learning progressions?

What do teacher educators need to know and be able to do in order to explicitly model InTASC Standard 6 for teacher candidates while meeting responsibilities under CAEP Standard 5?

In the next few sections, conversations between groups of educators addressing these questions are summarized.
What are the most significant challenges and tensions related to preparing teacher candidates (TCs) to meet InTASC Standard 6 and the associated learning progressions?

FOCUS ON TEACHER CANDIDATES AND ASSESSMENT

The participants identified several systematic challenges and tensions that can impede the ability to meet this goal.

One challenge relates to the reality articulated by a participant from a small private institution, who pointed out that TCs are not often aware of the effect of their past experiences with assessment on their perceptions of the purpose of assessment, or even on their perceptions of the nature of learning. This participant stated that a related challenge is how to accomplish transformations in TC perceptions of assessment as useful for advancing learning, especially while demands for external accountability of program effectiveness are increasing.

A participant from a large R1 institution suggested that InTASC Standard 6 directs considerable attention to the value of formative assessment, but most tacit messages that TCs receive from their experiences in our programs and in field placement classrooms are about assessments as summative. This participant agreed with the first, that a challenge is how to reframe TCs thinking about assessment as serving this range of purposes when so much of their experience, including their experience in TP, reflects only summative uses.

Teacher educators do work to make TCs more aware of the sea of assessments schools are swimming in, but TCs do not automatically understand the intended message. A participant from a small private institution pointed out that TCs, when asked to bring evidence from their field work of a teacher’s assessment practices, often return with a list of students and their scores. Helping TCs understand what data are useful for addressing ongoing student learning is challenging when those data are invisible to TCs in field placements. A participant from a large public university added to this observation, relating that even when a mentor teacher utilizes sound assessment practices, TCs are often unable to identify the practices a teacher is utilizing, and their effects.

Although TPPs often hope that TCs will learn about situated assessment practices in placement classrooms, this is complicated by two issues: the paradoxical messages their mentor teachers (MT) are receiving about assessment practices and values, and the lack of practice MTs have in articulating their practices and beliefs for these relative newcomers.

A participant from a large R1 institution pointed out that summative assessment is often out of the control of classroom teachers, as they are utilizing common assessments or district/state-mandated summative assessments. Therefore, TCs would have even fewer opportunities to observe and engage in crafting quality summative assessments for use during field experiences. A participant from a P-12 public school added to this, suggesting that on the one hand teachers at their school were being encouraged to use a range of practices, but on the other hand, they were being required by administrators to reduce student performance to a single number. A participant from a large public institution surmised that administrators might
be asking for numbers in order to quickly understand progress or growth. Participants agreed that helping TCs understand what assessment data were useful for what purposes was a challenge, because both nuanced qualitative data and concise quantitative data could be useful for different purposes, purposes that have remained implicit and mysterious for most of their education.

A participant from a large public university suggested, and others agreed, that identifying mentor teachers with sound assessment practices is difficult. This is in part because there is considerable variation in the quality of assessment practices among practicing teachers, and partially because the language, such as “formative assessment” is currently applied to many practices, some of which are effective and some of which are not. A participant from another large public university pointed out that there is variation across content areas in assessment practices, such that in some content areas teachers claim they “don’t use assessment” - meaning they don’t use traditional tests. TCs working with such teachers might be seeing good practice, but some of these teachers cannot unpack that activity for TCs because they lack the teacher education knowledge of how to articulate what they are doing.

The lack of understanding of how best to represent assessment knowledge to TCs is not limited to their P-12 placements. A participant from a large R1 university built on this point from the perspective of campus-based TEs, explaining that many formative assessment strategies are specialized in the various content areas. This makes it challenging to concentrate instruction in formative assessment in courses taught by assessment experts. On the other hand, it is challenging to concentrate instruction in formative assessment in content-specific methods courses, as those content-area instructors are not necessarily expert in formative assessment practices. Another participant added that assessment practices are also system-specific, meaning what is possible is related to what resources are at hand.

Yet another challenge was raised by a participant from a large R1 institution who pointed out that engaging candidates in the link between collecting formative assessment data and using the data to inform practice is difficult. In early stages of teacher preparation, TCs do not have ongoing responsibility for children’s learning, so it is hard to help them practice what to do with the formative assessment data they collect. A participant from a large public university added that this makes it hard to help TCs understand what counts as quality practice in making that link. A participant from a large R1 institution suggested that if TEs were able to do a better job of calling attention to formative assessment practices that TCs experienced, either in P-12 settings or in their university courses, it would aid student understanding of formative assessment. Because this does not regularly happen in either context, it suggests TEs in both contexts (university instructors and mentors in P-12 settings) may need help understanding formative assessment, and/or help learning to articulate formative assessment to TCs.

Reflecting on this challenge, a participant from a large R1 institution posed several questions TEs might have about supporting TC development of effective assessment practices. One is, how do we structure opportunities for TCs to try out a range of assessment practices? Another is, how do I model these practices myself, in the context of TP? This comment signaled a shift to the consideration of the second question considered in this session.
What do teacher educators need to know and be able to do in order to explicitly model InTASC Standard 6 for teacher candidates while meeting responsibilities under CAEP Standard 5?

**FOCUS ON TEACHER EDUCATORS PREPARATION PROGRAMS**

InTASC standards in initial teacher preparation, and so a challenge is to figure out which practices are the most important to address. Other participants agreed that sound, effective assessment practices take time to develop, especially in light of the constraints in TP and came up with a large array of issues and contextual realities that complicate these decisions for teacher educators.

One participant from a large R1 institution noted that a related challenge is reaching clarity as a field on what assessment practices must be in place before a TC is certified and begins teaching independently, and which can be effectively learned in the early career. Another participant from a large R1 institution pointed out that TP programs in Michigan have a range of philosophies and serve a range of candidates preparing for a range of settings, which further complicates the question of clarifying exit targets. Several other participants shared their own perspectives on this challenge, and agreed that we do not have a common target articulated for most areas of teacher preparation, including assessment. A participant from a large R1 institution related this idea of a common target to the notion of “safe to practice” expressed by Ball (2015).

A participant from a large public institution added to this point, stating concern that if there were a target for sufficiently effective assessment practice at program exit, this target would need to be far enough along in the development of TC skill and understanding in these effective practices that these “stick” when they enter their first independent teaching positions. Others agreed. A participant from a large public institution spoke to the challenges of helping TCs transfer what they have learned in TP about any aspect of teaching to their next context. A participant from a small private institution pointed out that we don’t yet understand what contributes to the variability in TC outcomes regarding assessment practices. Is it about selectivity at admissions? Experiences in the TP program? Experiences following certification? Another participant added that we also don’t know much about how a teacher’s assessment practices change as they gain experience. A participant from a professional organization in teacher education connected this challenge to the challenge of understanding the assessment practices of teacher educators, specifically what they know about acting on the knowledge and beliefs about assessment that TCs bring to TP in order to achieve program outcomes that “stick.”
Several participants pointed out that deciding on common targets is further complicated by the great variety of assessment practices in both placement schools and the schools that hire our graduates. A participant from a small private institution related this challenge to the range of teacher evaluation frameworks in use in Michigan, explaining that it was hard to think about targets for teacher preparation when candidates might be entering schools with any of a number of teacher evaluation frameworks and tools. A participant from a large public university added that the range of grading platforms and practices in schools made attending to details of implementing effective grading practices challenging. Several other participants offered other examples, including classroom management systems, specific curriculum materials and instructional technology.

Another major theme of this part of the conversation related to the intricacies of program design and issues of how we design programs so that assessment knowledge is appropriately scaffolded and sequenced across the time between matriculation and graduation. Picking up on the challenge arising from the lack of clarity about the exit target for TCs regarding assessment, a participant from a large public institution shared that programs face challenges in addressing complex ideas that develop over time, because students’ trajectories through teacher preparation courses bring them into contact with many different instructors. Coordination of efforts and reaching agreement is difficult. Another participant from a large public institution agreed that reinforcing ideas TCs learned earlier in the program and intentional scaffolding of complex ideas is made difficult by these challenges. Another brought up the challenge of understanding how to communicate ethically about candidate progress across instructors and courses. Several other participants expressed agreement that these are challenges they face in their institutions.

A participant from a professional organization expressed that it is one thing to have models of great practice and knowledge of the arc of development toward that goal, but it is another challenge entirely to be able to design teacher preparation experiences that move candidates along that arc. Relating this to the challenge expressed in the first part of the session about the limitations around creating links between collecting data and using it to inform practice, the participant noted that by relying on clinical experiences to move candidates along the arc, we amplify the challenges that arise from lack of coordination and reinforcement over time. This is sure to result in high...
variability among candidates. The participant wondered if it were possible to create authentic experiences for TCs in a more controlled, or controllable, context.

A participant from a large R1 institution pointed out that even with good curriculum and program design, TEs need a repertoire of instructional strategies that help TCs develop sound assessment practices. A participant from a professional organization added that TEs currently need to figure out these strategies on their own, which also creates wide variation in candidate outcomes. A participant from a large public university shared recent efforts at that institution to clarify which practices would be targeted and where they would be addressed, and the efforts underway to develop TE practices that support that growth. Participants were curious about the challenges TEs at that institution faced in changing their course goals and expectations and their instructional practices.

Several other examples of specific strategies that could be used by TEs were offered by a range of participants. Tensions between what can be done in the controlled setting of TP courses and what is possible, or necessary, in real classrooms were discussed during this sharing. A participant from a P-12 setting discussed the challenges in getting the balance right in TP between designing and developing assessments and using assessment data well. The participant wondered whether we might make progress if we attended to using data first, and then addressed assessment design and selection later in the developmental trajectory of TCs. Other participants expressed similar curiosity about this change in emphasis. A participant from a small private institution shared an example of this sort of work from their institution, and recounted that the TCs reported the outcome that most jumped out at them was how assessment data could be useful in planning future instruction. Another participant from a different small private institution shared a similar story.

Getting more specific about strategies, several participants pointed out that TEs could make good progress by modeling effective assessment practices in their own courses, including explaining to TCs what they were doing and why they were doing it, and shared examples. A participant from a large R1 institution pointed out that even a TE’s definition of learning should be made explicit to TCs, and connected to the assessment practices that TE is using. A related challenge is that TEs must both know how to do these effective practices in the context of teacher preparation, and also know how to articulate what they are doing in ways that allow TCs to connect those practices to P-12 settings.

A participant from a small private institution raised the issue of grading. The participant shared that working out a fair and educative system for grading in TP was still a personal challenge. The participant surmised that TCs would likely also be unsure how to think about grading in fair and productive ways, since even their models in TP were struggling with this idea. Others expressed similar challenges in their work. A participant from a large public institution suggested that the root challenge was understanding the intended learning outcome. This participant surmised that if the intended outcome was explicit and clear, TEs would be better able to work with TCs to meet that goal. In so doing, they could also model this practice for TCs in hopes they would be able to enact it in P-12 settings.
POSSIBLE INITIATIVES RELATED TO DATA COLLECTION AND USE

The following are some of the ideas raised in these groups for future collaborative work around issues of assessment and evaluation among TPPs in Michigan.

A participant from a large public institution stated that building consensus about the minimum exit expectations for TP around assessment could help with many of these challenges. A participant from a professional organization pointed out that a project is underway in Michigan which is aimed to conceptualize learning trajectories for assessment, from preservice to internship to inservice. Another participant from a large public institution pointed out that one important related question is, “What is the starting point?” Several participants expressed support for this work, and emphasized the importance of broad stakeholder participation in the effort. A participant from a professional organization suggested that this work could provide a framework for planning collective action, in which different institutions could work on effective tools for addressing different parts of the trajectory, focusing not just on “What works?” but “What works and how?” Another participant emphasized the importance of including a range of stakeholders, including from TPPs, from P-12 settings and from local communities.

A participant from a large public institution suggested some questions we could pursue that might better help us understand the problem, including “What is the problem - what aren’t TCs able to demonstrate once they are in schools?” and “Where do faculty struggle related to teaching assessment?” A participant from a large R1 institution added “How do we know what our TCs know about assessment?” A participant from another large R1 institution suggested that further inquiry into the professional development initiatives needed to educate TEs to support TCs in achieving the assessment goals discussed previously would be helpful. A participant from a large public university agreed. TCs are supported by a number of TEs in a program. Therefore, it would be important to consider not only course instructors, but also mentor teachers, field instructors and others that are involved in the education of TCs.

Broad agreement existed that TEs could be much more explicit about the types of assessment used in their courses. For example, “This is what I’m doing on this assessment, and this is why I’m doing it” provides one way of allowing TCs insight into both the types of assessments used to make sense of students’ thinking as well as the purposes of assessment.

Several participants pointed out that developing assessment-literate TCs must involve partnerships between teacher preparation programs and school districts. One area for collaborative work among P-12 and TPPs would be to determine what types of opportunities would be fundamental in any school district’s new-teacher training or induction-level PD in order to meet early-career expectations that lay just beyond the exit expectations for TPP.
References


Group 7: Teacher Education and the Michigan Department of Education: Moving Beyond Regulation and Compliance

Facilitators: Amy Parks and Tanya S. Wright
Scribes: Cassie Brownell and Tracy Donohue

ABSTRACT:

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and teacher preparation programs share the goal of preparing effective teachers for Michigan schools. However, MDE exists to operationalize the laws and regulations coming from the state legislature and administration in ways that are economical, valid, and sustainable. Teacher education faculty have the expertise and experience in preparing teachers. How can this conference provide an opportunity to find ways in which MDE could call upon educator expertise, and ways in which teacher educators could remain better connected with what is happening in the state legislature and MDE?
This working group explored the relationship between the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and teacher education programs within the state. The larger focus was on building positive working relationships across institutions and with MDE. In both working group sessions, the conversation was guided by the following questions:

- What shared challenges should we be tackling in the next five years, specifically related to teacher education?
- In what ways could teacher education institutions and the Department of Education support each other in our work?
- What could we do to build productive partnerships around shared goals?

In what follows, we first highlight the problem spaces as defined by participants. Next, we offer specific areas for improvement and reimagining before outlining potential next steps and possible initiatives.

DEFINITION OF AREAS FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION

Across both conversations, participants shared two primary areas for further collaboration—testing of teacher candidates and mentoring and induction. Thus, we open our discussion of problem spaces with in-depth descriptions of these two focal areas before sharing the secondary areas for collaboration identified by session participants.
Testing of Candidates

One primary area for consideration across both groups was the testing of teacher candidates, but it fell under two broader categories--entrance exams that admit into the teacher preparation program and certification tests that potentially limit who can enter the workforce.

As noted by several participants, a shared understanding exists about the need to measure the knowledge and skills of teacher candidates. At the same time, participants questioned the extent to which high scores on standardized, paper/pencil tests have been shown to be associated with high quality teaching. For example, one participant asked: If a teacher candidate were capable of getting into the university, but perhaps doesn’t test well, should we believe that this person won’t be a good teacher? Participants also asked: To what degree might MDE and institutions of higher education take on this issue? One area for continued conversation might be the scope, scale, and content of what gets tested. Many participants felt there was a significant difference between the subject matter content on which teacher candidates are tested and the actual skills and knowledge necessary for success in their careers. For instance, a teacher candidate might pass a history class, but fail the social studies Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC). Participants noted that currently tests focus much more on content knowledge than on pedagogical skills.

More broadly, participants connected the testing of candidates to a number of other areas for continued conversation, including the declining enrollment in teacher education programs nationwide, and the implications for programs developing local partnerships with districts of changing teacher certification tests and standards. Participants offered several anecdotes about teacher candidates in their home institutions being challenged by, and ultimately failing, required tests. In turn, many participants raised questions about how this testing informed recruitment of a diverse pool of teacher candidates.

One participant noted that, just as institutions begin to figure out ways to support their candidates, the requirements and/or certification tests seem to change. Similarly, participants shared stories about challenges posed by these changes for partnering with local districts. Many in the room commented that, in future planning, it might be useful to find out what other states are doing with testing, particularly as it relates to the concerns expressed about diversity, enrollment in teacher preparation, and partnerships with local schools. It was suggested that one place to consider looking would be Tennessee, where they are trying to create networks that include higher education institutions and the state department of education.

Mentoring and Induction

Mentoring and teacher induction were other primary areas identified for further collaboration among participants in both sessions. Participants concurred that induction and mentoring provide a natural way for MDE to collaborate with institutions of higher education. Much of the conversation centered around finding mentor/cooperating teachers who would help ensure that teacher candidates “survive and thrive” their student teaching and transition into their teaching career.
Participants stressed the importance of finding effective mentor teachers. Several participants mentioned the importance of school districts being included in collaboration with MDE and higher education institutions, especially in conversations about mentoring and induction. Specifically, participants discussed how all parties need to work with school districts to “make the case” for why supporting teacher candidates is crucial for the future of the profession. As one participant noted, the “added pressure” school districts face due to testing and accountability of their P-12 students might dissuade districts from wanting to participate in the development of teacher candidates because they fear candidates might adversely impact student test scores. The participant further explained that because teacher evaluations include student test score performance, teachers might hesitate to cede responsibility to a student teacher in case this might adversely impact student learning. What then might be done? How might MDE and higher education institutions work more closely with schools and listen to the concerns of administrators and teachers in an effort to provide mentoring opportunities that are worthwhile and beneficial for all parties?

As several participants noted, across both sessions, many classroom teachers feel handing their classrooms over to student teachers poses risks, as noted above in terms of teacher evaluations based on student test scores. Lower test scores also reflect negative impact on the children in classrooms. Thus, in each session, questions were raised about whether there is current empirical evidence addressing the question of whether having a student teacher in the classroom benefits learning or limits learning. Perhaps, it was suggested, MDE and teacher education programs might collaboratively investigate this question using data from student test scores in classes with student teachers and those without student teachers to see if any statistically significant differences could be found.

Similarly, large-scale partnerships with school districts around mentoring and teacher induction have the potential to create greater cohesion across induction programs. For instance, an MDE representative mentioned the wide variability within induction programs in districts throughout the state. Through collaboration and conversation, perhaps more consistency in teacher induction might be created, a need mentioned in both sessions.

Another topic discussed was that of mentor teachers. Participants questioned how “good” mentors might be found, recruited, and retained. Some participants suggested (better) incentives should be offered for mentor teachers who take on a student teacher. One participant shared that some mentor teachers take on student teachers out of the “goodness of their hearts.” Although many mentor teachers obtain State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECH) for their service, many participants believed this was not enough of an incentive to recruit high quality mentor teachers. One participant suggested that mentor teachers should be provided with support to become “master teachers” and described how such an offer might also improve the status of the profession. Both participant groups discussed how framing the role of a mentor teacher as an achievement might make the position more desirable and attract more effective teachers. This proposal might include the possibility of “promotion” to the status of “master teacher” from
a regular classroom teacher, which would be accompanied by some financial compensation. Additionally, when discussing financial incentives related to mentoring, a mentor teacher participant stated that, although he appreciated monetary compensation offered by the higher education institution, he found the collegiality the position offered him with higher education colleagues the most attractive incentive for his participation. Building on this idea, participants then suggested that higher education institutions and MDE could frame the position of a mentor teacher in this fashion.

SECONDARY AREAS FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION

Certification Structure

Participants mentioned certification structure as an area for continued discussion as well. Many worried about how the changing grade bands (see Figure 1), like past reforms, will affect teacher preparation programs. This includes a change in program standards and decisions about how or whether to “grandfather in” teacher candidates regarding such changes. Many participants commented that they just had overhauled their programs, expressing major concerns about what the changes in certification would mean for their programs.

Other participants had more specific questions regarding the certification structure. For example, some wondered why there was not a middle grades’ band while others expressed interest in figuring out how higher education institutions might best prepare teacher candidates for all settings (e.g., rural v. urban v. suburban). Participants hoped that, in making such changes, MDE would build a flexible system with adequate transition time. MDE representatives stressed that strong partnerships would sustain the changes and encouraged participants to take part and provide input.

Although the above areas were the primary focus of conversation among participants, a number of other topics were also raised. We also believe it is important to note that the areas for future collaboration described in this paper, as with many topics in education, overlap, but we have categorized them here under headers for purposes of clarity.
Lobbying legislature

In both sessions, both lobbying and legislation were discussed in relation to a variety of challenges. While MDE is responsible for enforcing educational policies at the state level, it is important to note that MDE itself cannot lobby. Thus, rather than a top-down approach from MDE, higher education institutions must create a collective voice for talking to legislators. Through collaborative conversation with governmental leaders, colleges of education can demonstrate how they are advocates for higher education and how experts within colleges of education can be helpful to them. Simultaneously, participants cited the value and importance of involving local ISDs and teachers in lobbying efforts as well. Of particular concern was the absence of legislators at the conference. Although the presence of MDE for conference conversations was appreciated by all those in attendance, participants desired that, in the future, legislators or their aides would join them at the table. One current state legislator that may be an ally is State Rep. Sherry Gay Danogo, a former Detroit educator.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

During the morning session, CAEP was a focus of discussion but did not re-emerge with the afternoon group as they considered the partnership between MDE and higher education. Although participants agreed that there should be mechanisms in place for advancing continuous improvement, many colleges of education are still very worried about CAEP as the vehicle for accomplishing this goal. MDE representatives noted that they had written a letter of concern about the impact of new accreditation standards to CAEP officials. Participants discussed that, in other states, the department of education often acts as a liaison with CAEP, but MDE representatives mentioned that CAEP has not yet accepted data from MDE. Perhaps an alternative route for conversation and collective agency with CAEP officials could be through the Michigan Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) or through Teaching Works at the University of Michigan.

Teacher shortage

Participants in both sessions were in agreement that ensuring all P-12 students in Michigan are instructed by effective teachers is essential. Teacher shortages and persistent teacher vacancies are having a negative effect on P-12 classrooms in some places. Specifically, participants noted that teaching positions that are persistently vacant are typically found in schools with large at-risk populations, the very schools that most need high quality teachers. For example, one participant expressed interest in how potential changes with certification bands might negatively affect Detroit Public Schools, a district that is consistently faced with teacher shortages. The ongoing mismatch between the supply of teachers and the demands of schools was a theme across both sessions.

Declining teacher preparation program enrollment throughout Michigan was also discussed. Participants noted the contribution of the declining status of the teaching profession as a contributing factor in terms of teacher shortages and persistent vacancies. Participants agreed that the teaching profession is no longer valued across society as a whole. One participant, a P-12 teacher, mentioned that Michigan is a “hostile” environment to teachers and that
being a teacher can sometimes feel “crushing.” Teacher salary freezes and new evaluation and accountability systems were among the reasons cited that contribute to the negative outlook concerning the teaching profession. However, one participant mentioned the MDE initiative to raise the status of the teaching profession through their new campaign, #proudM1educator, although few in the room were convinced this would be enough to bring about meaningful change.

**Alternative certification**

Participants also discussed alternative certification programs, especially as they pertain to teacher shortages. For instance, one participant expressed worry that a teacher shortage could lead the state to agree to make certification less rigorous for teacher candidates. Participants’ level of understanding and experience pertaining to alternative certification varied widely. One participant had minimal knowledge of alternative certification while another one worked in an alternative certification teacher preparation program. Participants also discussed how alternative certification programs themselves vary widely. An MDE representative shared that the percentage of new teacher candidates with alternative certification in Michigan is relatively low.

**Recruiting Quality and Diversity of Teacher Candidates**

The quality of teacher candidates was another point of discussion. A classroom teacher expressed apprehension on behalf of fellow teacher colleagues about making sure teacher candidates are “good.” Large scale factors, such as teacher salary and the cost of degrees, were also discussed, yet acknowledged as beyond the scope of the group. The discussion then turned to the reasons students do or do not go into the teaching profession. Participants discussed how other professional fields, such as STEM, hold incentives that are far more attractive to people who might otherwise choose teaching. A lack of professionalization was noted as contributing to lower numbers of people going into the profession.
AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT

Across participants’ primary and secondary discussion points, many areas needing improvement were mentioned. Among the issues of greatest potential was the role of the state legislature in making decisions about education and, in turn, the role MDE plays in enforcing such policies. Tied to this were questions about the role of local ISDs and local school boards. Participants in both sections appeared especially worried about how, with such a high turnover of staff, MDE can improve their communications to potential collaborators, including high priority schools. Participants suggested that, as a means of increasing communication across all parties, regional conversations might be sponsored more frequently.

CONCLUSION(S) AND POSSIBLE INITIATIVES

Although participants spent much of each session outlining perceived problem spaces as well as suggested areas for improvement, they also offered ideas and insights about potential next steps. Many in the room expressed their desire for more frequent critical conversations, like the sessions described in this chapter. Some thought it might be best for MDE to organize working groups. Other potential networks for collaboration include:

• Michigan Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
• Teaching Works at the University of Michigan

In addition to better communication among MDE, higher education institutions, policymakers, and P-12 educators, a clear desire emerged for generation of more empirical data on which to base policy decisions. Suggested areas for research include:

• Exploring the positive/negative impact on student outcomes when a student teacher joins a classroom.
• Investigating the teacher pipeline, perhaps through some form of survey research, including quantitative and qualitative data, that would canvass individuals from high school through the early years of teaching. Although questions might be framed around why someone first chooses and then remains in the profession, an open-ended inventory of more comprehensive questions might also explore why individuals leave the profession in the state of Michigan.

References

Conference Agenda

Friday, June 23, 2017

8:00-9:00  Sign-in, Coffee, & Continental Breakfast  Big Ten B/C

9:00-10:15  Opening Session  Big Ten C

Welcome by Margaret Crocco, Chair of the Department of Teacher Education at MSU
Speaker Introduction by Robert Floden, Dean of the College of Education at MSU
Keynote: Preparing All Teachers to Succeed: An Aspiration in Search of a Method
Anthony Bryk, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

10:30-11:45  Working Group Session 1  Breakout Rooms (see list below)

12:00-1:15  Lunch  Big Ten C

Remarks by Leah Breen, Director of the Office of Professional Preparation Services at the Michigan Department of Education

1:30-2:45  Working Group Session 2  Breakout Rooms (see list below)

2:45-3:00  Cookies & Coffee  Big Ten B

3:00-4:00  Wrap-up  Big Ten C

Facilitated by Corey Drake, Director of Teacher Preparation at MSU

4:00-4:30  Networking Time  Big Ten C

Working Group Session Breakout Rooms
You will be in different working groups for Session 1 (morning) and Session 2 (afternoon)

Group 1: Room 110 (first floor)
Group 2: Room 62 (garden level)
Group 3: Room 61 (garden level)
Group 4: Willy Room (first floor)
Group 5: Heritage Room (first floor)
Group 6: Centennial AB (first floor)
Group 7: Centennial C (first floor)
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# Re-Imagining Teacher Education in Michigan

**Friday, June 23, 2017**

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<td>Group 7</td>
<td>Teacher education and the Michigan Department of Education: moving beyond regulation and compliance.</td>
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Acknowledgments

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