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Learning to Lead Group Discussions:
Teacher Education at the Intersection of Content, Pedagogy, and Equity

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Abstract

In this paper, five teacher educators explore the integration of practice-based teacher education pedagogies to support preservice teacher learning and enactment of large group discussion in fieldwork settings. We discuss our own insights into the shifts in our instruction as we focus more acutely on teaching high leverage practices through practice-based teacher education pedagogies. We share the units we taught with specific focus on the intersecting and overlapping knowledge related to content, pedagogy, and equity necessary for effective teaching through large group discussions. We also discuss tensions that arose in our own practice and offer implications for teacher educators interested in shifting towards practice-based teacher education to support preservice teacher learning.

Keywords: teacher education, practice-based teacher education, high-leverage practices, large group discussion, equity, collaborative research

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Learning to Lead Group Discussions:

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Beginning teachers must know and be able to do many things. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2012) in their report *Our Responsibility, Our Promise*,: "Learner ready teachers have deep knowledge of their content and how to teach it; they understand the differing needs of their students, hold them to high expectations, and personalize learning to ensure each learner is challenged; they care about, motivate, and actively engage students in learning; they collect, interpret, and use student assessment data to monitor progress and adjust instruction; they systematically reflect, continuously improve, and collaboratively problem solve; and they demonstrate leadership and shared responsibility for the learning of all students" (p. iii-iv). With this impressive list of required knowledge, skills, and dispositions, preservice teacher education programs are under pressure to ensure their programs are designed to address each of the above competencies.

To accomplish this work well, teacher education programs are sharpening their focus on making practice the core of preparation (Zhai, 2019). Ball and Forzani (2009) argue, "to make practice the core of the curriculum of teacher education requires a shift from a focus on what teachers know and believe to a greater focus on what teachers do. This does not mean that knowledge and beliefs do not matter but, rather, that the knowledge that counts for practice is that entailed by the work" (p. 503). A focus on practice considers knowledge being both developed and practiced in contexts of space, place, and time, and requires different strategies in the classrooms of teacher educators.

Researcher Positionalities

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In January of 2019, the TeachingWorks organization at the University of Michigan put out a call for teacher educators in Minnesota to apply for a professional development opportunity focused in the areas of math and English language arts. The Fellowship program involved opportunities for participants to focus on the high-leverage practice (HLP) of leading group discussions through multiple training opportunities. Over the course of the 2019 spring academic term, we each developed and implemented a unit of instruction within our individual courses. As an extension of our work through the TeachingWorks Fellowship, we were specifically interested in continuing to support one another through the development, revision, and implementation of our instructional units designed to teach preservice teachers about effective pedagogy in leading a group discussion. We designed a collective case study (Stake, 2006) to capture preservice teacher experiences during this unit and to learn more about their confidence and competence in implementing group discussions in their fieldwork sites (where available). We collected survey data, exit slips, and field task videos and reflections in order to better understand the experiences of the preservice teachers during this unit and any changes they experienced in their confidence in implementing the complex pedagogical practice of leading group discussions.

However, in addition to learning about the shifts in perception and practice of preservice teachers, through the implementation of these units in our courses, we learned about the quality of our own teaching practices. The primary purpose of this paper, then, is to share our learnings as teacher educators implementing high-leverage practices, specifically teaching novice teachers how to lead large group discussion, through the use of practice-based teacher education pedagogies such as teacher educator modeling, using video and transcripts to see practice, and coached rehearsals, and to inform the field about the "doing" of teaching in the context of

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elementary literacy methods courses. In some cases, we make brief reference to results of the study, but the main goal in this manuscript is to share what we did and our reflections as teacher educators implementing these units. Though not intended as blueprints for others to implement, we hope readers learn from our experiences and imagine ways to integrate learning cycles for high-leverage practices in their own methods courses.

Literature Review

Leading large group discussions is a core (or high-leverage) teaching practice essential to being an effective teacher (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Grossman, 2018), a practice that can lead to deep literacy learning (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016). High-leverage practices “include tasks and activities that are essential for skillful beginning teachers to understand, take responsibility for, and be prepared to carry out in order to enact their core instructional responsibilities” (Ball & Forzani, 2009, p. 504). Other examples of high-leverage practices include explaining and modeling content, implementing norms and routines, building respectful relationships, communicating with families, and setting up and managing small group work. To effectively prepare preservice teachers for the realities of classroom instruction, it is crucial that preservice teachers have opportunities to enact these practices not just within the context of methods courses but in the complex contexts of P-12 classrooms (Zeichner, 2012) in order to build knowledge for practice, knowledge in practice, and knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

The focus on enacting high-leverage practices, however, is not designed to narrow the work of teaching, to imply that effective teaching is simply the mastery of a set of discrete, disconnected teaching practices. Preservice teachers still require relational skills and a professional vision to be successful (Butin, 2005), and to be taught how to think strategically

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about how and when to enact specific practices (Zeichner, 2012). The movement toward practice-based teacher education must remain situated within the “historical, social, economic, cultural, and political issues that professional teachers need to understand in relation to their practice and the practice of schooling” (Zeichner, 2012, p. 380). Preservice teachers, then, should be taught and have opportunities to practice how the effective implementation of high-leverage practices has the power to be transformative teaching, to disrupt patterns of inequities that have historically marginalized students in classrooms, moving beyond teaching about diversity to teaching for diversity. By supporting preservice teachers to observe, practice, and reflect on these complex practices as enacted in the field, preservice teachers see themselves as capable of enacting effective practices in the complexities of real classrooms.

Previous studies have provided insights into the complexity of preparing preservice teachers to engage in leading group discussions (Almasi & McKeown, 1996; Alston, Danielson, Dutro, & Cartun, 2018; Kucan & Palincsar, 2017; Rosaen, Meyer, Strachan, & Meier, 2017). The instructional practice of leading group discussions as conceptualized by TeachingWorks (2019) includes the work completed by the teacher to plan (enable) and facilitate the large group discussion. Discussion-enabling includes selection of an appropriate task aligned with the content objectives, anticipating student thinking, and considering whose voices might be over- or under-represented in the discussion. Teacher pedagogical moves to facilitate the discussion include framing the discussion through posing an open-ended question, orchestrating the discussion by eliciting multiple ideas and probing student thinking, and concluding the discussion, all while maintaining focus on the content objectives and disrupting patterns that reproduce inequities.

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Preservice teachers learn about this, and other high-leverage practices, through an intentional learning cycle: Introduce, Prepare, Enact, Analyze (McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanaugh, 2013). Preservice teachers learn about and engage in opportunities to practice the selected high-leverage practice through practice-based pedagogies including teacher educator modeling, analyzing videos and transcripts of the practice, and then through planning their own enactment, receiving peer and teacher educator feedback and coaching through rehearsals of the practice, enacting the practice in fieldwork sites, and analyzing and reflecting on their enactment to complete the learning cycle.

Unit of Study Cases

Below, we describe our experiences designing and implementing units of study taking preservice teachers through a learning cycle centered around the high leverage practice of leading large group discussions. These units built on previously incorporated assignments from the courses we taught designed to prepare preservice teachers for an interactive read-aloud. Though there were slight variations across our units, the objectives of the units typically focused on 1) planning and enacting an interactive read-aloud based on a discussion-worthy text representing an alternative to canonical texts, 2) launching and orchestrating a large-group discussion attending to equity, diversity, and inclusion, 3) enacting pedagogical practices to elicit and interpret student thinking and orient students to the ideas of others during the read-aloud and discussion, and 4) reflecting on their sense of teaching efficacy after leading the read-aloud and discussion. As we introduced the high-leverage practice of leading large group discussions, we centered on supporting preservice teachers' learning through the incorporation of specific practice-based teacher education pedagogies such as teacher educator modeling of the high-

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leverage practice (HLP), video and transcript analysis of teachers leading discussions, peer-review of lesson plans, and coached rehearsals.

Teacher Educator Catherine

I am an associate professor of education teaching in an elementary education licensure program at a private, women's, liberal arts, Catholic institution situated in a large midwestern city. The course in which this learning unit was situated, *Choosing and Using Books for Children*, was preservice teachers' first of three literacy and children's literature methods courses. Ten preservice teachers were participants, all identifying as women, nine identifying as White and one identifying as Asian American. See Appendix A for a chart outlining my unit, serving as an example of a unit for the purpose of this paper.

Teacher Educator Decision-making. In past semesters preservice teachers (PSTs) were required to complete an interactive read-aloud but did not facilitate a large group discussion following the read-aloud. Preservice teachers would discuss the read-aloud assignment with their host teachers, and despite the assignment for PSTs to select the text, often the host teacher selected the text for the preservice teachers to read. At times, the classroom teachers selected texts for their read-alouds that did not meet the criteria preservice teachers were looking for, though PSTs felt unable to suggest alternatives to the selections provided by the host teachers. Most host teachers, however, were willing to work with requirements placed upon preservice teachers from the University, so for this revised unit, I required specific texts for the assignment. The texts included: *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña (Christian Robinson, Illus.) (K-1); *Juna's Jar* by Jane Bahk (Felicia Hoshino, Illus.) (Grades 2-3); and *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh (D. Tonatiuh, Illus.) (Grades 4-5).

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These texts supported course goals of providing both K-5 students and preservice teachers access to windows and mirrors (Bishop, 1990) and a range of texts by authors and illustrators of color, about children of color. Selecting the texts for preservice teachers allowed them to focus on planning the discussion rather than spending time finding an appropriate text or negotiating with their host teachers about the text to guide their interactive read-aloud and discussion. In addition, I provided them with their opening discussion questions. Again, this helped PSTs begin their discussions, lessening the cognitive load in order for them to focus on other aspects of the pedagogy. Specifically, then, preservice teachers were responsible for planning the interactive read-aloud to support the opening question for discussion and follow-up discussion questions, and strategies for supporting the large group discussion.

Reflection After Teaching the Unit. There were significant learning opportunities for both the preservice teachers and me through this process. Overall, PSTs reflected on how the targeted practice they were able to engage in prior to the activity supported their confidence in the field enactment. In particular, the peer run-throughs and rehearsals were most commonly cited as supportive activities. One preservice teacher, Ellie¹, reflected, “At the beginning of the semester before having any in-depth content knowledge, I had no confidence in leading a group discussion. Now that the semester has passed and I have greater insight and detail of content, I feel much more confident.” Even with significant experience in class, however, preservice teachers want more practice. Sarah reflected, “I felt confident going into the read-aloud and discussion. Having thirty 4th and 5th graders all looking at me and listening to me was a little overwhelming. I realized that I was prepared for the discussion but needed to practice a little more with when the students weren’t answering the questions.”

¹ All names of preservice teachers are pseudonyms.

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I plan to continue to assign the text and opening questions in the future. Far too often, teachers are faced with required texts and tasks with little flexibility to adjust the broad requirements of adopted curriculum materials. Therefore, this activity more realistically mirrors a task teachers might be asked to do in their classrooms (enacting a read-aloud of a specific text within an adopted curriculum), and while the texts were selected as alternatives to the canon and therefore might not be representative of published curricula, the activity itself would. In addition, preservice teachers still had significant planning to do in preparing their interactive read-alouds in order to support the opening and follow-up questions for discussing the book in order to support their ongoing development. Through this work, preservice teachers realized how difficult this work is, and the more they knew, the more they recognized that teaching generally, and leading large group discussions more specifically, was hard work.

Teacher Educator Kristi

I am an assistant professor in elementary education and the director of the Reading Specialist Certificate program at a public, state university in the Midwest. The group discussion unit was situated in preservice teachers' first semester in their elementary education program in a class focused on literacy development in the primary grades. Participants included 47 preservice teachers divided into two class sections. The majority of preservice teachers identified as White, and 10% of preservice teachers identified as people of color. In the unit I designed, preservice teachers were asked to consider ways educators can disrupt patterns of inequity and work toward more socially just classrooms. After studying the practice of leading large group discussion in their methods course, preservice teachers designed and taught three interactive read-aloud lessons during a field experience. At the end of the semester, preservice teachers returned to campus to reflect on their learning as a class.

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Teacher Educator Decision-making. I developed this unit in order to provide scaffolding for preservice teachers as they learned to consider language demands and supports for primary age students and to consider ways to engage primary age students with higher order thinking and talk about texts during large group discussions. Embedded throughout our work in this unit, I wanted to intentionally address racism, sexism, and other forms of social injustice that may occur through the selection of texts and orchestrating of teacher-led discussions in primary classrooms. Preservice teachers wrote a reflection of their confidence level based on what they enacted in the field. Throughout this unit, I felt limited by the time we had together on campus (24 hours for the course), but managed to allocate 8 hours of class time for this unit.

Reflection After Teaching the Unit. I was impressed with the amount and depth of reflection I heard from preservice teachers during their final reflection of their teaching after their field experience. Prior to this field experience, preservice teachers' confidence level was high but many did not yet recognize obstacles to effective discussions. Teaching their lesson, either with peers in the classroom or primary-age students in their field experience, helped many preservice teachers recognize the challenges inherent in teacher-led discussions.

In their written reflections, preservice teachers reported the most difficulty with intentionally addressing racism, sexism, and other forms of social injustice in their classrooms. Maya wrote, "I don't think I did the best job with this. I was more so afraid of discussing those topics because I didn't want my cooperating teacher to get upset with me." The second most challenging aspect of the preservice teachers' teaching was providing language supports for their students. Also, based on my observations of teaching in the field, I recognized the wide-range of success preservice teachers experienced in leading this discussion and believed many would have benefitted from more focused practice with orchestrating the discussion in our classroom prior to

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enactment in the field. In addition, some preservice teachers were partnered with host teachers who enhanced their work with the interactive read-aloud, while other preservice teachers ran into obstacles in leading a discussion because of their host teachers. Finally, I recognized that more intentional conversations about racism, sexism, and social injustice throughout the teacher education program could strengthen the lesson plans developed by preservice teachers and taught in their primary classrooms.

Teacher Educator Amy

I am an associate professor at a private, liberal arts, Catholic university in a large midwestern city. My unit plan was situated in the second course of a two-course sequence devoted to literacy education methods in the undergraduate elementary education licensure program. I taught the same group of students for both courses and thus had familiarity and had built relationships with the students taking the second methods course. This course, *Language, Literature, and Literacy II*, is taken in the final semester before student teaching and focuses on teaching methods, assessment, and literacy strategies. The course includes a 150-hour linked field experience. Similar to the units described above, the unit on leading a group discussion I planned was focused on selecting a discussion-worthy text that provided opportunities to disrupt patterns of inequity in participation and featured under-represented perspectives in literature for the interactive read-aloud and discussion.

Teacher Educator Decision-making. In past semesters, the text selection for the interactive read-aloud was frequently made by the host teacher with limited input from the preservice teacher. Preservice teachers would let the host teacher know they needed to complete an IRA and the teacher would give them a book to read. The book usually supported a skill-based reading objective that was part of the school curriculum. My decision to have the

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preservice teachers select a discussion-worthy text that intentionally attended to equity, inclusion, and diversity supported their implementation of the high-leverage practice (HLP) leading a group discussion. My rationale was that preservice teachers needed experience in selecting and using texts that intentionally attended to equity, inclusion, and diversity because it would encourage their exploration of books with under-represented populations, and the preservice teachers would have greater investment in preparing for the field task while expanding the opportunity of advancing justice.

In preparation for the read-aloud and discussion leading experience, preservice teachers completed our university's lesson plan template that included objectives from ELA standards focused on students engaging effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly, as well as following agreed-upon rules for discussions, asking questions to check understanding of information presented, and staying on topic. Allowing for preservice teacher autonomy in text selection was intentional on my part because I wanted students to wrestle with the challenge of selecting a discussion-worthy text and preparing a discussion-worthy prompt before they entered student teaching.

Reflection after teaching the unit. Reflecting on the implementation of this unit several things come to mind. Several of the preservice teachers received push back from host teachers about using a text that wasn't part of the established curriculum and didn't align with the host teacher's learning objectives for the day the student was completing the assignment. Preservice teachers were reluctant to advocate for the importance of their choice, and some preservice teachers responded by adding additional learning objectives to appease their host teachers. Several others, however, had host teachers who welcomed the independent choices and the

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inclusion of book selections that sought to disrupt patterns of inequity. Going forward, it will be important to bring the host teachers along and provide information about the HLP and the goal of attending to equity, diversity and inclusion through the interactive read-aloud and group discussion.

The preservice teachers expressed the concern of being able to respond “in the moment,” determining what to do next while leading a discussion. They were concerned about knowing enough content, but also about how to make strategic contributions that would advance the discussion. This concern demonstrated growth, as the previous year’s students who’d had no requirement to select a text themselves spoke confidently about achieving the host teachers’ objectives. The task presented in this study required greater knowledge of students, the curriculum, and the elements of leading a group discussion.

All preservice teachers stated in their reflection that the most helpful part of the unit was watching the video of their individual IRA/discussions in peer triads and using an observation protocol to examine their teaching episode. In a reflection after the triad conference, Jade summed up the experience, “Leading a group discussion with a discussion-worthy prompt and text changed the read-aloud from ‘story-time’ to an opportunity to advance justice and show the competence of all my students. It felt real.”

Overall, preservice teachers were better prepared for the practice of leading discussions that can advance equity than previous groups of students who took the same course. The coached rehearsals and video analysis allowed them to gain confidence through practice. After reporting initial feelings of vulnerability and nervousness about practicing teaching in class, most preservice teachers indicated that it was transformational in their preparation for leading a group discussion.

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Teacher Educator Suzanne

I am an associate professor of education teaching in an elementary education licensure program at a private, women's, liberal arts, Catholic institution situated in a large midwestern city. My large group discussion (LGD) unit was embedded in a course called *Literacy Methods in the Intermediate Grades* and focused on how to lead a group discussion. The course includes a 30-hour fieldwork experience during which preservice teachers engage in a series of field tasks in an intermediate grade classroom while I observe their teaching and collaborate with the host teacher about upcoming field tasks. For this unit, the culminating task involved each preservice teacher leading a whole class discussion with students in their assigned classroom. Both the instructor-selected text, a short documentary called *That's a Family!* (Ben-Dov, Cohen, & Chasnoff, 2000), and the related discussion question "What makes a family?" were selected to enable preservice teachers an opportunity to embed two of Learning for Justice's (n.d.) Social Justice Standards in their planning and teaching. Specifically, the focus on defining family was intended to encourage students to "develop positive social identities based on their membership in multiple groups in society" (Identity Anchor Standard) and to "express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people" (Diversity Anchor Standard).

Reflection after teaching the unit. While the preservice teachers each led a group discussion about the question *What makes a family?*, I videotaped each enactment. Preservice teachers then concluded their work on the project by reviewing their taped session, and choosing two sections of the video to transcribe and reflect on. The first transcription captured something the preservice teachers thought went well, and the second transcription identified a missed opportunity.

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When I analyzed preservice teachers' reflections, a few patterns emerged. First, they attributed successful sections of their discussion-leading to the pedagogies we used in the Prepare phase of the learning cycle. In particular, they pointed to peer run-throughs and rehearsals as experiences that were the most helpful. Their written plans, especially the sections where preservice teachers had to anticipate student responses and plan strategies for orienting students to one another's ideas, were frequently cited as pre-enactment activities that contributed to successful discussions.

The second theme related to preservice teachers' perceptions of missed opportunities. Without exception, each preservice teacher transcribed sections of their video showing where they did not recognize or where they actively avoided engaging with tricky discussion points. In her presidential address at the American Educational Research Association, Ball (2018, 1:57) refers to these instances as discretionary spaces, that is, "micro-moments where teachers send implicit and explicit messages to students" (Pinkard, 2020). Baker and Milner's (2016) similar concept of discretionary authority illuminates where teachers have agency to invite or prevent opportunities to advance justice in the classroom, including "about gender differences, text selection, engaging methods, time management, classroom tone, and other issues . . ." (p. 101).

In her reflection about a section of video that points to a micro-moment where she had discretionary authority to engage students in a conversation about normative family membership, one preservice teacher, Nakiah, wrote, "Watching the video, I saw Javier ask if someone can be part of your family if they live with you but they're not married to anyone you're related to. I remember when he asked that question, and I remember thinking 'Geez, I never thought about that, does he mean his mom's boyfriend? What should I say?' I just ended up leaving that sticky part and moving on. That was a missed opportunity." Preservice teachers' reflections on

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successes and missed opportunities were invaluable as I considered what stays, what changes, and what gets added to my large group discussion (LGD) unit plan the next time I teach it. For example, in terms of practice-based teacher education pedagogies, I will continue to develop the use of peer run-throughs and rehearsals with a more focused application of the decomposition for LGD to organize preservice teachers' advance planning for leading discussions.

When preservice teachers' observations about missed opportunities or discretionary spaces suggested that their attempts to guide students in challenging oppressive narratives about families fell short, I saw that my attention to advancing justice in the unit plan was weak. A specific example of weak attention is evident in the preservice teachers' video transcription, analysis and reflection assignment instructions. Preservice teachers were directed to align their reflection with one of the goals they had for their discussion, those goals were pedagogy-based and almost devoid of language around our focus principle for advancing justice, and so their reflections predictably aimed in a different direction.

Ultimately, I would like preservice teachers to share in what Nailah, one preservice teacher in the course, explained she wanted her 3rd graders to experience. She wrote,

When I think about being a 3rd grader in a heavy discussion, I know it can be intimidating to be the first person to start talking, particularly when it is launching a greater discussion. You can never be certain if that first response will draw agreement or dissent and being that first voice is therefore brave. I wanted the students to know that and to be encouraged by bravery and courage. It is exciting to be brave. Including this in the launch helped set the tone that students who participate are doing the class a great service, hopefully encouraging more students to participate.

Teacher Educator Elizabeth

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At the time of this work, I was a teacher educator at a large, urban state university in the midwest. My unit plan was embedded in a course called *Reading Instruction in the Elementary Grades*, a course taken by 5th year students in the year they complete their licensure coursework. This course centers on pedagogical methods in literacy and preservice teachers are also in a clinical placement in an elementary classroom for three days a week. For this unit, preservice teachers were asked to read *George*, a novel by Alex Gino, centered on the experiences of a transgender fourth grade student, a text which would use as the basis for practicing large group discussions. In order to learn about LGBTQ-inclusive practices in elementary classrooms, preservice teachers also read *Reading the Rainbow* (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018) a text focused on methods teachers can use to expand students' knowledge of identity and representation. Therefore, as we read *George*, we read through chapters in the *Reading the Rainbow* text to better understand strategies like 'expanding representations' and 'questioning categories,' topics that preservice teachers were encouraged to weave into their discussion prompts. This coursework was designed to help preservice teachers explore the ways that voices are silenced or privileged in our classrooms using text-based discussion.

Teacher educator decision-making. Initially, I questioned whether I should use a common text in this unit or allow preservice teachers to choose the text they'd use for the discussion work. In the end, I decided to choose a text that would be considered somewhat controversial in an elementary classroom so that we could learn to navigate the discussions in our work together knowing that the preservice teachers would not need to translate it into a field task in an elementary classroom during the semester. This course aimed to help preservice teachers develop expertise in understanding LGBTQ students and recognize ways that school practices might exclude them. Further, I felt it was important to help preservice teachers realize

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that this was important for them as future elementary teachers because gender expression can be an important aspect of some elementary students' identities, not just for middle or high school students.

Unfortunately, because this was one of four class sections of literacy across a larger elementary education program with a strong commitment to course-alike planning, I did not have the capacity to change the assignments to allow for a field task. While the absence of a field task prevented the preservice teachers from enacting the discussion practices with real students, it did allow preservice teachers to practice within our class using the pedagogies of peer run-throughs, simulated student interactions, and coaching. These pedagogies allowed preservice teachers to practice utilizing the discussion prompts they had developed to orient discussion participants both to one another, to the text, and to the social justice concepts at hand.

Reflection after teaching the unit. In terms of their ability to use the practice of discussion, preservice teachers indicated a strong feeling of proficiency. Mamen said, "I feel that I am more able to respond to changing discussions and ideas with learners, and I am better at leading discussions in all subjects." They credited the practice-based teacher education methods used in class in their learning, indicating, "The feedback and examples provided from peers helped me see great work and see how I could improve." Emma stated, "I feel highly capable in examining content for biases and misrepresentations. I understand and value the importance of affording all individuals representation in my classroom. I also feel capable of locating additional resources should the need arise."

One remaining consideration stems from the fact that there was no field task connected to our work that would have allowed preservice teachers to practice leading a discussion with elementary learners, and therefore PSTs did not have a chance to reflect on the effectiveness of

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their work with elementary level students. This left me wondering, if the preservice teachers had led a discussion in their internship classrooms, would it have led them to feel more or less proficient in the practice? When asked to stipulate how confident they were about using this practice in the future, some preservice teachers indicated that they still felt some concern about utilizing culturally sustaining practices with Brendon stating, “I feel personally confident but there are some systems things that still concern me, such as parents and school district pushback.” Because our focus for this work was so heavily on gender expression, a topic that some might find contentious, students felt unsure of how their work would be received by stakeholders such as parents and administrators.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway of this work for me was how little we had practiced the work of teaching in previous courses I taught—a realization that has already had a great influence on my teaching and in shaping coursework at all levels of courses I teach from undergraduate to graduate level instruction. This realization has given me permission to shift the course away from a primary focus on content toward practice-based pedagogies.

Discussion

The synopsis of each above case was the culmination of our first attempts at incorporating practice-based teacher education into our courses. Venturing into teaching the high-leverage practice (HLP) of leading a discussion proved to be a fruitful learning experience for each of us individually, as well as collaboratively as we identified several commonalities around our implementations. For example, we all noted the benefit of teacher education pedagogies such as peer run-throughs and rehearsals, providing targeted practice for preservice teachers prior to fieldwork enactment. Many commonalities we experienced were also seen as challenges for us or the preservice teachers to grapple with during the planning, implementation,

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and/or enactment of the units. We've chosen to discuss these as tensions. That is, although each of these points has a positive aspect, each also must be carefully considered and addressed.

Tensions around Content, Pedagogy, and Equity

When beginning to implement HLPs and shifting to greater focus in practice-based teacher education, each of us noted that we had to make some difficult choices about how we spent precious class time. The shift meant a decreased focus on delivering English language arts content to yield time for preservice teachers to practice implementing the content. In order to increase attention to *how* to teach, there was a decrease in attention to *what* to teach.

In these first attempts at in-depth units focused on practice-based teacher educator pedagogies for teaching high-leverage practices, these choices were quite difficult to make. In all cases, in future implementations of units like those described above, we hope to continue to refine how we layer effectively content and pedagogy through equitable practices in our courses for preservice teachers. For preservice teachers who need additional support in content knowledge development, this might require additional modules of work or differentiated instruction. In some cases, this might mean streamlining homework to focus on the most essential content, giving up some readings or assignments that, though beloved, might not serve the content or pedagogy in the most effective way.

Tensions around Equity

In our work at the intersection of content, pedagogy, and equity, we were challenged to disrupt a system in a short amount of time. As transformational learning takes time, our work to interrupt patterns of thinking and action that could negatively impact learning in P-12 classrooms was not always successful. Preservice teachers who knew how to design equitable lesson plans

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were not always successful making in the moment decisions that addressed student contributions—both those that helped disrupt and those that reinforced issues of inequity.

To do this work well, developing preservice teachers' equity lenses and their equitable practices must be embedded throughout an entire program, rather than having this focus situated in one course or leaving it to a few experiences to fully develop in preservice teachers. Preservice teachers will require feedback early and often to become aware of and address their own biases and to develop confidence in their ability to respond adeptly in classroom teaching situations. We think that strategic selection of high-leverage practices, scaffolded across a program, with the intentional centering of equity in the work can help accelerate this learning for equity in preservice teachers.

Tensions around Enactment

There were also tensions identified in the enactment of field tasks carried out during the clinical practice or fieldwork portions of these classes. Among those teacher educators whose students completed a field task as part of this work, there was a general sense that preservice teachers were better prepared for the task of leading a group discussion than they would have been without the preparatory practice-based work that happened in the college classroom. Although there were some preservice teachers who drew a blank or froze during their enactment, there were also many who conducted discussions that created rich student engagement while positioning students as sensemakers—pedagogical moves that even some experienced teachers find challenging.

While some preservice teachers were able to center issues of racism, sexism, or other injustices in their enactments, some found these topics difficult to address. The freedom felt by preservice teachers to choose or use a “good and worthy text” (TeachingWorks, 2018) for their

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lesson often determined their ability to address these topics. In cases where host teachers allowed or even encouraged these text choices, preservice teachers felt more supported and better able to center equity within their teaching. In cases where preservice teachers were steered away from choosing texts that could be used to address equity issues, however, preservice teachers were less able to address issues of social justice. In some cases, even when a text that centered on equity was chosen, the preservice teacher felt as if they could not address these topics as a guest in their host teacher's classroom. These cases illustrate the importance of the host teacher's vision of social justice and willingness to allow the preservice teacher to engage students' critical thinking around these topics. When preservice teachers are unsure of whether their fieldwork practice space is "safe" for this type of teaching, they are less likely to be able to further their practice in this area.

Implications

The implementation of these units helped clarify for us the importance of a shared understanding of practice-based teacher education and the high-leverage practices that we aim to develop with preservice teachers. This shared understanding would have implications for all faculty and supervisors working with, and host teachers mentoring preservice teachers in coursework and fieldwork settings. When we have shared understandings and language for the work we're supporting across settings, preservice teachers are more likely to develop enduring commitments to these practices.

Though there might be many obstacles to developing these shared understandings, teacher educators from one of the institutions in this study have worked over several years toward this goal with teachers at a partner school in which preservice teachers often experience fieldwork and student teaching placements. The professional development for the principal and

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teachers has allowed for thoughtful discussions with our partner schools about these practices and supporting preservice teachers working toward effective enactment of these practices.

While individually we saw significant growth in our own effectiveness as teacher educators and, in turn, in preservice teacher development as well, we know to be most effective, this work cannot be the work of individual faculty members. We envision a framework embedding the high-leverage practices throughout courses to meaningfully introduce and deepen throughout the preparation program preservice teachers' knowledge and ability to engage in these practices. We imagine considering practice-based teacher education pedagogies and high-leverage practices as standards embedded throughout a program, with a variety of opportunities for preservice teachers to engage in this learning and receive specific feedback on their implementation of these practices. We argue that the complexity of this work necessitates that we work together—both within and across programs—to prepare effective preservice teachers. Embedding practice-based teacher education pedagogies in the teaching of high-leverage practices has helped us develop confidence in preparing teachers to meet the demands outlined by the CCSSO in our opening paragraph. Ultimately, it is this that drives us, our hope that the shifts in our practice will meaningfully contribute to more effective, equitable educators for our nation's students.

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Appendix A

Teacher Educator A’s Unit Plan

Class	Learning goals	Primary instructional activities	Pre-work/homework
1	<p>Identify their current understandings of group discussion skills</p> <p>Identify features of group discussions</p>	<p>Introduce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete the pre-assessment ● Consensus activity as an introduction to the decomposition of group discussion ● Introduction to the decomposition 	<p>After class as homework, preservice teachers (PSTs) will read de la Peña (2017) “How to Transform an Everyday, Ordinary Hoop Court...” from <i>Flying Lessons & Other Stories</i>, complete handouts to support work during the next class session.</p>
2	<p>Articulate instructional purposes for discussion & distinguish discussion from other instructional strategies</p> <p>Develop criteria for discussion-worthy, high-quality literature</p>	<p>Introduce: Model Lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Model lesson with de la Peña’s (2017) story from <i>Flying Lessons & Other Stories</i>. ● Whole group debrief 	<p>After class as homework, PSTs will complete the activity on “discussion as a lever for justice” on the discussion board.</p>
3	<p>Use video and transcripts to identify strategies for enabling, launching, and closing discussion</p> <p>Identify ways teachers facilitate discussions to ensure equitable opportunities to participate</p>	<p>Introduce/Prepare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Video analysis using decomposition ● Transcript analysis 	<p>After class as homework, PSTs will review “How to Transform an Everyday, Ordinary Hoop Court...”. PSTs will also read their assigned IRA book and will use the handouts to complete brainstorming for their IRA/discussion.</p>

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<p>4</p>	<p>Develop skills for planning an IRA and group discussion</p> <p>Evaluate prompts / questions for worthiness of discussion</p>	<p>Prepare: Co-planning a text-based discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “What makes a discussion-worthy text/question” activity ● Share drafts for IRA/discussion ● Peer run-throughs, and preparation for rehearsal(s) 	<p>After class as homework, PSTs will prepare for their role in their rehearsal(s) for their group discussion.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Develop skills for enabling, launching, and closing a discussion</p>	<p>Prepare: Rehearsal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rehearsal(s) of IRAs with large group discussion with live teacher educator coaching ● Whole group debrief 	<p>After class, PSTs will have 2 weeks to complete their field task and their individual reflections.</p>
<p>PSTs enact their field task in their fieldwork classrooms over two week period</p>			
<p>6</p>	<p>Notice and name key aspects of their own practice</p> <p>Evaluate and reflect on their own practice</p>	<p>Analyze:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share findings from individual analysis ● Share clips from video ● Engage in group analysis 	