

Master's Portfolio and Thesis:

UCLA's Principal Leadership Institute

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Task 2. Group- As a group, develop a memo that responds to the following questions, citing readings from class.

1. What (potential) issues are important to pay attention to?

Three interrelated issues are student/teacher engagement, communication, and timing, as a means of addressing low attendance.

2. Why are these issues important for your students, your school, and the broader community?

These issues are important because they aide in creating a collaborative environment, in creating “laboratories of democracy” among teachers in planning, and among students in co-creating curriculum with each other. Creating an open, collaborative environment that fosters an empowering curriculum is integral.

3. Why do you think things are as they are (in other words, what do you see as the underlying cause/s?)

One possible cause, based off of the National Board Certified teacher cadre, is the prescriptive nature of the prior administration. Teachers appear to be missing a sense of open dialogue within their school environment. This seems to trickle down to a teaching style where teachers are prescribing learning for the students. Students are not involved with the creation of the curriculum; their learning is a set of experiences that is planned for them, not by them. Looking at the data, student surveys identify specific communications issues (statistically deviant from

their district peers): not being listened to, not being able to talk about their learning. Accordingly, and not surprisingly, they feel disconnected from their learning, wanting school to end, and prioritizing home lives over school lives (in the attendance).

These issues may also manifesting as a result of this being a very new school and having such a transitional leadership structure at its inception.

4. What alternative approaches might your school consider?

We feel a need for more data and more information. We would suggest a meeting with the former principal. How does the administration communicate with teachers, parents? What do current time structures look like?

We would also like more information from the National Board Certified cadre and other teachers (because this is a missing audience) regarding timing, structures, and their experiences as a whole. With the time pressures, what mentoring structures are created and fostered to link experienced teachers with novice teachers?

We need to look at how our faculty meetings are utilized by teachers. Teachers suggested that they were not meaningful under the previous administration. We need to provide the time and collaborative structures whereby teachers are able to co-construct curricula that will engage students, students' funds of knowledge (Moll), and incorporate community voices during their collaborative, planning time.

As an alternative to the existing structures, we would say that attacking these issues in a collaborative space and utilizing teachers, parents, and students to address them holistically is integral. Administration needs to reconsider communication (with faculty as well as with families) and dialogical. Opportunities to integrate family and community issues (criticized as missing in the student surveys) could lead to greater relevance in curriculum, engagement in instruction and practice, and consolidation of learning. The new administration should create forums for this type of collaboration amongst faculty and staff, and model what it looks like to foster this type of environment, with the hope that this will translate to these values being utilized in classroom instruction and the learning environment as a whole.

This is a new school that still has not been established in a way that will sustain success. The precedence has yet to be set for all students, and the data generated after this first year offers the new administration real opportunities for improvement and greater success.

Task 4. In groups, choose the critique that poses the most difficult challenge.

a. Write a paragraph or so addendum to your memo that suggests how you might adopt or add to your approach based on this critique

We would argue that our four critiques: Baldwin, Lave, Rogers et al., and Westerman, are all complementary in that they would argue that Excel Elementary has a significant school culture issue; it lacks the integration of community voices. An authentic dialogue between school and community would incorporate family needs, experiences, knowledge, culture into curriculum and instruction, and lead students to question the status quo. The culmination of greater

communication with the school community would be more relevant participatory learning resulting in greater engagement, and presumably more consistent attendance.

b. In a paragraph-long memo, explain to what extent public schools as presently configured can address this challenge

Public schools are presently configured by standards as learning objectives, standardized testing as the mechanism for assessment, and very structured environments to achieve these ends. Accordingly, schools do not at first appear configured to easily account for the challenges we discuss. Yet within this configuration, we can address challenges by embracing the opportunities that the Common Core State Standards seem to offer. Setting aside for the moment the (flawed) assessments that have been designed to assess them, these standards are well suited to complimenting community-generated learning needs, practices and objectives while making sense of, reporting on, and taking action to change the conditions of the schools and communities.

Similarly, structures of communication already exist in schools, but must be better used to appreciate the voices of all stakeholders. PTA meetings or “Family Nights” would no longer be information dumps (as per a culture of acquisition) and instead become true dialogues about learning. Parents have been conditioned and trained to attend meetings (or not), to sit and absorb the information presented. In order to create a true dialogue, work would have to be done in order to create an authentic space where parents and guardians can participate freely.

In a similar manner, community participation through community organizations need to be part of parent/community meetings in order to incorporate voices that are working toward change in

the community. The existing school structures--PTA, Family Nights, SSC--therefore, are transformed to include voices in meaningful manners.

Teacher preparation time, an existing structure, could be reconfigured to facilitate mentorship and collaboration instead of isolated lesson preparation. The faculty meeting could be reconfigured to acknowledge greater teacher leadership.

This essay will argue that in order to address the systemic inequities in the United States that students and educators are impacted and influenced by, it is essential for school leaders to transform schools to develop an institutional culture of care that will empower educators and students, and serve as a systematic, effective, and empowering educational strategy to address educational marginalization. This transformation needs to occur from a critical, social justice perspective that takes into consideration how marginalization works in society. Since both students and teachers are immersed in society, they bring to school social attitudes and ideologies that often go unquestioned, unexamined, and are deeply harmful to students and their communities. While it might be beyond the purview of a school to transform society, by creating an institutional culture of care, schools prepare students to negotiate the injustices within the larger society and empower them to transform their own worlds. Transforming school cultures through care is an essential step toward developing a more democratic, equitable society. This work is crucial and, therefore, all stakeholders—students, parents, faculty, staff, and administration—need to share in the creation of an institutional culture of care.

Cooper and Chickwe (2012) argue that “care is a critical dimension of constructive human relationships; one that is positive, mutually beneficial, and allows both parties to grow and develop” (p. 11). According to them, “the concept of care takes a holistic approach and suggests that school officials are not only aware of the educational needs of students, but also understand the issue in those spaces external to the school context that impacts and influences the learning process in school” (Cooper and Chickwe, 2012, p. 10). Therefore, adults on campus need to develop a critical consciousness of how power marginalizes people in US society. Indeed, as Cooper and Santos suggest, “the more adults who have an understanding of the

challenges of being an adolescent in general, and a member of a marginalized group more specifically, the greater the sense of care a student will experience” (as quoted in Cooper & Chickwe, 2012, p. 10). Moreover, Cooper argues that schools should support students’ development of a “Critical Third Space” where students’ “interaction and integration of the multiple worlds students navigate between their adolescent development to be successful in their educational pursuits. It is in this space that students are socialized towards a reflective achievement ideology and a positive racial identity, which lead to both academic and social success in school” (Cooper, 2012, p. 225). Through an institutional culture of care, adults and students collaborate to develop a critical consciousness of how power operates and marginalizes, thereby empowering them to construct alternate and empowering conceptions of power. Cooper and Chickwe (2012) develop a tripartite system for schools to develop the institutional culture of care: “1) Adult Culture of Care; 2) Positive Peer Culture; and 3) High Institutional Expectations” (p.12). In order for an institutional culture of care to thrive in a school, these three tenets are critical. How can schools develop the institutional culture of care?

There are multiple systemic inequities in US society that influence and impact teachers and students, creating a critical need for an institutional culture of care. For example, Ladson-Billings argues that the pervasive and prevalent educational achievement gap between African-Americans and whites is so drastic and chronic, that “the historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society have created an educational debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2011, p. 5). Borrowing from the field of economics, Ladson-Billings identifies the “educational debt” by quoting a “strict economist,” Robert Haveman: “The education debt is the foregone schooling resources that we could have (should have) been investing in (primarily) low income kids, which deficit leads to a variety of social problems (e.g. crime, low productivity,

low wages, low labor force participation) that require on-going public investment” (cited in Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 5). She illustrates how the historical, economic, sociopolitical and moral decisions have created a bifurcated society by citing Randall Robinson:

No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled and penniless, pit them, without assistance in a hostile environment, against privileged victimizers, and then reasonably expect the gap between the heirs of the two groups to narrow. Lines, begun parallel and left alone, can never touch (cited in Ladson-Billings, 2011, p. 8).

Within the education context, moreover, the “educational debt” has pervasive effects on inequitable educational outcomes. For instance, “In the 2005 NAEP results, the gap between Blacks and Latina/o fourth graders and their White counterparts was more than 26 points. In fourth grade mathematics the gap was more than 20 points... these gaps persist over time” (Ladson-Billings, 2011, p.4). Race and racism, therefore, are part of the US’s endemic legacy to US society, which have a direct impact on students and teachers.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)’s critique of US society is founded upon this notion that racism is endemic to US society. Indeed, according to Delgado, racism is so endemic that it has become normalized:

Critical Race Theory begins with a number of basic insights. One is that racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society. Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture. Formal equal opportunity rules and laws that insist on treating Blacks and whites (for example) alike, can thus remedy only the more extreme and shocking sorts of injustice, the ones that do not stand out. Formal equality can do little about the business-as-usual forms of racism that people of color confront every day and that account for much misery, alienation, and despair (as quoted in Lynn and Parker, 2006, p. 259).

Therefore, social justice educators must interrogate the fundamental tenets within US society embedded in Delgado’s explanation. The notion that there is neutrality in the way students are treated, that there are “formal equal opportunity rules and laws” bears scrutiny, particularly

within the context of “everyday racism, in the form of microaggressions...as practiced in the everyday actions of individuals, groups, and institutional policy rules and administrative procedures” (Lynn and Parker, p. 260). Furthermore, within the historical and political context of the racism that Ladson-Bilings identifies, CRT “adopts a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage” (Lynn and Parker, p. 261). As such, the inequitable treatment students confront every day, whether through tracking or pullout programs, must be historically contextualized within our racialized and racist society. Within this context, therefore, notions of meritocracy face incredulity since students are not provided with equitable access to the curriculum. Indeed, as Cooper and Chickwe argue, “given that many educators have been socialized to view education as the great equalizer, a process driven by meritocratic principles, school leaders tend to explain academic success and failures in terms of individual characteristics of learners rather than the structural inequities that drive the system” (Cooper & Chickwe, 2012, p. 7).

CRT also fundamentally interrogates the advertised reality of a colorblind society, as well as any supposed benefits that might accrue from colorblindness. Guinier and Torres (2002) explain how both the political left and the right in the United States have used colorblindness as an aspirational ideology that is fundamentally based on an analysis of the individual in society, not individuals within the context of history or social groups. As Cooper contends, colorblindness is a “complex ideology in which people are taught to ignore race and the existing power relationship that privileges the dominant ideology and culture in our society” (Cooper, 2012, p. 227). The dominant ideology posits that success and achievement are the ultimate responsibility of the autonomous individual. Indeed, “proponents of a colorblind ethos define freedom and equality exclusively in terms of the autonomous—atomized—individual. This

individual has no historical antecedents, no important social relationships, and no political commitments” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p.38). This ideology is pervasive in US popular culture, be it through the “rugged individual” or Horatio Alger mythology of “pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps.” However, by using the atomized individual, “proponents of colorblind analysis locate that individual in an abstract universe of rights and preferences rather than within an obdurate social structure that may limit or even predetermine a person’s choices” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 38). Guinier and Torres’ (2002) critique of colorblindness contends that it is ultimately a pernicious ideology: “the colorblind paradigm has led to paralysis rather than action...[and] inhibits the kind of democratic engagement necessary for confronting some of the most deeply entrenched problems facing our society” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 37). If anything, the ethos of colorblindness leads to further marginalization and disenfranchisement among students. Social justice educators must interrogate colorblindness to transform the inequitable policies that this ideology constructs in order to create an institutional culture of care.

Guinier and Torres (2002) argue that the marginalization of African-Americans is indicative of how marginalization works throughout society. By using the metaphor of the “miner’s canary,” whereby racism’s systematic, toxic marginalization is the air in a mine and black people in the United States are the canary descending the mine with the miner to create a clarion call when the air becomes too toxic and deadly. Similarly, racism affects black people in the United States and analysis of racism’s systemic effects enables people, particularly people of color, to create clarion call to all people of how the system also marginalizes and oppresses other groups of people. Indeed, “others ignore problems that converge around racial minorities at their own peril, for these problems are symptoms warning us that we are all at risk” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 11). Guinier and Torres’s argument underscores that “individuals have common

experiences of marginalization, those experiences often function as a diagnostic device to identify and interrogate system-wide structures of power and inequality” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p.12). Their argument incorporates race as more than just a social construction; it also reveals race as a political construct in order to interrogate the historical and political marginalization at the heart of US racism and society. In this manner, “the distribution of resources in this society is racialized and that this racial hierarchy is then normalized and thereby made invisible” (Guinier & Torres, p.13). In this sense, the “canary is diagnostic, signaling the need for more systemic critique. Political race, on the other hand, is not only diagnostic; it is also aspirational and activist, signaling the need to rebuild a movement for social change informed by the canary’s critique” (Guinier & Torres, p. 12). How can social justice educators use this critique to create an institutional culture of care that empowers both teachers and students?

Within the racist and marginalizing context described and interrogated above, social justice education leaders must construct a culture that enables students to feel that the adults on the school site—from teachers, librarians, custodians, cafeteria workers, and administrators—deeply care about them personally, their present realities, and their future. According to Theoharis (2010), there are entrenched systemic injustices that social justice educational leaders must critique and transform:

- (1) School structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement, such as pullout programs.
- (2) A deprofessionalized teaching staff who could benefit from focused staff development.

(3) A school climate that needed to be more welcoming to marginalized families and the community.

(4) Disparate student achievement levels (Theoharis, 2012, p. 332).

Indeed, disparate student achievement levels can be ascertained for marginalized groups in the United States in terms of not only race, but also with the intersections of class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. According to Guinier and Torres (2002), however, it is precisely through the critique of US society by using the prism of political race and the miner's canary that enables social justice educators to shine the light on the multi-faceted layers of oppression. "Tackling the role that race plays in our social institutions is a way not just to improve the lot of racialized groups but to confront the ways in which power operates and circulates throughout our society and culture" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p.130). Since political race helps reveal the distributional inequities within social institutions, social justice educators can analyze the policies, practices, and programs within schools to determine whether resources and support are being distributed equitably, or whether inequitable tracking and pull-out programs are normalized.

From the perspective of an institutional culture of care, social justice leaders must interrogate and eliminate separate pull-out programs and tracking. These programs segregate students, thereby suggesting to swaths of students that the adults on campus do not care for them:

In addition to being the most expensive and least effective means to educate students, separate pull-out programs typically segregate and track students of color, low income students, ELL students, and students with (dis)abilities. Moreover, teachers are not challenged to build their capacity to teach to a range of student needs and students become fringe members of their classrooms. Consequently, students who need the most routine, structure, and consistency in their day experience the most disruptions (McKenzie, et al, 2011, p.127).

Therefore, as Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) contend, “recognition that the role of school leaders is at least in part to advocate on behalf of traditionally marginalized and poorly-served students carries a corollary contention that traditional hierarchies and power structures must be deconstructed and reconfigured, thereby creating a new social order that subverts a longstanding system that certain students while oppressing or neglecting others” (p. 4).

Similarly, the miner's canary enables social justice leaders to analyze how the asymmetrical power relations marginalize multiple groups within schools in order to challenge traditional structural forms of power to develop more equitable distribution of resources among all students in a school. Furthermore, Guinier and Torres contend that “political race must assert linkages to class, gender, and sexuality or else risk fragmentation” (p.298) when considering the equitable distribution of resources and care. Therefore, eliminating segregating programs like tracking and pull-out sends an implicit message to students that the adults care about equity, inclusion, and integration.

Guinier and Torres (2002) further elaborate on how to interrogate power, and create a more inclusive operating definition of power that empowers and liberates. They distinguish “power-over” which marginalizes people through “direct force or competition, typically in a winner-take-all context; indirect manipulation of rules and outcomes of such competition; and mobilization, often through psychological means, of biases or tacit understandings that operate to exclude or to include individuals or groups in the collective decision making or conflict (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 110). On the other hand, “power-with” which is “the psychological and social power gained through collective resistance and struggle and through the creation of an alternative set of narratives. It is relational and interactive. It requires participation” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p.141).

Power-with has the potential to not only transform external hierarchies of power, but also empower the internal affect of those individuals who participate in social justice collaborative work. Building upon Foucault's notion that "power is a pervasive force that constructs all aspects of human interaction...[and that] power is not merely repressive but can be a life-giving force [which can] either repress or liberate, depending on how it is deployed (Guinier & Torres, 2002, pp. 138-139).

In this sense, the role of social justice leaders is fundamental to creating potentially liberating laboratories of democracy. Since power has an "under-explored social aspect that is creative, generative, and conscious of domination while resisting domination as a primary goal" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p.143), educational leaders can support teachers to create small, interdependent, mission-based professional development that not only "reprofessionalizes" the teaching staff, but empowers them to develop empowering pedagogies. In this sense, the advent of Freire's critical pedagogy would support the "reprofessionalization" efforts that "move toward a commitment to social justice we envision the classroom as a site where new knowledge, ground in the experiences of students and teachers alike, is produced through meaningful dialogue and experiences" (as cited in Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks, 2009, p. 12). Indeed, power, in this sense, can create spaces of "psychic empowerment" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 147) that enables teams of teachers to empower themselves mutually, thereby creating structures that empower students and promote positive peer culture.

According to Guinier and Torres, power-with "prepares people to struggle against external challenges in ways they have not yet imagined, while also struggling with internal conflict. It should disrupt certain habits of individual thought or self-defeating rituals, while introducing new possibilities for reciprocity, collaboration, problem-solving, networking, and innovation" (p. 159). Certain elements of "power-with" emerge from these two examples:

(1) working together over time in groups rather than as individuals in isolation; (2) seeing problems in context rather than as small units independent of the whole; (3) approaching problem-solving in ways that spark joint participation from diverse perspectives; and (4) defining problems locally, by the immediate stakeholders, and then networking to similar efforts going on elsewhere (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p.146).

Guinier and Torres (2002) provide clear examples that enable social justice educators to see a methodical manner to develop a social justice movement: “This multi-step progression from race-consciousness through social justice critique to democratic experimentation is what we are calling political race” (Guinier & Torres, 2002, pp.94-95). First, there is a recognition of race “as an asset the potential solidarity and connection that those who have been raced often experience” (p. 95). Second, “political race entails articulating a broader social justice agenda” (p. 95). The third step involves “a willingness to experiment with new democratic practices” (p. 96). Using these elements of political race can fundamentally transform the school climate that historically “unwelcomes” marginalized communities from the school. Indeed, parent involvement is in desperate need of transformation, and considering “power-with” enables parents to not only be welcomed, but to be empowered as critical stakeholders in the direction of the school, and in the education of their children.

Integrating marginalized communities into the school will take Guinier and Torres’ perspective of “magical realism.” Currently, due to multiple factors, community and parent organizations are not welcomed, equitable members of many school communities, particularly those schools that serve historically marginalized communities. If there is a space to interrogate and transform the “juxtaposition of plausible and implausible,” welcoming parents is wide open. Indeed, social justice educators need “the movement from the plausible to the fantastic...[making] a possible willingness to question, reframe, and experiment” (p.23). Social justice educators need to incorporate political race in order to create alliances with the many

people who do not currently have access to social services or a high quality education in order to demonstrate that the school and the community are in a “linked fate” (Guinier and Torres, 2002, p.289) . Indeed, the development of an institutional culture of care is predicated on welcoming parents and community organizations, people who care deeply about their children and their neighbors, into the educational community.

According to Theoharis (2010), by addressing the first three injustices, schools indirectly addressed the fourth injustice. Indeed, “these principals did not use specific strategies with the fourth injustice they sought to disrupt (disparate and low student achievement); they believed that the confluence of the strategies used to disrupt the first three injustices collectively was responsible for the increases in student achievement” (Theoharis, 2010, p. 341). Transforming Theoharis’s injustices by 1) integrating school structures that marginalize, segregate and impede achievement, 2) professionalizing the teaching staff to develop a caring, critical consciousness about students’ realities, and 3) creating a school climate that is welcoming to parents enables the school to create an institutional culture of care that addresses the systemic inequities in the United States that students and educators are impacted and influenced by. Indeed, social justice educators will transform schools to create institutional cultures of care that will empower educators and students, and serve as a systematic, effective, and empowering educational strategy to address educational marginalization.

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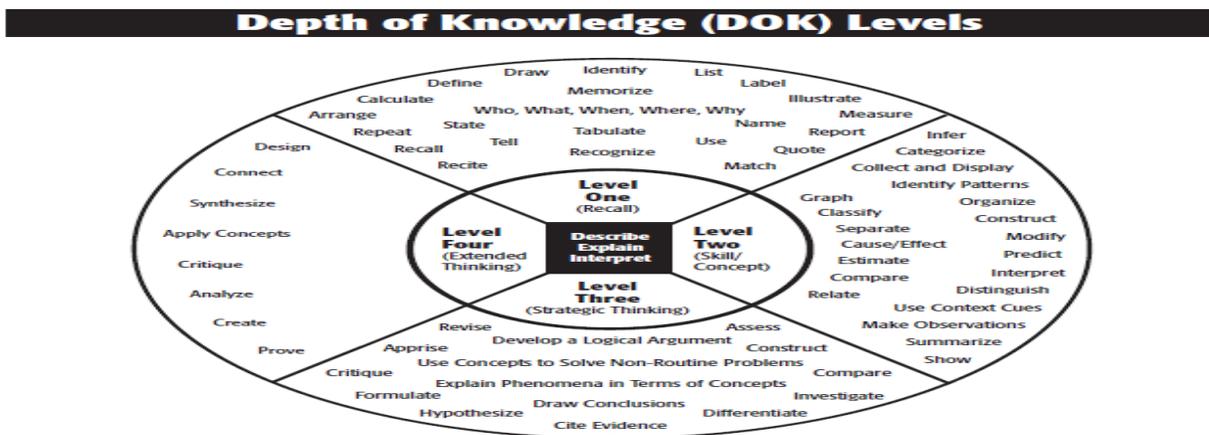
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Increasing Instructional Rigor in Schools through Improvement Cycles

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Identifying the Problem- Aim Statement

The problem our group tackled was rigor in education. We read the article, “Conceptualizing rigor and its implications for education in the era of the Common Core” by Paige, Smith, and Sizemore (2015) to have a common text to discuss concerning rigor. We recognized that a universal definition of rigor was absent, and decided to use the article as a reference point. Our group decided to articulate rigor as a range of learning activities, which can be manipulated by the teacher, existing on a continuum from cognitively simple to complex. The understanding of “rigor” varied even within our group and immediately we saw the need to use common language and the need to identify common tools to identify it. We shared various resources with one another and decided upon the most common tool used amongst us, the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) wheel. This was to guide the rest of our process.



Once a common definition was identified amongst our group we determined what problems existed in education around rigor. We wanted to make clear that rigor varied amongst teachers and school sites. To get more of an understanding, we set out to observe what rigor looked like at our various sites and discussed what we observed. Realizing that rigor was different across our different sites, we identified that as another problem to add to the need of having a common understanding or working definition of rigor. Upon closer inspection, we recognized that this was not only a problem when comparing our various sites; this was a problem that lived within single school sites. Thus, the birth of our problem: The level of rigor is inconsistent from classroom to classroom within single school sites. Our aim statement, then, communicated this problem: Increase the level of instructional rigor in our group's K-8 classrooms by November 19, 2015. If rigor varies from classrooms, teachers, and schools, we aimed to improve equity in rigor so all students are challenged to think at cognitively complex levels.

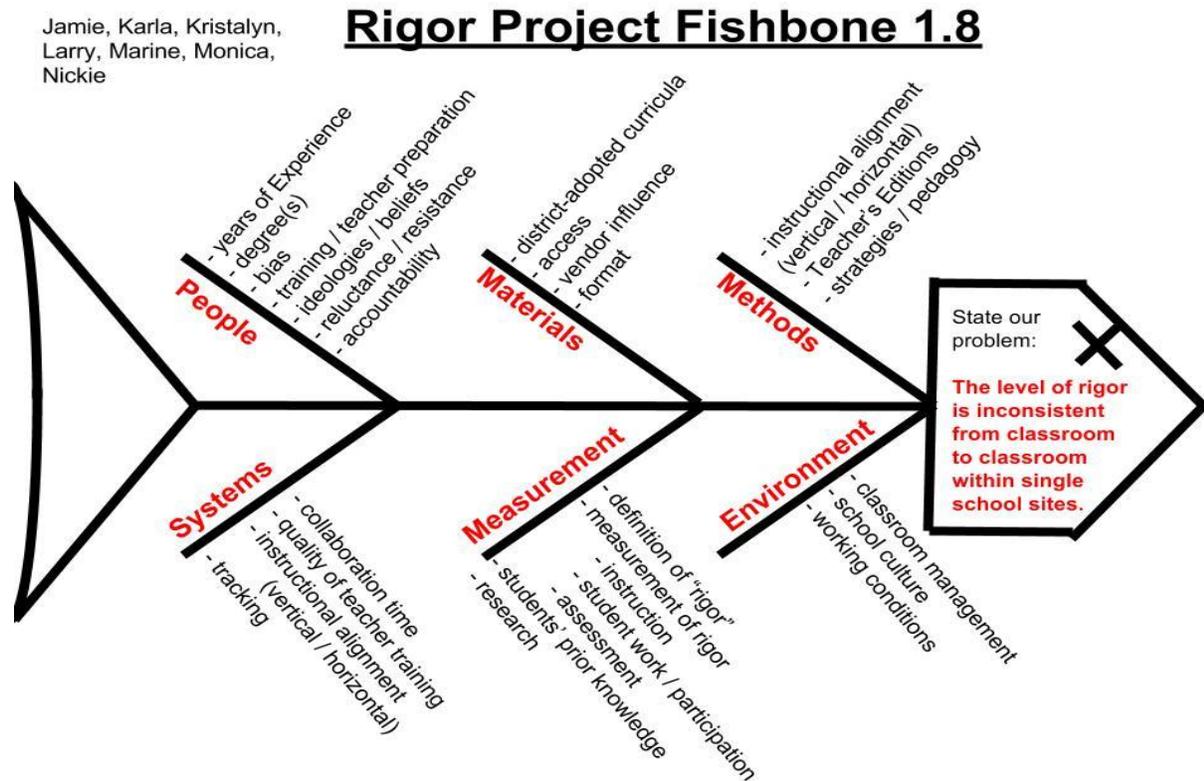
The System that Creates the Problem- The Fishbone Brainstorm

As we explored the potential causes of our problem, we decided to initiate our brainstorming conversation using a fishbone diagram. The fishbone diagram is designed to show causes of a specific event, thus making it a good starting point as we tried to make sense of the potential roots of our identified problem. In the book Learning to Improve by Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu (2015), we learned that a typical fishbone diagram has major causes grouped into major categories. Some common categories include people, methods, machines, materials, measurement and environment. We decided that we liked the categories in place, with the exception of machines. To better address our problem we replaced machines with systems since our current school systems may be contributing to the problem.

In version 1.0 of our fishbone diagram we identified the problem as “Rigorous instruction can be stronger on the simplicity-complexity continuum,” and we identified a number of smaller fish bones under each major fish bones (the different categories). After finishing our first version of the fishbone diagram, we were eager to bring it back to our school sites for some sanity checks. The sanity checks allowed us to show our fishbone diagram to the various experts at our schools to receive input and feedback on whether or not they agreed/understood our problem and causes. The sanity checks proved to be very insightful. When we came back together the following week, we realized that the problem was not well defined to the general audience, therefore was not understood entirely by the experts at our school. We also needed to revisit our categories and restart the process of asking “Why?” a multitude of times. The second round of assessing our fishbone categories and asking the whys, led to rich conversations that provided us many new angles and perspectives on what our actual focus problem was and the real causes that were contributing to it. After countless hours of dialogue we were able to reach consensus and create our final version of our fishbone diagram. In version 1.8 of our fishbone diagram, we decided that the problem at hand was that the level of rigor varied from classroom to classroom within single school sites. We also examined each category with more specificity which allowed us to isolate and address the different problems under each category.

The process of creating our fishbone diagram seemed longwinded because we had so many versions of it. However, it was the process of talking and thinking through the problem that led us to a better mapping of our problem /causes, and a better design of our process map. The “collective self-reflection” (Bryk, et al., 2015) turned out to be the meat of the learning and

improvement was only successful because of it.



The Process Map

Process mapping in education takes into consideration the educator or interdisciplinary team's perspective for identifying problems and suggesting improvements towards a preferred outcome, in this case rigorous instruction in the classroom. For identifying the measure of rigor in the classroom we asked several teachers at various school sites to be interviewed on which steps in the process map held value and non-value steps for planning a lesson in language arts. We first created the process map ourselves using post it notes during a discussion on how a lesson is developed based on our own experiences as educators. Each team member named practices and objectives commonly included in the lesson planning pathway and spent time determining which steps were the correct sequence and other ripple effect variables involved in each step such as differentiation and assessments. A sanity check at the school site with teachers

who are on the front lines and frequently involved in lesson planning followed which included reporting of concerns, evaluation of efficacy, and the listing of consecutive events towards planning a meaningful lesson designed to increase rigor. When our team reconvened we conducted lean thinking transformation of the pathway, a popular Toyota Kata method, to inform us on what steps were not needed, could be combined, or steps that could be switched with another step in the process (Rother, 2010).

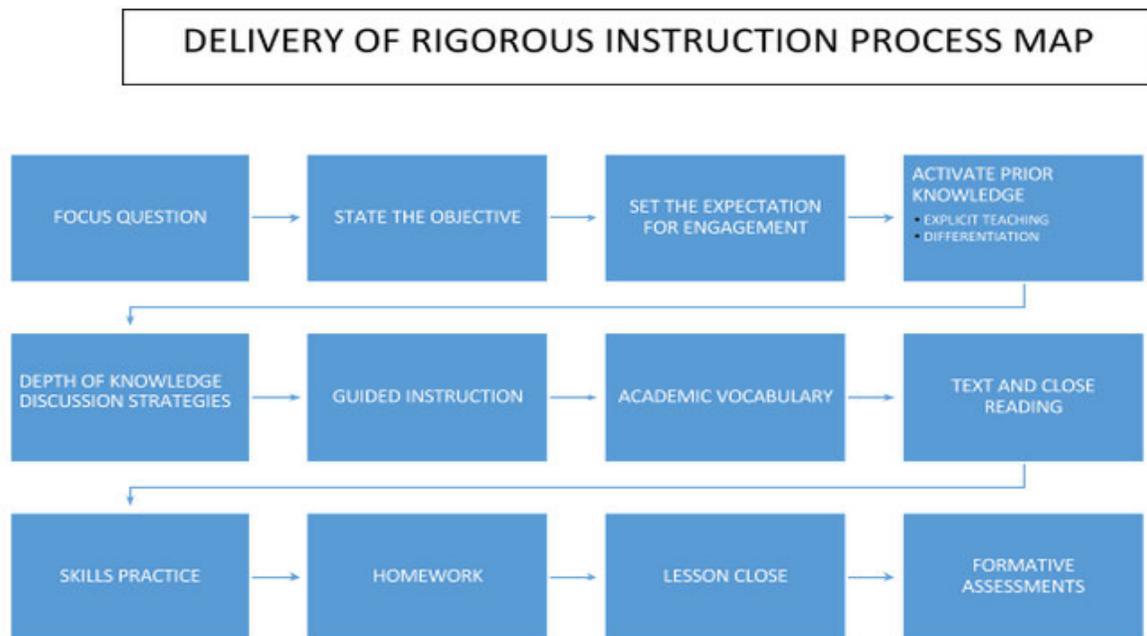
What we discovered was that likely wasted effort was found in the front loading of vocabulary when students are already familiar with a topic. Another identified bottleneck was offering a focus question before naming the objective and the placement of assessments. Some teachers prefer to assess both midway to check understanding and at the conclusion of instruction, versus only at the conclusion. We talked about the various steps and the thought process behind lesson planning and realized that the teacher’s objective sets the tone for the entire lesson. In order to test our theory, our group decided to send one of our outside-of-the-classroom team members to observe classrooms and watch a few lessons. During this observation, the observer was to use a checklist to assess the rigor seen in the classroom.

Classroom Visitation Data Collection Template

School Name:		Date:				Subject/Topic:
Teacher:		Duration:				Grade Level:
Evidence of Rigor		Below Standard	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary	Evidence to Support Rating
Appropriately Challenging Student Work	Student products and/or observable efforts and activities demonstrate depth of content knowledge & content area connections with the skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Higher Order Thinking	Students are reflective, self-directed and productive learners who are creative & critical thinkers and problem solvers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Inquiry & Student Response	Student responses, collaborative conversations, discussions, and presentations provide evidence of analytical skill and creativity combined with a deep knowledge of content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Evidence of Relevance		Below Standard	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary	Evidence to Support Rating
Appropriately Challenging Student Work	Student products or observable efforts and activities lead to real-world applications and skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Authentic/Real World Resources	References, tools, equipment, and technology are authentic real-world resources that go beyond textbook and worksheets.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Learning Connections	The learning experience connects to real world applications and appropriately builds on students' prior knowledge and skill.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

During these observations, the lessons observed demonstrated a low level of rigor as assessed by the checklist. Using the DOK wheel, the observer rated all three lessons observed in a DOK 1 and 2 level in their level of student engagement and inquiry. As the observer collected more information, it was soon realized that all three teachers had used lessons taken directly from teacher’s editions of the district-adopted curriculum. It was of interest to look at the lessons designed by these publishers. In looking closely, the stated objectives in the teacher’s guides were not very rigorous. As a consequence, the level of rigor in the lesson and activities provided to the students were also very low.

When the group put together these anecdotal observations along with the Process Map outlining a lesson plan, it became evident that the level of rigor begins at the very start of a lesson planning venture, with the *lesson objective*.



When teachers sit down either alone or in collaboration with other teachers, they must think about the purpose behind their lesson. The level of rigor and thought a teacher places into

her lesson plan will reflect the level of rigor of questions and discussions s/he will facilitate. We decided to start collecting lesson objectives. We chose to collect these objectives directly from students in two urban middle school math classrooms. As is a common practice, teachers write their lesson objective on the board for students to see every day. The students were given the task of copying the objective every day and turning them into the office at a designated spot. Not only was this a quick and easy collection, it was a small way to hit a big issue. This level of data collection proved to be effective as the balancing measures of time and effort were accounted for by involving the students in the data collection. One of our team members set all of this into place at her school and brought the data back to our group to analyze over a three-week period.

The lesson objectives were analyzed and assigned a Depth of Knowledge (DOK) rating of one through four. Level one tasks involved recalling information like calculating tax and learning the steps to solving one-step equations. Level two tasks involved applying learned skills to solve problems, for example using a formula to solve a word problem that warranted the use of the formula. Level three tasks involve developing a logical argument to support thinking; and level four tasks involved the application of mathematical concepts to real world situations. In an effort to simplify the data collection process a system was developed utilizing a tool where a students from the selected class periods were tasked with recording the daily agenda on a form that they retrieved from the office at the start of the day and delivered back at the end of the school day. The data was then analyzed and assigned a DOK level and recorded on the run chart.

Theory of Action- The Driver Diagram

The next step was to identify change ideas through drivers. A driver diagram provided us with the opportunity to build theories that would allow us to make progress towards our aim. Our

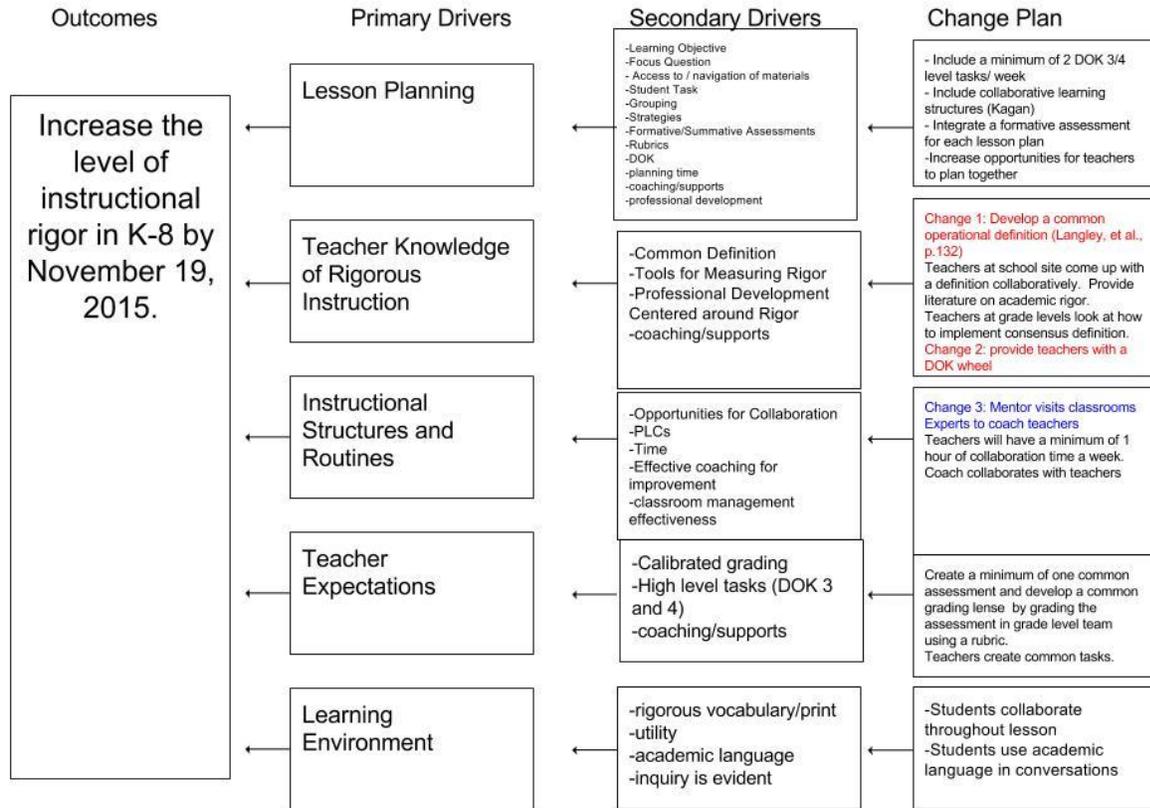
group developed a driver diagram by identifying the outcome, primary drivers, secondary drivers, and change ideas.

The primary drivers identified barriers in the way of accomplishing the stated aim. The drivers identified were lesson planning, teacher knowledge of rigorous instruction, instructional structures and routines, teacher expectations, and learning environment. The secondary drivers identified were the norms and/or structures linked to the primary drivers. As suggested by our instructors, our group set a goal of developing between two and five barriers for each secondary driver. As we collectively added ideas to the secondary drivers, we made sure to think of any overlaps amongst them, which would indicate primary drivers that could be grouped together.

The process of interviewing stakeholders, creating the fishbone, and the process map influenced the change ideas we linked to secondary drivers. As the driver diagram facilitates the building of a theory to bring the aim to reality, we considered the importance of bringing together the data we had gathered up to that point.

In selecting a change idea to implement, we made sure to focus on a small change, choose something within our control, and select a change idea that would help move towards the big aim. As previously stated, analyzing the data we had previously gathered helped to select a change idea. After many hours of discussion, our team decided developing a common operational definition of rigor to increase teacher of knowledge of rigorous instruction would lead to an increase of the level of instructional rigor in K-8.

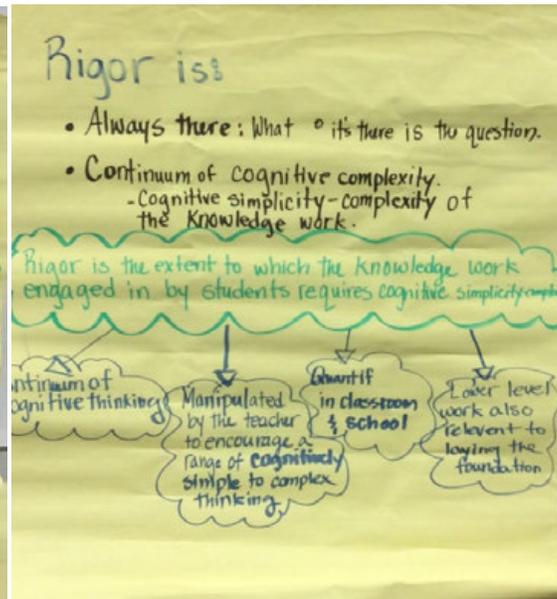
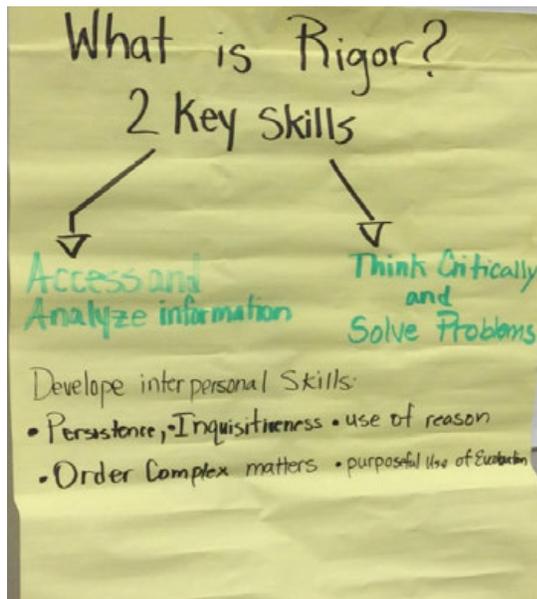
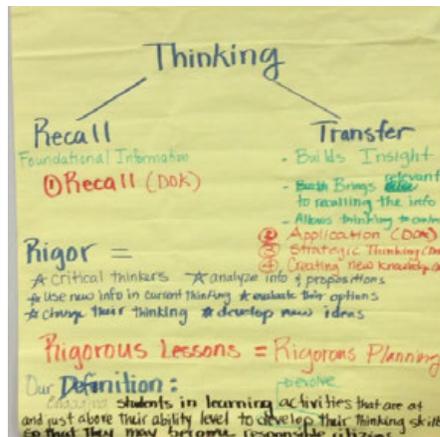
Group Project: Rigor; Driver Diagram



Our Results: What the Data Revealed

The preliminary data collection conducted using our fishbone and driver diagrams revealed that one of the struggles teachers faced in evaluating and measuring the level of rigor in lessons was the lack of a common definition. Teachers needed a common language to ground their conversation centered on rigor. This common language would enable them to develop evaluation and measurement tools that effectively support student learning. It was this absence of a common language that drove our first PDSA cycle. Participating teachers were provided with the article, “Conceptualizing rigor and its implications for education in the era of the Common Core” (Paige et al., 2015). The teachers went through a process very similar to the process our own team went through at the beginning of our project. They read the article and met to collaboratively develop a better understanding of rigor and generate a working common

definition. In doing so, teachers were reflective of their practice and faced misconceptions they had with their understanding of rigor. One teacher commented that she was under the impression that a rigorous lesson involved students having to continuously engage in activities that were very time consuming and almost impossible to achieve, but appreciated that the article recognized that rigor is the continuum of cognitive simplicity-complexity of knowledge and work (student tasks) because to access the higher order of thinking one must have the foundation to build upon.

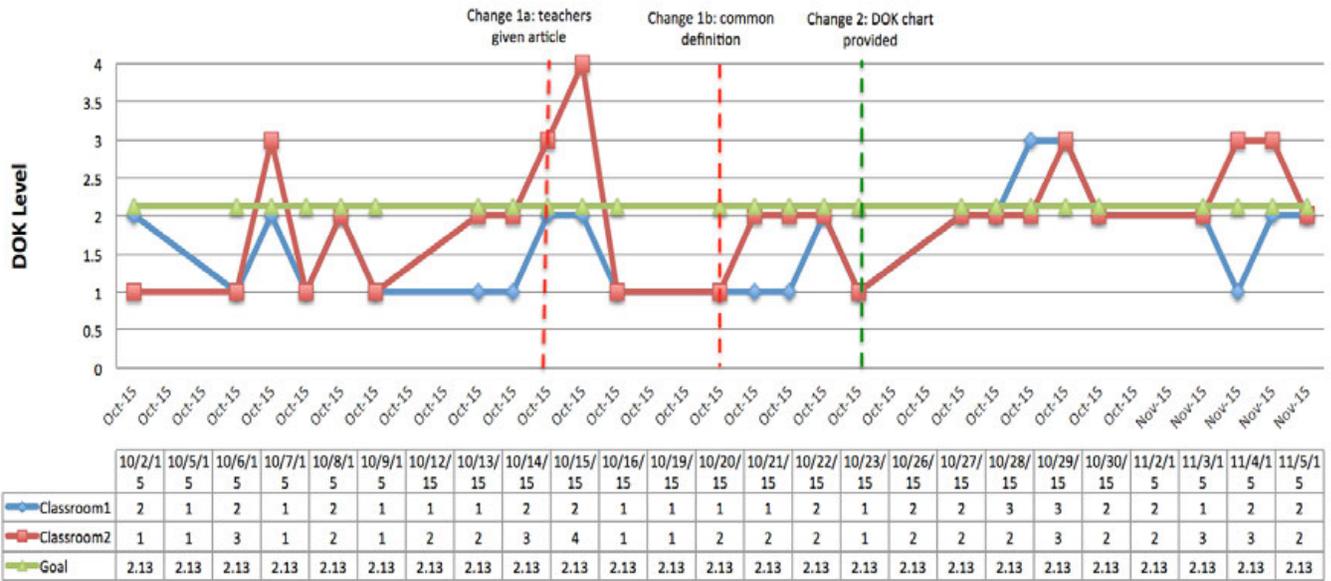


The team worked together to develop two definitions. The first one they referred to as the “educational jargon” one, stated that rigor is engaging students in learning activities that are just or above their ability level to evolve their thinking skills. The second definition referred to as the “simply put” definition: rigor is developing your students’ thinking skills regardless of what level that knowledge work falls on the DOK level. The group agreed that rigorous lessons can be easily accessible to students of all ability levels and that it was up to teachers to use rigor in the planning and reflecting of lessons to insure that students were always involved in the depth of thinking.

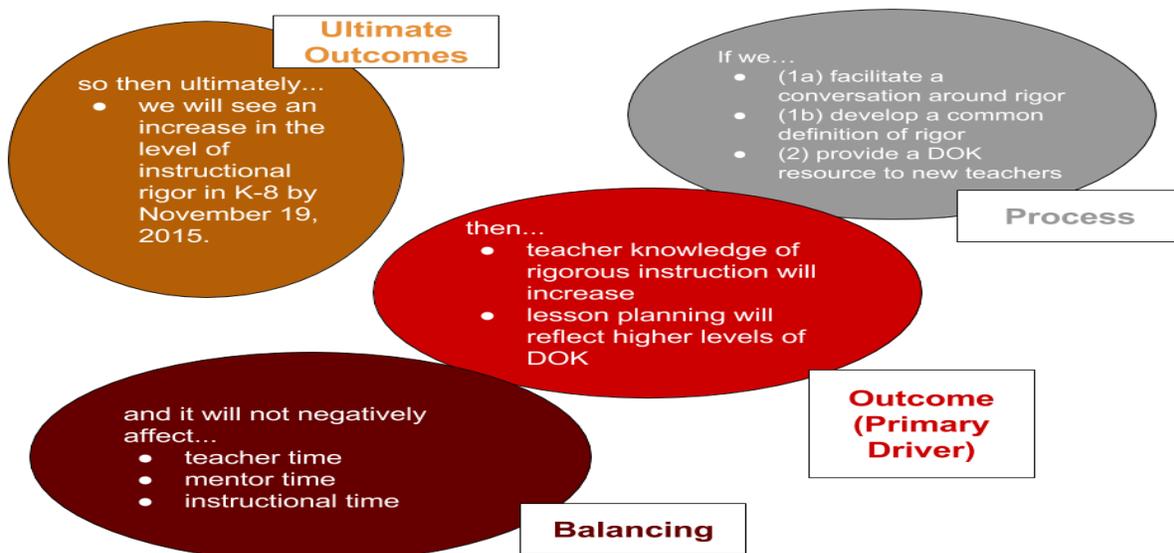
A second change idea was implemented approximately a week after developing the common definition. Teachers were provided with a DOK wheel that listed the four levels and sample knowledge work that correlated with each level. Our group felt that in addition to having a common definition of rigor, equipping teachers with a foundational tool they can use to create tasks and questions would enable teachers to check their lessons on the rigor continuum.

In evaluating the run chart data it was evident that the DOK levels fluctuated, consistent with the idea that rigor is on a continuum of cognitive simplicity-complexity of knowledge work. Further analyzation of the run chart data also revealed that the frequency of DOK level one knowledge work was significantly reduced in both of the classrooms, with only one occurrence after the implementation of the second change in classroom one and zero occurrence in classroom 2. In addition to the run chart data display, weekly combined DOK level averages were collected for the participating classrooms. The weekly averages were as follows: week one 1.71, week 2 1.75, week 3 1.59, week 4 2.38 and week 5 2.13. It is evident in looking at the run chart data and weekly averages that a significant improvement was made in the two changes that

were implemented through the PDSA cycles.



Our process is well illustrated in the following visual. We believed through research, interviewing experts, our own background knowledge and experiences, and through many in-depth discussions that we would be able to achieve our aim statement by making a couple of changes.



Our Learning

The high-leverage problem that we wanted to address in thinking about rigor was the “driver” of “quality teaching” which is “likely the single biggest source of variability in student outcomes: differences in how instruction is organized and carried out” (Byrk, et al, p. 76). When we started our conversations around rigor, around high quality teaching, we had a hard time coming to a consensus of how to tackle the problem of instructional rigor. We initially thought that looking at teachers’ lesson plans would help us determine varying levels of rigor. We also thought that teachers’ understanding of rigor might also be divergent since we didn’t have a common understanding. We read the article, “Conceptualizing rigor and its implications for education in the era of the Common Core” by Paige, et al. (2015) which helped us come up with a common definition, “Rigorous instruction can be stronger within the simplicity-complexity continuum.” We did think that the definition might only make sense to the people who might read the article. Indeed, when we did the “smell test” with our fishbone and asked our experts, the definition was not successful. However, the fishbone did help us learn and understand our experts’ beliefs about why instructional rigor varied at our school sites.

When we returned to class with our own divergent understandings of rigor and our results from our fishbone, we immersed ourselves into the process map of what makes a rigorous lesson. Once again, the discussion was fruitful, complex, and we realized that we had divergent understandings of how to conceptualize a rigorous lesson. However, we were able to converge around the components of a rigorous lesson. This discussion opened our eyes to a realization: teachers needed to be explicit about their expectations for their students, and those expectations might be determined by identifying and analyzing lesson objectives. We knew that results within

schools on standardized measures vary among classes, so we expected that teachers' expectations as analyzed through their lesson objectives may also vary.

Our expectations were met when we came back with our first Run Charts, which showed significant variance among the rigor of lesson objectives as analyzed through a Depth of Knowledge (DOK) continuum. However, not only did we notice that variance existed in the rigor of the objectives, but even within that variance the overall rigor of the objectives was also low based on the DOK continuum. Hence, there was a two-fold problem: on one hand there was the problem of variance and, on the other hand, there was a problem of overall low objectives on the DOK continuum. Therefore, in order to increase instructional rigor overall, even though there still might be variance, we predicted that supporting teachers' understanding of instructional rigor was essential. Thus, our Run Charts encouraged us to implement our first change by helping teachers understand rigor through reading the same article we read on rigor. Based on the literature, we believed that a common understanding and common language must be established when working with groups of individuals. Moreover, we predicted that the common understanding would increase the overall level of rigor. We wanted our teachers to collaborate on an operational definition of rigor as our first change agent to see if that may increase the overall level of rigor as interpreted via lesson objectives. We also immersed ourselves in a discussion of rigor within the context of our Driver Diagram and realized that the Primary Driver that we needed to address was Teacher Knowledge of Rigorous Instruction.

When we returned with our run charts after our first intervention, we noticed incremental improvements in the overall level of rigor based on lesson objectives, even though there was still variance in the level of rigor among the lesson objectives. Based on the overall increase, we deduced that the degree of belief in considering the level of rigor when determining the lesson

objective had increased. Therefore, as our second intervention, we predicted that if we included a DOK wheel to help teachers better determine the level of rigor of a lesson would support them in writing more rigorous objectives. We learned that we were helping teachers make small, incremental changes in how they understood rigor in order to gradually improve the overall level of rigor at a school. Indeed, we learned that constant testing was guiding the direction of the improvement effort since our teachers were able to determine and refine lesson objectives with little risk to the larger organization. As our readings had indicated, “Rarely should one move quickly to implementation after one successful small-scale test. In most situations, additional cycles for testing the change are needed. As the degree of belief in the success of the change is increased, the scale of the test can be increased with less risk” (Langley, Moen, Nolan, K. M., Nolan T. W., Norman, & Provost, 2009, p.145). Our interventions were heading in the direction of our desired improvement, increased instructional rigor at our school site. However, we learned that this improvement had occurred through careful planning based on what we had seen in our results. These were critical first steps.

The interventions caused the teachers to share learning with other individuals within the organization, rather than working in isolation (NIC). Indeed, the people directly in charge of the work, our teachers, were starting to create a “team-based approach to innovation” (Brown, 2008) However, this intervention might be one of the next steps, helping teachers find the space to collaboratively develop lesson objectives, which would help with both the variance in the objectives and the overall level of rigor.

Next Steps

There are several next steps worth considering after our first two PDSA cycles. We think appropriate next steps would include involving the team, making field visits, and reaching out to others.

Knowing that the first team of teachers became aware of the run chart data and the analysis of rigor, a next step would be to include them on the journey of deeply understanding rigor and how to address rigor in instruction. The teachers could be supported in examining their current practices and collaborative planning for rigorous instructional activities.

Field visits could be another next step. The run chart data collected indicated an increase in the rigor of teaching objectives as measured by the Depths of Knowledge wheel. As a group, we wondered if this change is happening solely on paper now that the teachers have a better understanding of the terminology or if more rigorous instruction is actually taking place in the classrooms. For that reason, a potential next step is to go see what is taking place in the classroom in order to determine whether the development of a common operational definition is impacting the wording of lesson objectives or actual instruction.

Extending our study to reach others is a further next step. As a group, we would like to test the first change idea of developing an operational definition by repeating the PDSA cycle with another group of new teachers to determine whether the structure we developed is sustainable. The development of an operational definition is crucial to building a foundational understanding of rigor amongst teachers. We were successful in developing protocol for creating this definition by reading an article and reflecting as a group, and now it may be worthwhile to engage in this process with others.

A final next step would be to go into another driver we had outlined and test another change idea. There are many options we had developed and we can include our team of teachers from the first PDSA cycle in this process.

What We Learned about Leadership

It quickly became apparent that in order to implement a change, it was first necessary to establish relationships with the teachers we were working with during the PDSA cycle. Our team member had already established a mentor-mentee relationship with the teachers who participated in the PDSA cycles. She had previously met with them, supported them in different areas, and expressed her vision to encourage student success. The mentees knew that the process they were involved in was for the sole purpose of learning how to improve teaching and learning.

In order to foster any change, stakeholders must develop a culture of care, constant improvement, and trust to be willing to take risks. People need to know that mistakes will not be punished and that learning happens best through the mistakes. Leaders must foster this culture so teachers are willing to honestly engage in risk-taking in order to grow and learn something new. In addition, leaders must lead through example, showing that they are willing to take risks and learn from mistakes. Honest dialogue is necessary and honest self-reflection. The fish bone brainstorming activities as well as process mapping activities can be ways to initiate those conversations, first on a small scale and then reach larger scales within the school, and finally reaching to organizations outside of the school site to implement larger systemic changes.

Another important area of learning for us was the process of how to identify high-leverage problems and make small change ideas with balancing measures to effectively improve systems. We saw firsthand how a small incremental change can lead to more changes, ultimately resulting in amazing improvements. We also learned that it will be necessary to continuously

collect data to determine whether the change is sustainable and also to determine whether the change has affected any other area negatively. This is why it is important to start small. Another area of growth for our group was in learning how to pilot programs, starting a change idea on a small scale. Our school systems have a tendency to implement reforms that go nowhere because of the lack of research, the lack of piloting, and the absence of the use of data. The use of run charts is not only crucial in checking your programs' success; it is a relatively simple way to collect useful information.

Our team learned much from this experience. We tackled a difficult issue, rigor. A topic no one wanted to take on. We challenged ourselves, made the work meaningful to us, and took to heart the advice from our instructors, the knowledge from our readings, our observations, interviews, and our own expertise to make a small change idea that resulted in a large impact. PDSA cycles will be a useful tool we all take with us as we become leaders in schools. Indeed, social justice *is* in the details.

Our Social Justice Insights

The social justice problem of the pervasive and persistent inequities in the US educational system is well documented. Inequities exist in terms of race, class, and gender. For example, Ladson-Billings argues that the pervasive and prevalent educational achievement gap between African-Americans and whites is so drastic and chronic, that “the historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society have created an educational debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2011, p. 5). The inequalities are evident throughout the country, among schools, among neighborhoods, within and among cities. The inequalities also occur within schools through tracking and/or inequitable distribution of resources among school programs within a school. These “savage inequalities” are evident through inequities in resources

and in educational outcomes (Kozol, 1991). Moreover, if we embrace the notion that, “every system is designed to achieve exactly the results it gets” (Berwick, 2003), then addressing the inequalities and inequities in US education is a fundamental issue of social justice.

As mentioned before, we decided to tackle educational inequities through the variance and level of “quality teaching” which is “likely the single biggest source of variability in student outcomes: differences in how instruction is organized and carried out” (Byrk, et al, p. 76). We believed this was a high leverage problem that could be within our sphere of influence. When we started testing the rigor of lesson objectives through our Run Charts, the results clearly demonstrated that there was variance within the level of rigor at each one of our schools--from charter, to public high performing, to private high performing, to comprehensive schools. From a social justice perspective, it demonstrated that there was inequitable access to a rigorous curriculum and rigorous instruction within our various schools—even within the same educational programs at those schools. Based on our results, students within schools and among schools were receiving significantly different levels of instructional rigor.

Our ultimate goal would be to develop “benchmarking” around rigorous, high-quality instruction in order to address the pervasive inequities in educational achievement. We would want teachers to collaboratively develop standard practices in order to foster adaptive integration at school sites. We believed that addressing teacher beliefs through their lesson objectives is an initial and critical step toward spreading best practices throughout our schools. Ideally, with time and clear implementation of PDSA cycles, we could help foster teams that are looking to systematically change to improve their practices in order to address the pervasive achievement gaps. Our Driver Diagram included multiple incremental changes that would take time to fully implement. Indeed, these incremental changes have the potential for dynamic innovation within

education. We noticed that even the small innovation and improvement process started creating an increased “degree of belief” in considering rigor. This gradual innovation would support the need of the educational system to increase rigor. This notion of complex humans, teachers, trying to systematically and collaboratively standardize practices to support complex humans, students, is a clear avenue of change for improvement. Moreover, it could be an integral component in a social justice movement within education.

A leader must allocate resources effectively at their site towards space for teachers to collaborate, and the prioritization of time and opportunities for teachers to reflect on their successes and their struggles with like-minded colleagues. Powerful learning in the classroom should be within a safe space with the presence of positive relationships between students and teachers and even between teachers and administration. As teachers improvise and revise their lessons, rigor and the practice of knowing benchmarks will improve. A teacher and the school leadership must undergo professional development that trains them to identify needs and resolve dilemmas on campus. This is done using regular measurements of student strengths and needs against the Depth of Knowledge wheel and Bloom's Taxonomy. Teachers are most beneficial to the process of instilling rigor in their curriculum when they see beyond their individual selves and look to solve complex problems and higher order thinking that is at once demanding and dynamic (John Hunter).

To be a social justice leader you must understand and respect the socio-cultural ways of the school community you serve. If you look to other ways to acquire learning as evidenced by the video we saw this summer on Brazilian Children Street Vendors it is clear that socio-cultural learning is a major factor in increasing rigor in traditional classrooms. We can as educators and school leaders begin to vary the tools and materials we use to make learning tangible. Use

apprenticeship type grooming towards mastery where one master brings up a beginner, have highly engaging lessons and activities that are pleasing to the student, and promote group interactions and collaborative study between students. One principal of a high achieving private school on the Westside we interviewed for this project said that in order for rigor to increase, the teacher must be comfortable and confident in going beyond the provided “stretch” materials and seek out materials that dig deeper into the content. She said it was all in the mindset of the teacher whether the rigor and critical thinking skills improve or not.

Inequities are taking place in classrooms across the nation in the form of high teacher turnover, teacher burnout, lack of supports and professional development for teachers, both new and veteran, and in the form of low expectations for their students. A consistent, purposeful mentoring program should be on every social justice leader's agenda at their site. Mentoring is part of the powerful learning process depicted in the Brazilian Child Vendors video. Without a master to build you up to the expert level you cannot produce good work that is of high quality. If there is no formal mentor program available at a school site it only takes a team of stakeholders: parents, teachers, admin, and committees to establish their own in house version. Highlight areas of need for new teachers and mark where they should be in skills mastery pre and post mentorship as they work alongside volunteer mentors that can include retired teachers, substitute teachers, expert teachers on campus who volunteer to train new teachers in certain procedures or practices. Collective learning such as learning from experiments, outcomes and processes, and being able to identify gaps in performance should be a part of every school leader's routine. Eventually being taught to the mentors and mentored during their training to reduce the numbers of low achieving students in future classrooms. To actively put higher

achievement into the forefront of your decisions as a school leader is to be socially just towards children of color in and around Los Angeles.

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Topic and Rationale

This fieldwork project will pursue manners to increase structured academic language use by students at Suva Intermediate (SUI), in Bell Gardens, CA. Essentially, this means that the project will pursue manners to get SUI students, and particularly English Learners (ELs), to communicate academically in class more often. This topic is directly related to improving educational outcomes for all students at SUI, with a particular emphasis on the school's English Learners (ELs). The City of Bell Gardens is considered among the lowest socio-economic areas in Los Angeles County. Suva Intermediate's students are all on Free and/or Reduced lunch. The vast majority of Suva Intermediate's students are Latino (over 99%). Moreover, most of the students' home language is Spanish. A quarter of the students have not reclassified, continuing to be classified as ELs. This project, therefore, will impact students who are marginalized for multiple reasons: class, ethnicity, documented status, and language. Moreover, within the context of the school, reclassification of ELs has been a particular challenge. For instance, for the 2014-15 academic year, of the two hundred twenty students who were classified as ELs at the beginning of the academic year, only six students reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (FEP). That is a 0.04% reclassification rate. While there are concerns with the tool used during the 2014-15 academic year for reclassification, the results are alarming.

As I sit in our classes at UCLA, I am consistently impressed with how students eloquently express their complex ideas. Academic language undergirds their eloquence which makes sense since language undergirds cognition. Developing academic language, therefore, is essential to academic success. Moreover, academic language is also the language of power, a language register that is often used to voice political and socio-economic agendas in order to participate more effectively in society and US democratic institutions. Students in the Bell

Gardens community, students who have been historically marginalized, already use multiple languages and language registers to negotiate and navigate their hybrid realities—Spanish, English, “Spanglish,” Chicano English, multiple Spanish and English urban discourses, *texteze* (for lack of a better word). All these languages and language registers serve particular purposes. Marginalized students also need to develop academic language register in order to navigate and negotiate the academic world and the multiple realities and avenues that academia opens. Therefore, developing the academic language register enables students to advocate for themselves and their communities at multiple levels—it helps them develop the voice that US hegemony uses to marginalize, while still maintaining their hybrid identities and languages. Academic language adds to their hybridity. Essentially, it gives the language of power to the powerless, to those who have been marginalized in order to be powerless. Students who attend Suva Intermediate are able to develop the academic language to navigate these realities; they need support and multiple opportunities to engage and communicate throughout the day using structured academic language.

What is academic language? For the purposes of this project, the operational definition of academic language will be:

Academic language refers to the specialized vocabulary, grammar, discourse/textual and functional skills associated with academic instruction and mastery of academic materials and tasks. In the simplest terms, academic language is the language that is needed in academic situations such as those students encounter during classroom instruction or reading texts (Saunders, Goldenberg and Marcelletti, 2013, p. 19).

This project will determine manners to increase academic language use in class by students in order to engage in increasingly rigorous academic learning. The project is part of a learning cycle that MUSD has attempted to integrate into the district's classrooms. In 2010, MUSD

embarked on a district-wide effort to increase academic language by implementing Academic Language Development (ALD) in the district's classrooms. Kate Kinsella, one of the foremost experts in the field of ALD in classrooms, was hired to support teachers develop an "academic language function toolkit" to foster academic language use in classrooms. Furthermore, the Office of Curriculum and Instruction developed professional development around ALD, including the training of "Teacher Leads" to support the training of teachers in ALD at specific school sites. Summer Institutes for "Teacher Leads" were designed in ALD, with particular focus on SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), in order to support teachers at school sites in ALD instruction and development.

What have been the results of the effort to increase ALD in MUSD classrooms?

Anecdotally speaking, the results are mixed. Some teachers embraced the notion of developing language objectives alongside content objectives in order to get students to actively engage, communicate, and collaborate throughout their lessons. However, in conversation with instructional leaders (administration and other support staff), the prevailing method of instructional delivery is direct instruction with few opportunities for students to communicate with their peers. When I approached, Dr. Teresa Alonzo, the school principal at Suva Intermediate about this project, she wholeheartedly embraced the idea. Indeed, she wants academic language to be a central focus of improvement for the school, so the project will be in line with administration goals. With that in mind, Dr. Alonzo invited me to be part of the leadership team (even though I am on sabbatical this year) in order to collaboratively co-construct this project with the team.

My plan is to develop PDSA cycles with increasing academic language use as the AIM of the project. Courageous conversations around academic language will be necessary. Fishbone

and driver diagrams will encourage our focus of improving and increasing academic language use in classrooms. Suva Intermediate's teachers meet weekly in Data Teams. These teams enable teachers to develop common formative assessments with a focus on expressive academic language—speaking and writing—that can be integrated across the curriculum. PDSA cycles will support and expedite the work of improvement, particularly around the school-wide focus on academic language. Teams will support the implementation in measuring outcomes, in analyzing results, and making constant revisions to their own plans to increase academic language use throughout their instruction.

Literature Summary and Analysis

In their synthesis of extant research on ELD instruction, “English Language Development: Guidelines for Instruction,” Saunders et al. (2013) contend that “the field of ELD instruction has been driven mostly by theory. The result is a large body of accepted practices that are not adequately supported by research” (p. 13). The use of academic language is one strategy among many under the umbrella of English Language Development (ELD), Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), all of which are strategies and/or programs specifically designed to support English Learners (ELs). Unfortunately, academic language development is one of the strategies that has not been systematically researched. Indeed, in a separate synthesis of extant research on ELs, “Unlocking the Research on English Learners: What We Know—and Don't Yet Know—about Effective Instruction,” Claude Goldenberg, one of the foremost researchers on instruction for ELs, elaborates that among the many strategies included to address the instructional needs of ELs, “the use of content and language objectives, sentence frames, and differentiating instruction

by English proficiency levels, there are no published data at all about their effects on ELs' learning" (2013, p. 7).

The instructional recommendations around Academic Language Development (ALD) promulgated by Montebello Unified School District (MUSD) in order to train teachers to support ELs are the ones that Goldenberg emphasizes: the use of content and language objectives, the development of academic language sentence frames, and for ELD, teaching students at their English language proficiency levels. While Saunders et al., indicate that there is, "as yet, virtually no research that has examined empirically the effects of instruction focused specifically on academic language" (2013, p. 20), they also suggest that "since academic language probably plays an increasingly important role in defining what actually constitutes language proficiency as students go up the grade levels, it is reasonable to hypothesize that a focus on academic language might help students attain advanced language proficiency more quickly" (2013, p.20).

Through PDSA cycles, this improvement project will test the "reasonable hypothesis" that increased academic language instruction (content objectives) and academic language development (language objectives), coupled with students actually using the academic language in classroom conversations, has an impact on academic achievement for all learners when used with specific academic language frames. Moreover, specifically for English Learners (ELs) and Fluent English Proficient (FEP) students, who constitute twenty-five and fifty-five percent of Suva Intermediate respectively, there is a need for academic language development in English since their home language is not English. As a reminder, for the purposes of this project, the operational definition of academic language will be:

Academic language refers to the specialized vocabulary, grammar, discourse/ textual and functional skills associated with academic instruction and mastery of academic materials and tasks. In the simplest terms, academic language is the

language that is needed in academic situations such as those students encounter during classroom instruction or reading texts (Saunders et al., 2013, p. 19).

Part of the problem with such a broad, albeit comprehensive, definition is that it incorporates multiple aspects of language—vocabulary, grammar, discourse/textual and functional skills—making it complicated to design studies that research the impact of specific, discrete components of academic language when the concept is multidimensional. When searching for experimental research specifically on academic language development, like Saunders et al. indicate, I found little to nothing. Therefore, I had to research academic language via its separate components in order to glean what might support the project. With that in mind, what does the limited research on academic language development suggest?

In their quasi-experimental study, “Language proficiency, home-language status, and English vocabulary development: A longitudinal follow-up of the Word Generation program,” Lawrence et al. (2012) report on the results of Word Generation, a program Catherine Snow (Snow et al., 2009), a co-author and recognized expert on instruction for ELs, helped design.

The researchers had three related questions:

1. How did English speaking students from English-language homes (ELH) who participated in the Word Generation program learn, maintain, and consolidate words compared with similar students attending comparison schools?
2. How did English-proficient students from language-minority homes (LMH) who participated in the Word Generation program learn, maintain, and consolidate words compared with similar students attending comparison schools?
3. How did students with limited English proficiency (LEP) from language minority homes who participated in the Word Generation program learn, maintain, and consolidate words compared with similar students attending comparison schools? (Lawrence, et al., 2012, p.440)

Word Generation is a “cross-content vocabulary program that provides direct instruction in general purpose academic vocabulary words in language arts, mathematics, science, and social

studies” (Lawrence et al., 2012 p.439). Middle school students were taught general purpose academic vocabulary by their subject-area teachers in one of their five classes for fifteen minutes which would then be used throughout the day and/or week in other classes, particularly in discussion and debate.

The study researched 525 students in comparison schools and 1140 students in treatment schools over two academic years, using pre-and post-test measures, including the effects of retention of vocabulary over the summer, when typically many students decline in performance. Four Waves of assessments were administered (Fall 2007, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, and Spring 2009). According to the study, Word Generation had a significant effect on how students “learn, maintain, and consolidate” academic vocabulary during the middle school years, though the results were inconsistent among the three groups studied. For instance, “English-proficient students from language-minority homes who participated in the Word Generation program benefited even more than students from English homes” (Lawrence, et al., p.446) who also benefited from the treatment. Ironically, for a program that was designed with all students in mind, including ELs, one of Catherine Snow’s main research interests, “LEP students, however, did not show short-term or long-term benefits from participation in the Word Generation program” (Lawrence, et al., p.448). As the authors discuss, there are reasonable explanations for these results:

Considering how low the scores of sixth-grade LEP students were, it is probable that the target words were too difficult for these students... while English proficient students could direct their capacities toward conceptual and vocabulary development, LEP students were simultaneously learning the phonological, grammatical, and pragmatic features of English in the process (Lawrence, et al., p. 449).

The findings “support an approach to vocabulary instruction that emphasizes the contextualized use of words in multiple academic contexts and in multiple modalities, and emphasize the use of high leverage academic language in discussion and debate” (Lawrence et al., 2012, p. 450). The study suggests that coordination and collaboration across content-areas to support students’ general academic vocabulary development. However, the limited effect on LEP students suggests that students should be taught at what Vygotsky identified as the Zone of Proximal Development. The fact that all students received instruction on the same list of words, with little differentiation for instructional need, buttresses the notion that “one size does not fit all.”

How do these results affect this improvement project? The fact that the treatment language minority group benefited the most, what would be considered the 55% of FEPs at Suva Intermediate, is significant. Inviting a larger number of teachers across content-areas will have a significant impact on vocabulary retention. The study focused on academic words, which “might appear in any number of academic content areas” (Lawrence et al, p. 438). The study used Coxhead’s The Academic Word List “which was developed by analyzing a range of adult academic texts to identify words that were used in multiple academic contexts across genres” (Lawrence et al., p. 438). For the 25% of LEP students at Suva Intermediate, the list of words that might be selected could be conceptually similar to the words, but not as phonologically complex and/or with a connection to Spanish cognates.

In terms of the grammar/syntax in the aforementioned operational definition of academic language, “Using a functional linguistics metalanguage to support academic language development in English Language Arts” by Moore and Schleppegrell (2014) is a qualitative study that provided insight into how focusing on the grammar/syntax of English Language Arts texts can support ELs comprehend texts, reach higher levels of cognition, and express

themselves through speaking and writing in more elaborate manners. The authors suggest that “the forms and features of academic language vary by task, subject matter, and grade level, so those who want to support children’s development of academic language need to situate that support in particular contexts of use and in the service of content area learning” (2014, p. 92). Parting from this premise, the authors “offer evidence from classroom talk that shows how grammatical metalanguage and related artifacts can support ELLS in meaningful discussion that extends both their language and content knowledge” (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 93). For the purposes of my project, “language and content knowledge” are akin to the “language objectives and content objectives” identified by Goldenberg as not studied, and fundamental to how academic language development is interpreted in MUSD. Moreover, a fundamental aspect of the project is to create conditions where students talk since “knowledge is created through dialogic interaction and co-constructed through classroom talk rather than transmitted from teacher to students” (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 94).

The data presented focused on the “ELA lessons implemented during the second year of a three-year project. Research was conducted in five elementary schools in a high poverty urban public school district that serves large proportions of bilingual students” (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 95). In order to develop a comprehensive perspective of the dialogic nature of complex classroom conversations, various qualitative data informed the authors’

evaluation and refinement of the intervention, including interviews with teachers and students, multiple records of practice, and formative and formal assessments of student learning. Records of practice included videotaped observations of lessons, classroom artifacts such as completed graphic organizers, and teacher logs where participants reflected on their teaching experiences (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 95).

Thirty-three (60-90 min) lessons were videotaped and observed, then narrowed down to “14 lessons that engaged students in productive talk about narrative texts” (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 96).

The researchers had many questions:

What are the features of the classroom talk? Who is talking? Who is using the metalanguage? What is the role of the teacher/student in the conversation? How do the activities and metalanguage and other artifacts promote or impede meaningful talk about the text? What other form of metalanguage are the teacher and students using? (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 96)

The findings provided evidence that “the metalanguage supports elaboration and enactment of meaning, and exploration of patterns of language and author’s purpose in the texts students read. This results in extended discourse by students in which they also connect text meaning to their personal experiences” (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 96). By focusing on functional grammar that “connects language forms to meanings in context of use offers a means of engaging students and teachers with the language of curricular texts, for it enables teachers to foreground meaning while also being explicit about language forms” (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 93).

Keeping that concurrent focus on grammar and meaning in mind enabled students “to talk about *what this means* and *how this means*. We see children engaged in discussion of an author’s craft in ways that link form and meaning” (italics in original, Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 101). The scaffolded focus on the forms of the language in the text enabled “more elaborated explanations that prepared students for writing” (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 101). In a similar vein, therefore, the results suggest that focusing on the forms of language (language objectives), in addition to the content objectives, enables ELs to use language scaffolds to develop confidence so they may develop more elaborate explanations of their

thinking. As the authors suggest, “this works helps students rehearse interpretations of the texts, and articulating how they know what they are asserting helps them make text-based claims and support them” (Moore and Schleppegrell, 2014, p. 103). In terms of this improvement project, having clear content objectives coupled with *language objectives* that scaffold student interaction, particularly for ELs, enables students to elaborate on their text-based explanations.

In many ways, the advent of systematic instruction of academic language and literacy for ELs is based on the development of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). SIOP “has 30 features of instruction grouped into eight components: lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment” (Short et al., 2011, p. 364). Short et al. (2011) report on three separate studies, two quasi-experimental and one randomized. In all three studies, academic literacy was assessed at the institutional level—standardized tests or measures of overall academic literacy. “Results of the three studies reveal that students with teachers who were trained in the SIOP model of sheltered instruction and implemented it with fidelity performed significantly better on assessments of academic language and literacy than students with teachers who were not trained in the model” (Short et al., 2011, p. 363). Since there are 30 features to a SIOP lesson, “implementation fidelity” required multiple visits to classrooms, interviews with teachers, as well as teacher surveys that inquired into the number of SIOP features that were routinely used in lessons.

One of the three studies, a quasi-experimental study with 19 treatment teachers and four comparison teachers, assessed “ELLs in sheltered classes whose teachers were trained in the SIOP Model (treatment group, n = 241) and ELLs in the same district programs whose teacher had no exposure to the SIOP Model (comparison group, n = 77)” on the Illinois Measurement of

Annual Growth in English (IMAGE), “a writing assessment as an outcome measure of academic literacy” (Short et al., 2011, p.365). The difference in the results was dramatic, with SIOP students growing significantly more than the comparison group. Moreover, the researchers “calculated the effect size of the intervention (Cohen’s *d*) of the intervention, which was .833. This effect size is considered large by most indices, suggesting significant gain” (Short et al., 2011, p. 366). Similar results occurred in all three studies, when teachers implemented SIOP with fidelity, validating the effects of SIOP on ELs. If SIOP is so effective, why has it not become the main manner of supporting ELs?

The fact that SIOP has so many components makes professional development difficult—difficult to implement with fidelity systematically, and difficult to identify what features of instruction have the highest effect size. Nonetheless, the effects of SIOP on ELs, when implemented with fidelity, are significant. Lesson planning for 30 features of instruction, within the context of 8 components, can be overwhelming. Indeed, as somebody who has trained teachers in elements of SIOP, teacher response borders on incredulity—professional development on 30 features of instruction for one lesson? In a similar vein, in the randomized experimental study where the effects of SIOP were not as significant, the researchers bemoaned that, “the initial teacher professional development was *only* two-and-one-half days long” (emphasis added, Short et al., 2011, p. 376). Indeed, the authors suggest that “we have found that teachers with SIOP Model training need 1-2 years of support to become high implementers” (Short et al., 2011, p. 379). The study that demonstrated most gains, for instance, which systematically tested implementation fidelity, teachers had extensive training in SIOP: “Each cohort had seven days of professional development in its first year of participation. Cohort 1 had three additional days in the second year” (Short et al., 2011, p. 368). In addition, “coaches and

researchers observed and gave feedback to teachers to assist with implementation” (Short et al., 2011, p. 368). Treatment teachers incorporated more of the 30 features of sheltered instruction than comparison teachers.

MUSD's focus on academic language development identifies four of the features of instruction within the SIOP Model, not the thirty suggested by SIOP that should be included in all lessons for ELs. For the purposes of PDSA's, it will be helpful to parse the elements that are most effective. The articles analyzed in this literature review, moreover, suggest that this improvement project's emphasis on academic language—content objectives/vocabulary, language objectives/grammar, and sentence frames with student interaction—will have positive effects on student achievement.

School Data Summary

Suva Intermediate (SUI) in Bell Gardens, CA, serves a student population that has gravitated between eight hundred fifty and nine hundred students over the past five years. According to the Education Data Partnership, for the 2014-15 school year, 25.1% of the students were ELs, 54.2% were Fluent English Proficient (FEP), and 16.1% were Redesignated FEP. These percentages have increased slightly as the school has experienced some declining enrollment. However, the number of ELs has consistently remained between 220 and 230 students. In 2014-15, 95.4% of the student body is, or was, an EL during some portion of his or her schooling. Academic English, therefore, is essential for their school success since this setting will provide the main avenue to practice their academic language.

As the graphs below indicate, on the 2015 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CASSP), only 3 percent of overall students at SUI exceeded the state standards. 29 percent of the students met the standards. Therefore, 68 percent of the students did not meet

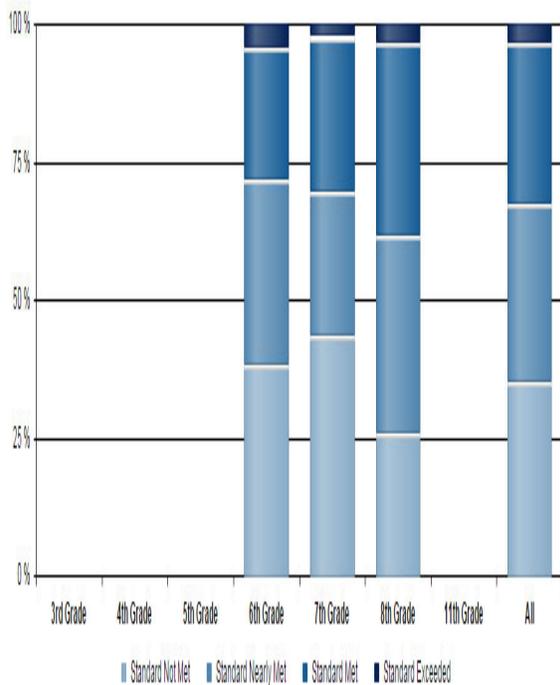
the standards. Indeed, 35 percent of the students did not come close to meeting the standard. Moreover, there is a significant discrepancy between overall achievement and EL achievement. As the graphs indicate, ELs score significantly below the overall population of the school.

Indeed, 96 percent of ELs at SUI did not meet the standards, 73 percent of whom were not close to meeting the state standards. Only one EL exceeded the standard. These scores represent overall performance on the CASSP for the entire school and for ELs specifically. However, how do the 220 ELs perform on the CASSP when scores are broken down by proficiency level according to the CELDT?

SUI Overall CASSP Results

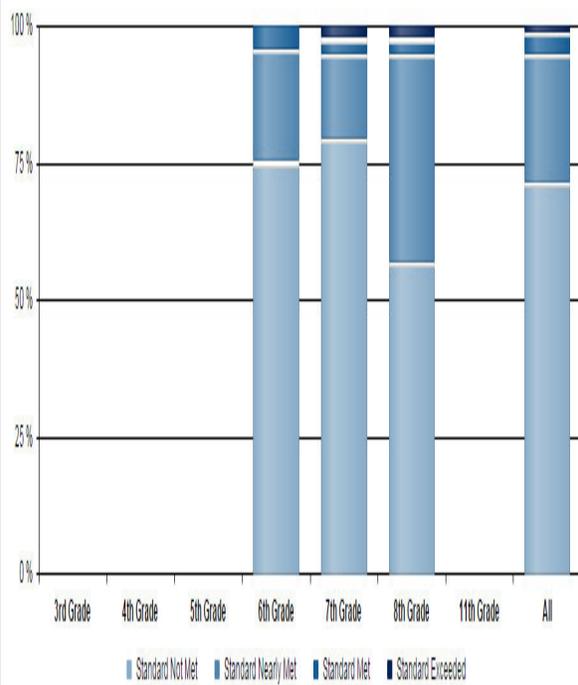
SUI ELs CASSP Results

Achievement Level Distribution

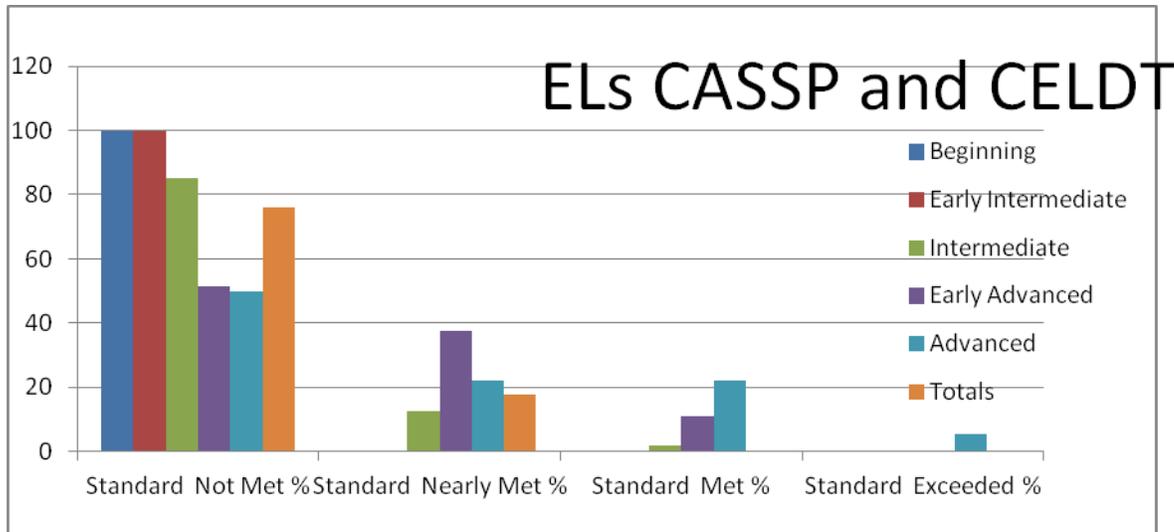


English Language Arts/Literacy Achievement Level Descriptors

Achievement Level Distribution

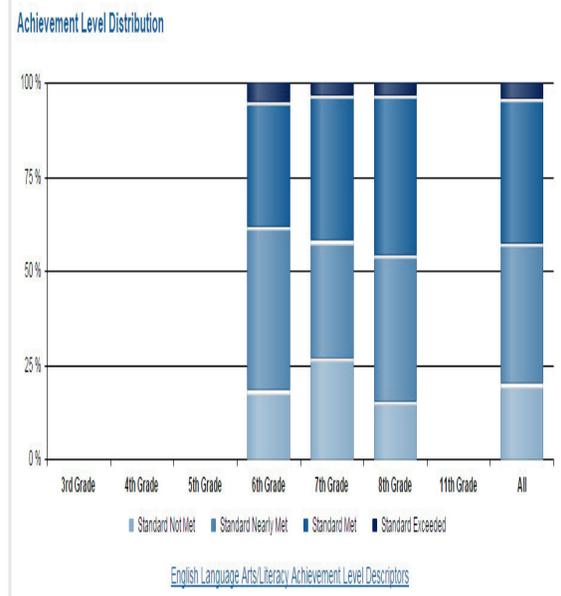
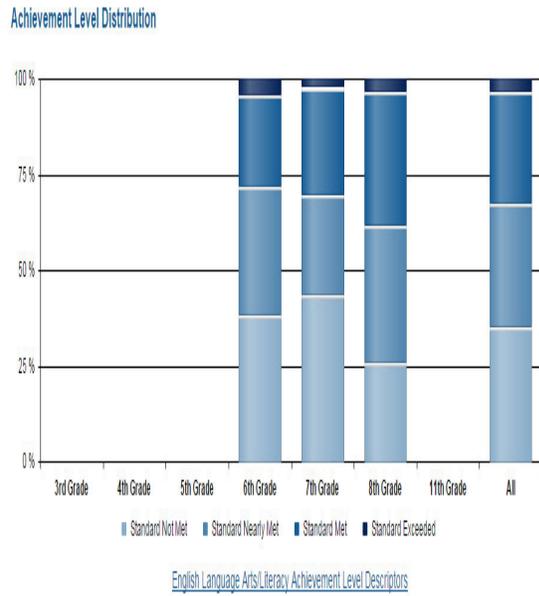


English Language Arts/Literacy Achievement Level Descriptors



As the disaggregated data above demonstrate, ELs at all levels scored poorly on the CASSP. Indeed, students who are at or near English proficiency on the CELDT—Early Advanced and Advanced students—barely met the CASSP standards. 69 Early Advanced and Advanced students, 84.1 percent of all Early Advanced and Advanced students, did not meet the standard. Based on their CELDT performance, these students should perform better on the CASSP. Moreover, the largest proportion of ELs at SUI is at the Intermediate level, 102, which represents 44.3 percent of all ELs. Only two of these students met the standard. Thus, 98 percent of Intermediate ELs did not meet the standard, 85.3 percent scoring not close to the standard. All students should benefit from academic language development, but these three groups—Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced—might benefit the most. Since the CELDT is considered an assessment of English fluency, the discrepancy between the performance on the CELDT and performance on the CASSP might be the level of academic language.

ELs who redesignate to FEP historically perform better on standardized assessments. At SUI, redesignated FEPs represent 50.7% of the student body (the other 4 percent were IFEPs).



As the charts above indicate, 43 percent of the redesignated students met or exceeded standards, slightly higher than SUI’s overall performance. However, 57 percent of redesignated students did not meet the standard. 20 percent of redesignated students were not close to meeting the standard. Redesignation implies that students are at a similar English fluency level as an average mainstream English speaker, yet 20 percent of SUI’s redesignated students are not close to proficient, over half not meeting standards.

SUI’s achievement levels on the CASSP indicate that there is a need for improvement in academic achievement across the entire school. There is a need to raise the level of academic language among all students at SUI—ELs, RFEPs, IFEPs, EOs. SUI students can and should achieve at higher levels. The data suggest that there is a need for a focus on academic language in order to support students on the cognitively and linguistically complex common core assessments, particularly with the increased expectation for expressive academic language, namely academic writing. The oral rehearsal component integral to this improvement project—talking to peers within multiple instructional contexts—will support students’ development of academic language, and particularly academic writing.

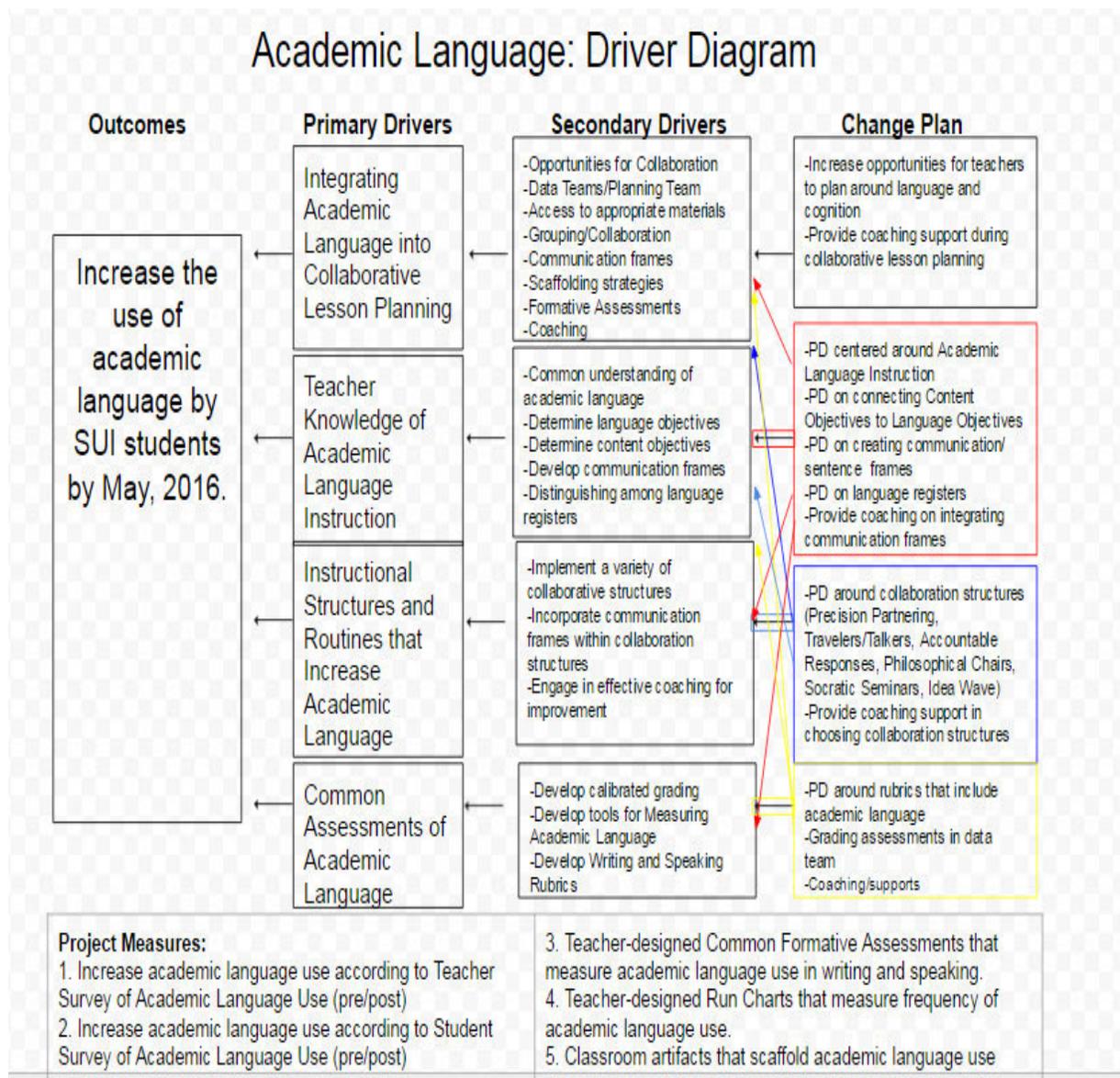
Foundation

There is a clear need at Suva Intermediate (SUI) to address academic achievement through academic language for all students, and particularly for English Learners (ELs). Students at SUI should perform better on institutional measures of academic achievement, namely the CELDT and the CASSP. The research discussed suggests that systematically focusing on academic language instruction—vocabulary, grammar, discourse/textual and functional skills—should have a positive impact on student achievement. Indeed, according to the research, the integration of content objectives with language objectives—brought together through the use of language/communication frames that support students' academic language—encourages active engagement, develops higher levels of cognition, and helps students elaborate their ideas throughout the instructional day. Moreover, SUI's demographic context makes a focus on academic language imperative since the school is the main setting students have to practice their academic language register. How will SUI implement a successful plan to integrate academic language throughout all content areas?

Teachers need to be front and center in the design and implementation of academic language instruction. The structure for collaboration—Data Teams—already exists at SUI; the focus on academic language does not, yet. By utilizing the Data Team structure—grade level and content-area instructional teams—teachers can learn to implement PDSA cycles effectively. Each Data Team will develop an understanding of its unique needs in terms of the content and academic language students need to succeed in a specific subject. Coaching and professional development will support the process of bridging the objectives through communication frames. Through collaborative planning, there are a multitude of incremental improvements a Data Team may select to implement, to do, in order to support students' academic language. Clear measures

to determine the frequency and rigor of the academic language expected of students will be necessary to assess the implementation and efficacy of the interventions, and to determine the next incremental steps to include. To be successful, teachers need to be at the helm of the planning, doing, studying, and acting around the improvement of academic language instruction at Suva Intermediate.

Graphic Organizer



Timeline and Learning Process

Activities to be Accomplished	Timeline	Data to inform Learning Process	Learning Process
Teacher survey on academic language use (pre-test)	December, 2015	Completed surveys	Share results with Leadership Team Use data to inform direction of project
Student survey on academic language use (pre-test)	December, 2015	Completed surveys	Share results with Leadership Team Use data to inform direction of project
PD on Academic Language, connecting Content Objectives to Language Objectives; incorporating communication frames to support Language Objectives	January, 2016	PowerPoint Share results of surveys with school staff to establish purpose. Share multiple definitions of academic language.	Develop an operational definition of academic language with staff. Within Data Teams, support teachers in developing communication frames that support content/language objectives in order to increase academic language use.
Create fishbone on "How do we increase academic language use?" with leadership team	January, 2016	Fishbone diagram	Guide leadership team in developing cause factors that may increase academic language use.
Distribute fishbone diagrams to teachers to do a "temperature check" to determine systemic solutions	January, 2016	Completed Fishbone diagrams	Pareto Chart showing results "How do we increase academic language use?" Share Pareto with Leadership Team
Develop a Driver Diagram with leadership team	January-February, 2016	Driver Diagram	Guide leadership team in determining primary and secondary drivers for increasing academic language
PD on PDSA Cycles	February, 2016	PowerPoint	Support Data Teams in planning first cycle. Focus on creating "lightweight" measures that will test interventions (Doing)
Implement PDSA Cycle 1 Establish measurement (CFA)	February, 2016	Run Charts Teacher generated Common Formative Assessments	Support Data Teams in planning first PDSA cycle. Help teachers create "lightweight" measures that can inform interventions (Doing)

<p>“Go and See” Offer coaching support</p>	<p>February, 2016 through May, 2016</p>	<p>Anecdotal notes, observational field notes. Pictures of artifacts that support academic language use</p>	<p>Since I am on sabbatical, I will have one day to “go and see,” observe instruction as teachers are implementing their interventions. I will both support the process and gather information regarding the “doing” to support future PDSA cycles</p>
<p>PD around collaboration structures (Precision Partnering, Travelers/Talkers, Accountable Responses, Philosophical Chairs, Socratic Seminars, Idea Wave)</p>	<p>March, 2016</p>	<p>PowerPoint Anecdotal notes on presentation</p>	<p>Support Data Teams in determining which collaboration structures support specific academic language goals.</p>
<p>Implement PDSA Cycle 2 Establish measurement (CFA)</p>	<p>March, 2016</p>	<p>Run Charts Teacher-generated Common Formative Assessments</p>	<p>Support Data Teams in planning second PDSA cycle. By analyzing “lightweight data,” help teachers reflect on interventions. Focus on how collaborative structures can support interventions to increase academic language use.</p>
<p>Implement PDSA Cycle 3 Establish measurement (CFA)</p>	<p>March, 2016</p>	<p>Run Charts Teacher-generated Common Formative Assessments</p>	<p>Support Data Teams in planning third PDSA cycle. Help teachers reflect on measures.</p>
<p>“Go and see” walk through with members of the leadership team</p>	<p>April, 2016</p>	<p>Anecdotal notes, observational field notes. Pictures of artifacts that support academic language use</p>	<p>Gather evidence from classrooms that students are actively using academic language in multiple manners</p>
<p>Implement PDSA Cycle 4 Establish measurement (CFA)</p>	<p>March, 2016</p>	<p>Run Charts Teacher-generated Common Formative Assessments</p>	<p>Support Data Teams in planning fourth PDSA cycle. Focus on how the evidence from previous cycles increased academic language use (hopefully). Improvements should be systemic and incremental. Help teachers</p>

			reflect on interventions that have become habitual and consider how to make minor modifications.
Teacher survey on academic language use (post-test)	May, 2016	Completed survey	Share results with Leadership Team Compare and contrast results from pre-test
Student survey on academic language use (post-test)	May, 2016	Completed survey	Share results with Leadership Team Compare and contrast results from pre-test
Share results of PDSA cycle (fishbone diagrams, driver diagrams, run charts, and walk through) and Teacher and Student surveys with School Site Council (SSC)	May, 2016	PowerPoint, charts	Exit Tickets for SSC about potential next steps

Data Collection, Analysis, Validity, Ethics

Measuring academic language is complex. As mentioned before, the research community has not attempted to determine whether or not academic language instruction, and the structured use of academic language by students in multiple collaborative contexts, is an effective intervention for students, particularly for English Learners (ELs). Therefore, the fact that Suva Intermediate's leadership team is willing to take a leap of faith and immerse their students in the use of academic language is courageous. However, since Suva's status quo illustrates the notion of insanity quite eloquently—doing the same thing and expecting different results—something needs to change because the status quo is not supporting advanced academic achievement for Suva's students. The leap of faith, therefore, is a bold attempt to do something different. Particularly for this reason, it is imperative that the fieldwork project include multiple valid measures of the various interventions teachers will attempt in their PDSA cycles to show

the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the implementation of academic language use throughout students’ instructional day.

This fieldwork project will use multiple qualitative measures to determine the effects of academic language interventions. The project will use teacher and student surveys, common formative assessments, classroom observations, and classroom artifacts as measures. Indeed, even the potentially quantitative data—Run Charts—will most likely be qualitative in nature as teachers will be using data methods that are “lightweight” (collected expeditiously) in order to not disrupt classroom instruction. Since these measures are qualitative in nature, there will be a need for data reduction in order to quantify the results. The careful coding of the qualitative data will be essential to ensure validity. Throughout the entire project, once measures are created by Data Teams, the leadership team will ensure that data is collected in a manner that is both valid and ethical.

Some measures have already been designed. For example, the surveys below will be used as pre- and post- measures of academic language instruction. The actual survey will use surveymonkey.com to generate the data:

Teacher Survey	Student Survey
<p>Please complete the following survey. Your anonymous responses will help gather information about how students share their learning at Suva Intermediate. The information will help guide our efforts to increase academic language use at Suva. Thank you for all you do!</p>	<p>Please complete the following survey. Your anonymous responses will be used to gather information about sharing your learning at Suva Intermediate. Please consider your experience in all your classes. Thank you.</p>
<p>1. How do you define academic language?</p>	<p>1. How often do your teachers expect you to speak in class to show you are learning?</p>

<p>2. How often should each student speak to show his/her learning during a class period?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">At least once a day</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4-5 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2-3 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0- 1 time a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">O times a week</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>3. How often should students speak to a peer to show their learning during a class period?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">At least once a day</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4-5 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2-3 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0- 1 time a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">O times a week</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>4. How often do you provide language structures/scaffolds (sentence frames) to support student interaction?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">At least once a day</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4-5 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2-3 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0- 1 time a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">O times a week</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>5. What structures or activities do you provide for student interaction and</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	At least once a day	4-5 times a week	2-3 times a week	0- 1 time a week	O times a week						At least once a day	4-5 times a week	2-3 times a week	0- 1 time a week	O times a week						At least once a day	4-5 times a week	2-3 times a week	0- 1 time a week	O times a week						<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">At least once a day</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4-5 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2-3 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0- 1 time a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">O times a week</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>2. How often do you think you should speak during a class period to show you are learning?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">At least once a day</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4-5 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2-3 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0- 1 time a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">O times a week</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>3. How often should you speak to a peer during a class period to show your learning?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">At least once a day</td> <td style="text-align: center;">4-5 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2-3 times a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">0- 1 time a week</td> <td style="text-align: center;">O times a week</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>4. Do you enjoy speaking in class? Why or why not? Are there situations that make it easier for you to speak in class?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	At least once a day	4-5 times a week	2-3 times a week	0- 1 time a week	O times a week						At least once a day	4-5 times a week	2-3 times a week	0- 1 time a week	O times a week						At least once a day	4-5 times a week	2-3 times a week	0- 1 time a week	O times a week					
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In order to ensure that the surveys are not evaluative in nature, the questions are anonymous. No demographic data is requested in either survey. The purpose of the surveys is to develop a broad sense of academic language use throughout the school, and not differentiated by grade level or subject matter. Indeed, if the survey asked for grade level or subject matter data, it would be

straightforward to determine specific teachers or departments that are, or are not, using academic language. This is particularly relevant since the administration has set the tone that academic language use is a school-wide initiative that teachers should be including in their instruction.

In order to ensure validity, the same questions will be used for both the pre- and post-measures. The analysis of the multiple choice questions in both surveys is straightforward. An average number will arise which can be compared between the pre- and post- dates. The open-ended questions, however, will have to be coded for data reduction. Based on administrative observations and testimonials, there currently is little to no consistent sense of academic language use school-wide. For instance, the coding for the definition of academic language will arise from the data, from the open-ended short answers. Similarly, the coding for students' affect towards speaking in class will also arise from their open-ended responses.

The "lightweight" measures teachers decide to use in their Data Teams for their PDSA cycles should be valid. Each Data Team will "plan" its own intervention to "do." Each Data Team will determine a measure to "study" the effectiveness of the intervention. Moreover, each team will come together to analyze the results, and decide how to "act" upon their observations. The PDSA tracker created by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching will be used to support teachers as they delve into their PDSA cycles. Suva teachers are a veteran staff with many years of experience and expertise. The interventions and measures they design, with coaching support, should validly measure the interventions around academic language use. Furthermore, the professional development around content and language objectives, around communication/sentence frames, around collaborative structures should also support and inform their plans. Additionally, each Data Team will meet with members of the leadership team to

ensure that the team can draw valid inferences that can guide their learning and their actions so the aforementioned “shoulds” will be more certain.

The “go and see” aspect of the project will be conducted by members of the leadership team. The team has been trained in an observation protocol that eschews evaluation to focus on evidence of instruction. The protocol stipulates that teams observe instruction silently while writing down their observations as they visit classrooms. When the team leaves the class, they collaboratively discuss their observations in an attempt to validly capture a broader perspective of the evidence of learning, or academic language use for the purpose of this fieldwork project. In a sense, this is an attempt to develop inter-rater reliability among the leadership team to create a more complete perspective of the classroom context. In a similar vein, members of the leadership team will identify classroom artifacts that are identified as supporting academic language as teachers are implementing their interventions.

The data collection and analysis plan for measuring academic language use at Suva Intermediate will guide the learning and the actions that will incrementally increase academic language use throughout the instructional day. The data collection process is directly tied to the professional development plan included in the timeline and learning process. Suva's teachers and students are eager to incorporate their voices to the notion that the frequent and strategic use of academic language throughout the instructional day can augment academic achievement for all students, and particularly for ELs.

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Students, teachers, and communities need emancipatory, empowering education. Education is emancipatory when students' dynamic, hybrid cultures, student learning, and student empowerment are at the heart of all decisions enacted at a school site. An emancipatory education requires teachers empowered to make decisions, both collaboratively and independently, about how best to develop collaborative instructional units and empowering spaces that build on students' cultures and experiences. Similarly, an emancipatory education requires that teachers empower students to make decisions, both collaboratively and independently, about how best to guide their collaborative and independent learning. Teachers and students, therefore, need voice and choice in terms of the instructional materials they utilize in their classrooms and the pedagogies they choose to implement in order to develop empowered, emancipated individuals. This type of emancipatory education takes on an inherently social justice perspective, putting student identity, empowerment, and liberation at the heart of curriculum and instruction, particularly when integrating the identities of historically marginalized students.

Outside of school, students interact with dynamic, diverse, shifting realities that influence their emerging, hybrid identities. For instance, students interact passively and actively with a rapidly changing technological landscape, including social media, videos, and video games at their fingertips, that bombard students with a diverse barrage of images and messages that are increasingly complex to process. Similarly, from a musical perspective, students listen to,

interact with, dance to, and are influenced by lyrics and myriad musical traditions—from Hip-Hop, Reggaeton, Electronica, Pop, Banda, Bachata, and Cumbia to the now more traditional Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Boleros, Rock & Roll, Salsa, Merengue, and Mariachi their parents and grandparents enjoyed. Moreover, as Hollie (2011) contends, “Many minority students arrive at school in America speaking a language that differs from the language of instruction. How teachers view this language difference significantly influences the students’ ability to acquire literacy and other academic skills” (p. 55). These shifting facets of youth culture—technology, music, language—demonstrate part of the diverse cultural landscapes students interact with on a daily basis that influence their identities. It also suggests the diverse “funds of knowledge” that students bring to school, funds that must be embraced in order to develop emancipatory education. Schools must implement dynamic, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy that helps students construct their hybrid identities in critical and emancipatory manners.

My understanding of an emancipatory, empowering education is grounded in socio-cultural theory centered on shifting, socially-situated hybrid identities at the heart of a collaborative, culturally responsive, critical pedagogy.

The social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and in fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary...the specific structures and processes revealed by individuals can be traced to their interactions with others (Scott and Palinscar, 2013, p.1).

This lens centers learning and identity-formation in socio-culturally relevant interactions. Thus, school-based interactions must foster constant interactions among students that embrace students’ backgrounds. When “students’ primary discourses (those used in the home, community, and informal social interactions) and students secondary discourses (those endorsed in school and other formal institutions) intersect” (Scott and Palinscar, 2013, p. 6), students are

able to merge worlds to build upon their funds of knowledge. “From this perspective, as learners participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalize the effects of working together, they acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture” (Scott and Palinscar, 2013, p. 1). These interactions enable experimentation with varied identities in socially-situated contexts.

An emancipatory education incorporates students' hybrid identities in socially situated contexts that enable students to learn and shift their identities. Indeed, when students consistently collaborate, identities shift, “Transformation (rather than internalization) occurs as participants in the activity assume increasing responsibility for the activity; in essence, redefining membership in a community of practice, and, in fact, changing the socio-cultural practice itself” (Scott and Palinscar, 2013, p.3). It is also critical to recognize that students live in a “racialized society that gives unearned privilege to some while others experience unearned disadvantage because of race, gender, class or language” (Hammond, 2015, p. 18). Therefore, students are interacting with dynamic realities as they face asymmetrical, racialized, power relations that must be incorporated into our understanding of emancipatory education. Given these realities, what does emancipatory education look like?

The instructional materials that schools select must enable students to collaboratively negotiate the “discourse, norms, and practices associated with particular discourse and practice communities” (Scott and Palinscar, 2013, p. 5). This enables students to incorporate and transform the practices, thereby shifting their academic identities. In this sense, instructional leaders need to consistently foster pedagogy that reflects Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT) that challenges students to engage in “productive struggle” in order to collaboratively develop higher order thinking and independent learning. CLRT requires constant reflection, in collaborative contexts, that enable social justice educators to learn from

one another to develop “an ability to recognize students’ cultural display of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts” (Hammond, 2015, p. 15). Indeed, as Hammond (2015) contends, “a disproportionate number of culturally and linguistically diverse students are dependent learners,” primarily because they receive a skills-based education that does not embrace students funds of knowledge that enable them to engage in the “productive struggle that actually grows our brainpower” (p.14). In this sense, schools must select instructional materials that promote culturally responsive, project-based learning that aids in shifting student identities as they incorporate, and shift the norms and practices associated with particular professional communities. As Howard (2011) contends,

[Culturally responsive pedagogy] encourages students to view themselves as agents of change, and to interrogate issues such as resources in their respective communities, educational equity, immigration policy, health disparities, and overall quality of life. Culturally responsive teachers introduce current events, issues, and perspectives that are germane to students’ communities and families contemporarily and historically. These teachers encourage students to be critical thinkers about solutions to transform their communities (p. 4).

Instructional materials that foster teacher collaboration through culturally and linguistically responsive teaching that builds on students’ funds of knowledge and applies relevant, project-based collaboration is, therefore, integral to an emancipatory and empowering education.

The instructional materials selected will reflect the community when broad ranges of stakeholders at the school are integral to the process of developing the vision and the criteria that represent CLR pedagogy and instructional materials. What guides the selection of instructional materials needs to be guided in an understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy where it

[i]s situated in a framework that recognizes the rich and varied cultural wealth, knowledge, and skills that diverse students bring to schools, and seeks to develop dynamic teaching practices, multicultural connections, multiple means of

assessment, and a philosophical view of teaching that is dedicated to nurturing student's academic, social, emotional, cultural, psychological, and physiological well-being (Howard, 2011, p.2).

Teachers and a diverse selection of students, as the principal enactors of the curriculum, must be integral to the process of selecting culturally responsive instructional materials. Students and teachers from historically marginalized communities must be front and center at the table, as the CLR instructional materials must reflect their realities in relevant manners. Parents, including those representing historically marginalized communities, are fundamental as they provide voices of community aspirations. Similarly, community activists provide insight into issues facing the community, and build relevant bridges in which to apply the culturally relevant projects students enact. Office staff, from managers to community liaisons, are integral as well as they interact with multiple community stakeholders on a daily basis, and provide insights about issues community members face as they interact with the school. Custodial staff should also be at the table as they often interact with students and the community in manners that enable them to be fundamental brokers of community issues that will support the work and collaborative knowledge of the selection committee. Finally, incorporating district and academic "experts" in CLRT and State adopted frameworks will help clarify and elaborate various tenets of socio-cultural learning theories to support the work of the group.

Enacting an emancipatory, empowering education, therefore, requires a village with a culturally and linguistically responsive vision. This vision is necessary, in particular, for historically marginalized communities whose cultures historically have been perceived as inferior in school settings. As Howard (2011) argues,

Culturally responsive teaching rejects the deficit based beliefs that some teachers may hold about culturally diverse students. It operates from a standpoint of recognizing student strengths, and seeks to build on them. Deficit based

explanations are usually centered on poor students, and students of color lacking or being devoid of culture, coming from a culture of poverty which is not suited for academic success, possessing an oppositional culture, having a disdain for academic achievement, or having parents how lack concern for their children's academic aspirations. These deficit based accounts of students have also derided students' language as being deficient because of its variation from Standard English (p.2).

The instructional materials schools can select usually reflect mainstream language and culture. As Delpit (1995) argues, moreover, culturally diverse students “who often do not have access to the politically popular dialect in this country, that is, Standard English, are less likely to succeed economically than their peers who do” since the language and culture of the materials is more readily comprehensible to mainstream students (p. 53). Therefore, the instructional materials by themselves are not enough to enact an empowering, emancipatory education. As Delpit (1995) suggests, instruction matters: “Teachers need to support the language that students bring to school, provide them input from an additional code, and give them the opportunity to use the code in a non-threatening, real communicative context” (p. 53). An emancipatory education entails that teachers work collaboratively to develop instructional units and empowering socio-cultural learning contexts that build on students' cultures and experiences. Contextualizing the selection of instructional materials within culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies places the materials in socially-situated contexts that enable students to collaborate on projects that are germane to their communities. Socio-cultural theory, therefore, liberates teachers to implement an emancipatory education that liberates all students, particularly those from historically marginalized communities.

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Students, teachers, and communities benefit from an emancipatory education that instills leadership in all members of a school community. This is the case for most schools, but particularly for schools in communities that have historically been disenfranchised due to racial, ethnic, linguistic, sexual, and gender discrimination. Education can be emancipatory when communities dynamic, hybrid cultures, student learning, and community empowerment are at the heart of all decisions enacted at a school site, thereby taking on an explicitly additive perspective to address a community's historical marginalization. In order for this to occur, school communities need an empowering school vision that all stakeholders collaborate on, develop, create, and enact that affects all facets of the school community, and particularly student learning. An emancipatory education requires that a broad cross-section of stakeholders in the community—students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, community liaisons, community activists—take ownership of the school vision in order to be intricately and intimately invested in the direction of the school. This type of emancipatory education takes on a social justice perspective, putting student and community identity, empowerment, and liberation at the heart of curriculum and instruction, particularly when integrating the identities and experiences of historically marginalized students.

Enacting an empowering education entails developing an inclusive, collective, school vision. A school's vision needs to be explicitly aware of its socio-political context. As Kose (2010) contends,

In response to long-standing and pervasive school inequities, deficit-thinking, and low expectations for students who are marginalized due to their race, ethnicity, language, ability, or other social identities, scholars have argued that school leaders should lead for social justice...centered on understanding and addressing issues of equity, diversity, social justice, and oppression (pp.1-2).

Taking on social justice explicitly in the creation of the collective school vision empowers communities to collaborate with schools to strive for equity. Kose (2010) suggests, "A collective and shared school vision or mission is a characteristic of effective schools, helps foster inclusive and equitable schools, directs positive school change" (p.2). This is the collective school vision the "Emancipatory Education Framework" strives for at each school site:

Our school is guided by principles of socio-cultural theories of learning implemented through culturally and linguistically responsive teaching that affirms our students' identities to promote social justice. Leadership models equitable and inclusive practices to provide access to a collaborative culture of learning that promotes a culture of inquiry, critical thinking, project-based learning, and learning for social justice.

It is "critical to include all key stakeholders, including traditionally marginalized voices, to ensure representative ownership in a truly shared vision" (Kose, 2010, p.6) as we collaborate on the collective school vision. Thus, we include former and current students (including historically marginalized), parents (including historically marginalized), content teachers, community activist, professionals engaging with the content in their profession, district curriculum specialist, researchers in socio-cultural theory, and classified staff in the creation of the school vision.

During the initial steps of creating the collective school vision, "transformative ideas such as equity, affirming diversity, or learning for social justice" (Kose, 2010, p. 7) are incorporated into the discussion so the school's direction takes on an inclusive and explicit social justice direction. Incorporating multiple voices into the collective school vision, taking stock of multiple programs at school sites to determine how they fit (or not) into the vision, will take

leadership, time, patience, and coordination among all stakeholders. As Kose (2010) indicates, “persistent and organized leadership was important because initial ideas rarely fit together and it took months or longer to satisfactorily integrate multiple viewpoints” (p.9). Efficiency and expediency in developing the mission will not trump the time and work it takes to build strong relationships that will enable the development of an equitable, collective school vision.

The aforementioned collective school vision integrates social justice in manners that are clear to all stakeholders, “recognizing that social justice has no fixed or ‘universal’ meaning or definition” (Kose, 2010, p. 3). Consequently, as the stakeholders develop the school vision, clarity about the implications of the language incorporated into the vision becomes evident. For instance, Kose (2010) contends that the vision must incorporate language that is “specific, manageable, and coherent” (p.9). Indeed, “visions with clear, specific concepts to help focus or frame planning, practices, or policies” enabling stakeholders to build a clear understanding of the direction of the school. For example, instead of emphasizing a broad, ill-defined (though laudable) concept of ‘education for all,’ “a vision concept related to affirming diversity to focus staff meeting discussions on associated ideas such as deficit thinking, institutionalized racism, or affirming students’ cultural backgrounds” (Kose, 2010, p 10) enables teachers and the community to explicitly and directly engage social justice issues within a framework that attempts to critique and contest historical marginalization.

Our collective school vision is explicitly “guided by principles of socio-cultural theories of learning implemented through culturally and linguistically responsive teaching that affirms our students’ identities to promote social justice.” This explicit language enables the community to know that our school affirms our students’ identities and that we are informed broadly by

socio-cultural theories of learning, and specifically by Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT). As Howard (2011) contends,

[Culturally responsive pedagogy] encourages students to view themselves as agents of change, and to interrogate issues such as resources in their respective communities, educational equity, immigration policy, health disparities, and overall quality of life. Culturally responsive teachers introduce current events, issues, and perspectives that are germane to students' communities and families contemporarily and historically. These teachers encourage students to be critical thinkers about solutions to transform their communities (p. 4).

Moreover, the emphasis on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is justified within the context of CA ELA/ELD Frameworks:

Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and equity- focused approaches emphasize validating and valuing students' cultural and linguistic heritage— and all other aspects of students' identities— while also ensuring their full development of academic English and their ability to engage meaningfully in a range of academic contexts across the disciplines (ELA/ELD, p. 917).

Therefore, the school vision is explicit and the language triggers a research-base and a State priority the school community can access that suggests the type of curriculum, instruction, and student engagement expected at the school. Hence, while school visions will naturally have a focus on student learning at their core, including this type of “transformative” student learning with social justice implications in our vision is in line with the precepts of transformative leadership. Indeed, according to Kose (2010), incorporating “equity/inclusion, affirming diversity, responsible citizenship, learning for diversity, and learning for social justice” (p.10) enables the school community to have a clear purpose of the direction of the school, and particularly the curriculum and instruction.

The development of a collective school vision provides a rationale for all stakeholders to take ownership of the direction of a school. As Kose (2010) indicates, “a school vision could coordinate and integrate school efforts under a broad umbrella” (p.6). As such, the vision can

“increase collaboration possibilities, more efficiently distribute workloads, and focus school efforts on quality student learning” (Kose, 2010, p.6). The rationale not only helps stakeholders take ownership of the vision, but also of the process of enacting the school vision. When stakeholders take a direct role in creating the collective school vision, the leadership of a school has the implicit support of the school “to leverage school visions for transformative hiring, curriculum development, professional learning, and school improvement” (Kose, 2010, p.2). Thus, consistently reflecting and acting in accordance with the collective school vision implicitly places all stakeholders at the table when leaders—principals, assistant principals, teachers, and all stakeholders—make decisions, large and small, to consistently implement the vision.

Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) argue that, “[leadership] enacted broadly across the entire school community—builds the capacity of staff, students, parents, and community members to engage in meaningful collaboration and authentically shares power and decisions about the equity work (including the vision, organizational policy and practice, curriculum, and instruction)” (p.105). The school vision is not an abstract document, “it is lived and enacted in the daily interactions and work of leadership” (Ishimaru and Galloway, 2014, p. 109). For example, since our school vision explicitly incorporates socio-cultural theories of learning broadly and CLRT specifically, the instructional materials the school selects must reflect that vision. Thus, when the committee analyzes textbooks to adopt, it first identifies whether the materials are compliant with California (CA) Mathematics and English Language Arts/English Language Development Frameworks, which stipulate that Instructional Materials to Support the Common Core State Standards must meet the following criteria:

1. Content/Alignment with the Standards.
2. Program Organization.
3. Assessment.

4. Universal Access.
5. Instructional Planning.
6. Teacher Support. (See Appendix A for specific descriptions)

These criteria do not include socio-cultural theories of learning or CLRT. Therefore, the committee searched for instructional materials that would incorporate both, and identified *Rethinking Math* as it incorporated two elements of the school vision: CLRT and project-based learning. Moreover, CLRT and project-based learning are ideally assessed formatively throughout the process, which we incorporated as a lens to adopt instructional materials. Most significantly, the instructional materials (McGraw Hill and *Rethinking Math*), when placed side by side, require teachers to collaboratively design integrated instructional units that will address the skills suggested in the sequence of McGraw Hill, and *Rethinking Math* projects.

Consequently, by adopting two different textbooks, teacher collaborative practice and continuous growth become fundamental in enacting the school vision.

The collective school vision incorporates systematic structures that foster continuous collaboration in order to share power and develop internal leadership among all stakeholders. Our vision states, "Leadership models equitable and inclusive practices to provide access to a collaborative culture of learning that promotes a culture of inquiry." Leadership is transformative when it is diffuse throughout the system. As Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) argue, "we need to move beyond what the principal, alone, can accomplish and begin to understand more about how to develop *organizational* leadership to eliminate educational disparities by race, ethnicity, class, language, and/or ability" (p.100). Indeed, Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) suggest that the leadership and responsibility for enacting the school vision should demonstrate

high expectations for educator practice and student learning; utilizes inclusive, democratic decision making process; builds collective responsibility for the

educational success of each student; and employs strategies for countering push-back to sustain the vision and its enactment (p.109).

At the heart of a diffuse, shared leadership is continuous collaboration among stakeholders.

Teacher collaboration around the instructional materials is essential to enact the school vision. Indeed, it is an integral component of our vision by incorporating a “collaborative culture of learning that promotes a culture of inquiry” through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), as illustrated by DuFour and Fullan (2013) who contend that, “a guaranteed curriculum can only occur when those who are called upon to implement the curriculum—the teachers themselves—are the ones making the guarantee to the students and their colleagues” (p.49). In this manner, the locus of implementation for socio-cultural learning and CLRT at the school site lies in the hands of teachers collaborating around student learning, “working together to create their own common assessments and to establish the criteria by which they assess the quality of student work. They use this evidence of student learning to inform and improve their individual and collective practice” (DuFour and Fullan, 2013, p.50). The evidence also serves to support teachers’ expertise and reflection on practice through the dialogue, discussion, and discourse within each PLC. As DuFour and Fullan (2013) indicate, “A distinguishing characteristic of a PLC is its unrelenting focus on learning—not only for the students, but also for the adults who serve them” (p.54). However, in order to enact the vision, leadership needs to provide support structures that foster the collective and individual expertise among teachers as they continuously hone their craft to construct an emancipatory, empowering education.

Developing the collaborative culture of learning among teachers entails that “leadership at all levels in systemic reform...create the conditions that allow people to be successful at what they are being asked to do” (Dufour and Fullan, 2013, p.50). Those conditions require

transparency within the organization—student work brought to PLC collaboration, open classrooms, continuous peer-to-peer observation, Instructional Rounds. As Dufour and Fullan (2013) stipulate, “If results are kept secret, however, there is no awareness of the need for change. The potential power of irrefutably better results and positive peer pressure to foster change is rendered impotent without transparency” (p.56). Leadership’s role in building the process of transparency is integral by creating the opportunities for peer-to-peer observation and formative feedback, for the development of Problems of Practice with all stakeholders in order to guide Instructional Rounds. Within the context of supporting the openness and transparency inherent to highly functioning PLCs, moreover, “Proficient equitable leadership practice consistently provides individualized feedback on instruction with an equity lens and facilitates ongoing professional development in order to hold staff accountable for utilizing equitable instruction” (Ishimaru and Galloway, 2014, p.112). In this sense, all stakeholders are engaged in PLCs, supporting the work, providing structures for reflection, thereby creating conditions for internal reflection and collaborative accountability.

Teachers are supported continuously and collaboratively through feedback that is formative in nature and goal-centered. For instance, using an evaluation protocol that embeds the school vision—CLRT, project-based learning, collaborative praxis, and a focus on socio-cultural formative assessment (see Appendix B)—teachers and leadership formatively support their colleagues, whether through peer-to-peer observations and/or the data from Instructional Rounds. The observations operate within the context of what the PLC is attempting to accomplish, grounded in the aforementioned precepts of the school vision. Therefore, instructional improvement, supervision of instruction, and evaluation are conducted in manners that are collaborative and capacity-building in nature. As Ishimaru and Galloway (2014)

indicate, “leadership for monitoring and developing equitable instruction is expressed as a collaborative endeavor with teachers and staff, where teachers hold themselves accountable for utilizing equitable instruction, providing equitable access to high-quality content” (p.112). This data, moreover, supports school-wide needs for professional development. Since the locus of curriculum and instruction occur at the collaborative level within each PLC, professional development is guided by the work conducted within the PLCs, peer-to-peer observations, and the data from Instructional Rounds. These systems develop a culture of inquiry that embeds sustainability in its processes through continuous cycles of formative feedback and collaboration.

Beyond building systems of collaboration, there is an explicit focus on equity throughout the system. As Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) contend, “equitable practice engages in on-going monitoring, feedback, and accountability for equitable instruction and examines both formative and summative forms of data as evidence of improvements in teaching practice and student learning” (p.113). Moreover, when PLCs disaggregate observations and data by race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, language, and ability they build a continuous culture of critical inquiry. It is essential to “highlight data inquiry as a key process for surfacing school inequities and triggering the urgency and ownership required for bringing people to the table to begin to address them” (Ishimaru and Galloway, 2014, p.106). Transparency entails sharing information with all stakeholders. As such, “leadership facilitates the collective capacity of not only teachers and staff, but also students, families, and community members to lead for equity” (p.114).

As part of this work, critical consciousness-raising implies deep reflection on personal positionality among all members of the school community, modeled by all leaders and diffused throughout all stakeholders. Indeed, critical consciousness raising leadership

engages in personal and intellectual work to understand how privilege, power, and oppression operate—both historically and currently—in school and society. As part of this process, the leadership examines its own identities, values, biases, assumptions, and privileges. This includes defining core values around democracy, social justice, and equity...and modeling continuous learning and inquiry in pursuit of equity (Ishimaru and Galloway, 2014, p.118).

By engaging all members of the community in this critical work, the school vision develops an “asset-based approach that recognizes marginalized students, families, and communities as active participants and potential collaborators in systemic and school-change processes” (Ishimaru and Galloway, 2014, p. 98). An empowering and emancipatory education entails that all stakeholders take a critical seat at the table, particularly those who have been historically marginalized, to build the type of transformative education students and communities deserve. Together, they co-create conditions for all to develop the leadership to transform their school, their community, and their lives.

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Appendix A

1. Mathematics Content/Alignment with the Standards. Content as specified in the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics with California Additions, including the Standards for

Mathematical Practices, and sequence and organization of the mathematics program that provide structure for what students should learn at each grade level.

2. Program Organization. Instructional materials support instruction and learning of the standards and include such features as lists of the standards, chapter overviews, and glossaries.

3. Assessment. Strategies presented in the instructional materials for measuring what students know and are able to do.

4. Universal Access. Access to the standards-based curriculum for all students, including English learners, advanced learners, students below grade level in mathematical skills, and students with disabilities.

5. Instructional Planning. Information and materials that contain a clear road map for teachers to follow when planning instruction.

6. Teacher Support. Materials designed to help teachers provide effective standards-based mathematics instruction (CA Math Framework, p.5).

What is your definition of marginalization? How might your school look different if marginalization was reduced?

Marginalization is a systemic process that unjustly places groups of people on the margins of the center of power, where power is negotiated. In the United States, people are marginalized due to their race, class, culture, language, gender, sexuality, age, and/or perceived ability. Indeed, the process of marginalization is an integral element of the cultural and linguistic hegemony that operates throughout its institutions. Of the five faces of oppression that Young (1990) identifies—exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, violence, and cultural imperialism—she states that “marginalization is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life” (p. 63). Indeed, “marginalization is unjust because it blocks the opportunity to exercise capacities in socially defined and recognized ways” (Young, p.63). Schools use cultural and linguistic hegemony to marginalize non-dominant students so they have less access and practice to exercise their capacities in socially recognized manners.

Young's discussion of cultural imperialism where it “involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm.” is similar to my understanding of cultural hegemony. Indeed, the discussion of cultural hegemony is applicable to school contexts because the dominant cultural “norm” is what dictates “the standards,” the “hidden curriculum,” and the normative behavioral and linguistic expectations at school sites. Students who do not come to school with the dominant norms of the school due to their race, class, culture, language, gender, sexuality, and/or perceived ability are placed at the margins.

Schools administer a plethora of tests, starting in kindergarten, that exalt people's home cultures, and not necessarily what is learned at school. Consequently, when students do not meet the "standards" of mainstream/dominant culture, they are placed in "alternative" tracks or in "intervention" classes that marginalize them from the center of power, with a curriculum that addresses their "needs."

A school that reduces marginalization would critically examine the cultural biases of the dominant culture that are disseminated throughout the institutional structure and each individual. As the dominant cultural norms are constantly interrogated, the faculty could be explicit about potential instructional and institutional decisions privileging dominant norms, thereby potentially marginalizing non-dominant students. Moreover, the faculty can also be explicit with students that the dominant norms are sometimes taught so that students can have access to the center. However, that discussion must be equally explicit that the norms can be learned without foregoing individual and group cultural identities. Schools can thus be dynamic forums where cultural norms are contested, creating ever-evolving hybrid, multicultural identities. For this to occur, all students need to be at the center, in diverse classes since "marginalization... also involves the deprivation of cultural, practical, and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in context of recognition and interaction" (Young, p.64). Bell Hooks argues that, "to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body." In schools, we must put students as part of the main body—not only in classes, but also in the curriculum through culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy—so that students who have been historically marginalized can use their positionality to learn to critically interrogate the center in socially recognized manners.

What is an example from your own experience (as a student at any level of education or as an educator) of student voices being incorporated into school practice? Is this an example of democratic practice or democratic education? Why or why not?

Throughout my high school and college years, I was involved in leadership at multiple levels. In high school, I was involved in student government, as a captain of athletic teams, and in bringing social justice issues to campus through a number of organizations. In college, I brought social justice issues to the fore through a number of political action groups directly tied to combating racism, sexism, and classism—not through student government. In both cases, my involvement in these spaces attempted to push school practices in specific directions. When I reflect on these experiences today, especially after reading Hantzopoulos (2015), I would argue that my participation in these extra-curricular spaces is an example of both democratic practice and democratic education.

Hantzopoulos (2015) cites Apple and Beane in discussing democratic education which “must be experienced and lived, moving beyond ‘engineering of consent toward predetermined decisions [to a] ... genuine attempt to honor the right of people to participate in making decisions that affect their lives” (p. 347). Indeed, when Hantzopoulos (2015) quotes students from Prep, I identified with the over-arching notion that, “this type of critical and democratic education found at Prep is instrumental in their academic success” (p.352). I learned to add my voice through my participation in extra-curricular activities, which then transferred over to adding my voice to my classroom discussions. The small, democratic spaces helped me develop and practice my voice in varied spaces, with varied audiences. Indeed, these spaces helped develop my identity as a critical participant in my education, calling for more diversity in syllabi, questioning pedagogical practice productively, and helping add my voice, and my peers’ voices, to our curricula.

I was a disruptive middle school student. Once I began participating in extra-curricular spaces in high school, a gradual transformation occurred where I realized that my education mattered. I realized that what I learned could affect the direction of my life and my community. My education was an integral part of who I was and wanted to be. Indeed, one student's reflection resonated powerfully:

You hear about people doing these amazing things, these protests and these campaigns and just taking up these causes that they feel strongly for and you never realize that those people are the same as you. *There's nothing about them that's extraordinary, except that they choose to be extraordinary people* (Hantzopoulos, 2015, p.353).

Student participation in democratic practice transfers over to democratic education; it has the potential to inspire and transform people throughout the school—students, teachers, staff, and administrators—in order to democratize and transform communities.

Noguera (2007) indicates that “it is important not to omit those who might know more because they are better connected to their peers, even if it means including students who are not models of ideal student conduct” (p.210). Noguera suggests that student voices are essential to foster genuine school reform; I would argue (and I speculate that he would too) that incorporating student voices empowers students to become invested in their education thereby indirectly addressing “high dropout rates in urban areas, concerns about violence and safety, pervasive low achievement, and a seemingly “intractable achievement gap that corresponds disturbingly and predictably to the race and class backgrounds of students (Noguera, 2007, p. 205). From my experience, then, democratic practice is democratic education—as well as effective, emancipatory, empowering education.

What is one example of a time when a leader at your school included multiple stakeholders (teachers, other staff, students parents, other community members) in some decision making structure. What purpose(s) (if any) were served by including multiple parties in the decision? What other purposes might the school leader have pursued?

It is deeply disappointing that I cannot cite one example of when an administrator genuinely included multiple stakeholders in decision-making structures. Naturally, mandated entities, like School Site Councils (SSC), must include multiple stakeholders. However, my experiences at my various school sites have been that SSCs nominally include multiple stakeholders, but truly work as a “rubber stamp” to implement the administration’s agenda through budgetary means. The closest example I can think of involved including teachers on a leadership team that actually made decisions for the school, and not just a forum where teachers could collectively share their gripes on a monthly basis. Unfortunately, there were no community or staff members on the leadership team, but the experience left an indelible mark on the teachers at the school.

A little background: the principal was visionary by bringing PLCs to our district. He believed that collaboration would empower teachers, which it did. In fact, the collective experience of many teachers participating and co-constructing curricula for students empowered them to start looking beyond the confines of the classroom to see other manners of impacting learning. Teachers started looking at a number of systems at the school site to improve, which lead many teachers to want to be part of a decision-making body. The principal embraced the movement and created a leadership team that started making collective decisions to affect the culture of learning at the school. While I am unsure if the principal’s original intention was to get so many teachers empowered, the results were clear across the board: more teachers embraced

improvement efforts. Teachers who were not on board with many of the collective initiatives started to leave the school on their own volition because they saw that teachers were the ones leading the changes. By including teachers in the decision-making structure, student achievement improved on multiple measures: student and parent surveys, CSTs, quarterly benchmark exams, and PLC-based SMART goal Common Formative Assessments.

Ironically, the administrator was dismissed from the district at the end of the year—after a massive protest to keep him on by a coalition of parents, teachers, and students who spoke fervently on his behalf at board meetings. School results continued to improve after he left—greater improvement than any other school in the district on CSTs—even though the school had two different principals in two years. The improvement continued because teachers were at the helm of improvement efforts. Based on our readings, including parents would have only made the improvement efforts more entrenched.

I recall having multiple conversations with the principal as a member of the District Site Leadership Team (DSLTL) regarding the leadership structure. When I suggested that he embed teachers on a leadership flowchart who were involved in the decision-making arena in order to be transparent—particularly in supporting curriculum, assessment, and instruction for the various PLCs—he responded that the district would laugh at him. The leadership structure had to be bureaucratically hierarchical, even if it didn't reflect reality. Our readings for this week hit at this tension between bureaucracy and democracy, an on-going tension that must be negotiated by multiple stakeholders in order for deliberative democratic initiatives to take place.

What is an example from your own experience (as a student, a parent, or an educator) of a school involving parents in an important decision or school practice? Was this “authentic participation?” Was it democratic? Was it critical? Why or why not?

Ironically, the best example I can remember of a school “involving parents” in a decision was when my school district decided to close my school down. I have taught for twenty years, and in those twenty years I have seen how schools “involve parents” mainly in the “plug-in” manner that Terriquez (2011) discusses. When I reflected about “authentic participation,” potentially democratic, and possibly critical, I was at a loss for clear examples. However, I realized that the manner the district closed down (“repurposed” was the euphemism) my school became “authentic” in soliciting parent input, potentially democratic in that a committee of representative parents and teachers negotiated the “repurposing” process with the district’s assistant superintendent, and critical because a significant amount of parents from the school site had recently mobilized in a failed attempt to retain an exemplary principal. The district realized that if it didn’t handle the situation in a representative, democratic manner the reaction from the critical community would be media-savvy, vocal, and unpredictable.

Laguna Nueva School (LNS) was “repurposed” in the middle of the “Great Recession,” in 2011. LNS was a K-8 school. In terms of students, it had the second smallest population—and the other school was a K-5 campus. Per grade, LNS was the smallest school in the district by far. It also didn’t have a permanent structure. Indeed, every structure on campus was an old “portable,” a “bungalow.” Plans had been designed to create a permanent structure in the 1990s, which never happened. During the recession, student enrollment in the district declined dramatically, as in many So. Cal districts, so there were many empty classrooms in neighboring schools. The district had calculated that by “repurposing” LNS, the district would save at least

\$600,000 annually—money it sorely needed to stay afloat. Indeed, the teacher's association/union supported the district's decision to close the school down. The money saved could help retain teachers.

Given that budgetary context, the district initially held two different meetings with LNS stakeholders—teachers, parents, and community members—to explain its rationale. The response from the school community was swift and in clear opposition. We loved our little school, and we believed that the education we were providing was unique in the district, and our results on CSTs (the only results the district cared about) were outpacing the vast majority of schools. While the “repurposing” might have made sense financially, to the community it made no sense at all.

Once the district realized that all stakeholders—save the principal—were unified against the move, the assistant superintendent started having multiple meetings with stakeholders. At those meetings, the message was clear: the school will be repurposed. Parents spoke out at meetings in opposition, created an ad-hoc committee against the move. Teachers and parents walked the community weekly to talk to school parents regarding the potential closing, and our intention to fight the move. Eventually, the district created a committee and invited members of the community at large and the ad-hoc committee to discuss and negotiate the process. Multiple meetings were held where parents voiced multiple concerns. Eventually, a process was put into place that kept the school open for an additional year so parents could plan their next step.

When I reflect on the process, I sincerely believe that the reason the district organized multiple meetings with authentic participation, making the process transparent and democratic, was that the community was organized and knew how to mobilize. Parents were not happy with

the “repurpose,” but understood the financial constraints. The community was feeling financial constraints acutely. The “parent involvement” became critical because of prior mobilization and opposition to district decisions. To me, the lesson learned is that “parent involvement” is democratic and critical when it’s already part and parcel of the manner the community organizes itself. Districts and schools usually want docile, “plug-in” parent involvement. Active participation is habitual. As social justice leaders, we need to create active parent collaboration a habit of the decision-making bodies on campus.

Introduction

According to critical scholars of the United States, the dominant culture's ideological conceptions of race, class and gender constructed legal, political and social structures that benefited them—White, wealthy, property-owning men (Zinn, 1995). For example, the foundational writers of the U.S. Constitution marginalized the majority of the population by not extending full and equal citizenship rights to people who were not White, property-owning, men—establishing a precedent whereby non-White, non-male and poor individuals became subordinate classes, “living out social relations in subordination to the dominant culture” (McLaren, 1998, p. 172). Therefore, groups of individuals who did not reflect the dominant culture were historically and structurally marginalized. Due to an intersection of some of these factors, the primarily Latino residents of the City of Bell Gardens, among the lowest socio-economic areas in Los Angeles County, are marginalized. According to 2010 US Census Report, 95.7% of the community is of Hispanic or Latino decent, 45.1% are foreign-born, most residents' home language is Spanish, and the schools that serve the community have large percentages of students who are on Free and/or Reduced lunch. Students in the community, therefore, are marginalized on multiple fronts: class, ethnicity, legal status, and language. Within this group of historically marginalized students, moreover, Special Education (Sp. Ed) students are further marginalized in schools through tracking. This essay will interrogate the system that marginalizes Sp. Ed students in Bell Gardens from legal and pedagogical perspectives, investigating legal and pedagogical manners to address the marginalization in order to create more equitable structures and practices at school sites.

Nature and Extent of the Problem

At a case site school in Bell Gardens, Sp. Ed students experience systemic marginalization through educational tracking that segregates them for at least half their instructional day. Most often, students stay in their “track” for the duration of their tenure at the school. According to Oakes (1992), tracking students within the school, essentially segregating them due to their perceived ability and/or their school-designated classification, is a common practice with pernicious effects. For example, through tracking, access to the curriculum is inequitable since classes allegedly differentiate learning in separate contexts, often with lower expectations, and with less access to the core curriculum. Indeed, as Oakes (1992) describes, “Low track courses offer less demanding topics and skills, while high-track classes typically include more complex material and more thinking and problem-solving tasks” (p.15). Beyond receiving a less demanding curriculum, often schools track students by removing them from class to “intervene,” according to their educational needs. Pull-out programs also have deleterious effects:

In addition to being the most expensive and least effective means to educate students, separate pull-out programs typically segregate and track students of color, low income students, ELL students, and students with (dis)abilities... Consequently, students who need the most routine, structure, and consistency in their day experience the most disruptions (Bell McKenzie, et al, 2011, p.127).

Thus, Sp. Ed students, by virtue of their school-created designation, receive a vastly different education than students of perceived higher abilities under a tracking or pull-out system.

The effects of tracking go beyond educational opportunity. For example, Oakes (1992) contends that,

tracking is accompanied by public labels, status differences, expectations, and consequences for academic and occupational attainment. Thus, tracking becomes

part and parcel of the struggle among individuals and groups for comparative advantage in the distribution of school resources, opportunities, and credentials... This political dimension often encompasses highly charged issues of race and social stratification (p.13).

Students often develop an identity around the designated label, accepting a lesser curriculum and a status within the school with lower expectations. As such, according to Oakes, being placed on a lower-ability track has far-reaching consequences that impact the potential future of the lower-tracked students. If the effects of tracking are harmful, as the research suggest, have there been legal attempts to rectify the situation?

Can the law help?

The court has addressed tracking. For example, in *Hobson v Hansen* (1967), the court argued that tracking in the operation of the school system “unconstitutionally deprive the District’s Negro and poor public school children of their right to equal educational opportunity with the District’s white and more affluent public school children” (Biegel, et al, 2016, p. 434).

To buttress its argument, the court included specific findings of fact:

9. The aptitude tests used to assign children to the various tracks are standardized primarily on white middle class children. Since these tests do not relate to the Negro and disadvantaged child, track assignment based on such tests relegates Negro and disadvantaged children to the lower tracks from which, because of the reduced curricula and the absence of adequate remedial and compensatory education, as well as continued inappropriate testing, the chance of escape is remote (Biegel, et al, 2016, p. 434).

Thus, the courts have attempted to address the inequities caused by separating, or tracking, students. Indeed, the segregationist framework enacted in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), “separate but equal,” was over-ruled and considered unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) as the effects of segregating students was deemed to provide unequal educational opportunities. Moreover, in *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972), the court contended that school

districts, like in *Brown v. Board of Education*, had to educate all students, especially students with special needs, regardless of cost. Doing otherwise relegated students to an unequal education. In that sense, the legal foundation was set for districts to provide Sp. Ed students with equal access to education.

Tracking Sp. Ed students, however, does not provide equal access. Indeed, the manner Sp. Ed. students are tracked may unfortunately support the notion that “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” According to Biegel, et al. (2016), “Congress’s passage of the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) of 1970 marked the beginning of significant efforts by the federal government to include children with disabilities in public schools” (p.706). However, since the passage of the EHA did not achieve its goals, Congress attempted to rectify the law by passing the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in 1975, which, according to Biegel, et al (2016) included,

three fundamental and continuing requirements of the EAHCA are (1) that children with disabilities receive Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); (2) that schools provide students with disabilities a free and appropriate public education (FAPE); and (3) that this education occur in the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate (p.707).

While these have remained fundamental tenets of future iterations of the law, how to interpret what constitutes an “appropriate education” in the “least restrictive environment” opened the door for multiple interpretations, including “appropriate” tracking, and much litigation. Indeed, according to Biegel, et al, (2016), “much of the litigation involving students with disabilities arises over what constitutes the least restrictive environment” (p.709). As Biegel et al, explain,

Because each student with disabilities is uniquely situated, the least restrictive environment (LRE) has no blanket definition. The law, however, requires that “[t]o the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities... are educated with children who are not disabled, and ... removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity

of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (p. 709).

As Biegel, et al. (2016), indicate, “there is much room for disagreement between parents and educators as to what constitutes the appropriate environment for the child” (p. 709).

Consequently, the discussion around “appropriate” setting, therefore, opens the door to potentially tracking Sp. Ed students.

According to Biegel, et al. (2016), the room for disagreement around tracking may be more philosophical than pedagogical since

there are some who believe the social benefits of inclusion justify all students' inclusion in all classes, regardless of ability or capacity to learn the material. Others believe that full inclusion would interfere with regular classroom activities and would recreate the pre-EHA model of education in which millions of students with disabilities languished in classrooms with programs they could not access (Biegel, et al., p.710).

The courts addressed tracking in terms of general groups of students in *Hobson v Hansen* (1967), but not in terms of Sp. Ed students. Indeed, the courts have provided broad interpretive rights to States and districts to interpret what is an “appropriate” education. For example, in *Board of Education v. Rowley* (1982) the Court argued that in the IDEA, “Congress sought primarily to identify and evaluate handicapped children, and provide them with access to a free public education” (Biegel, et al., p.718). The court argued that Congress had been explicit in its intent, reiterating Congress's definition that Special Education means “specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents or guardians, to meet the unique needs of a handicapped child, including classroom instruction... as may be required to assist a handicapped child to benefit from special education” (Biegel, et al., p.716). What mattered was that students “benefit” in some manner from the education and not necessarily “maximize the potential of each handicapped child commensurate with the opportunity provided nonhandicapped children. Desirable though that

goal might be, it is not the standard that Congress imposes upon States which receive funding under the Act” (Biegel, et al., p.718). Moreover, in *MR. I. v Me. Sch. Admin. Dist. No. 55* (2007), the Court argued that

though the IDEA “establishes a basic floor of education” for children with disabilities, guaranteeing them “[a] free appropriate public education” ... it does not displace the states from their traditional role in setting their own educational policy. Each state thus remains free to calibrate its own educational standards, provided it does not set them below the minimum level prescribed by the statute (Biegel, et al., p. 731).

In this sense, the courts leave schools, social justice educators, and parents with ample room to design programs for Sp. Ed. students that integrate them into the general education classroom with additional supports. What needs to be investigated, analyzed, and evaluated is if tracking Sp. Ed. students marginalizes in such a manner that, by design, sets up a situation that provides an education that is “below the minimum level prescribed by the statute,” or in other words, a “separate and unequal” education.

The language of civil rights is particularly relevant since there is an “overrepresentation of ethnic and language minority students in self-contained special education classrooms” (Skiba, et al., 2008, p. 265). While ethnic segregation may not be the case in Bell Gardens, “institutional structures, such as ability grouping and significantly separate special education classrooms continue to keep minority students segregated from their White peers” (Skiba, et al, p. 265). This is particularly problematic since the court found in *Larry P. v Riles* (1972/1974/1979/1984) that “IQ tests used by the California school system to place children into special classes” were culturally biased against minority students (Biegel, et al., p. 748). Similarly, “the difficulty in accurately distinguishing between language acquisition difficulties for English Language Learners and a language disability also complicates identification and assessment issues for

Latino students” (Skiba, et al., p. 270). Placement in Sp. Ed. classes in Bell Gardens, therefore, may be influenced by inaccurate assessments of ability. Moreover, Abedi (2004) “demonstrated that tests normed for native English speakers have lower reliability and validity for English Language Learners and noted that tests standardized on native English speakers may inadvertently function as English language proficiency tests” (as referred in Skiba, et al. 2008, p. 271). Therefore, placing students in Sp. Ed. tracks is not only harmful, but potentially based on inaccurate assessments. In order to avoid pitfalls due to inaccurate assessments and the actual reproduction of educational inequities, educational leaders should search for alternative manners to educate their diverse student populations in integrated settings.

Can educators and/or education policy makers help?

Social justice leaders, educators and/or education policy makers, need to investigate and eliminate separate pull-out programs and tracking. By implementing programs that segregate students, the school suggests to swaths of students that they are inferior to the general population. As indicated above, special education classes often segregate students entire days, and often for the entirety of a child's education—particularly in Special Day Classes (SDC). Indeed, according to Theoharis (2010), eliminating programs like tracking and pull-out sends an implicit message to students that educators on campus believe all students can achieve, and that they care about equity, inclusion, and integration. Moreover, by integrating students in the general educational program, educators can advocate for the equitable distribution of resources within all classes, spreading out interventions for multiple students who might face intersectional marginality. According to Theoharis (2010), social justice educational leaders must critique and transform entrenched systemic injustices that “marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement, such as pullout programs” (p.232) and tracking. The courts have enabled and empowered

educational leaders to experiment with methods of addressing educational inequities for Sp. Ed. students. Therefore, transforming systemic injustices by integrating school structures that have marginalized, segregated and impeded achievement is a critical step in developing a more equitable education for Sp. Ed. students. It enables school systems to “craft and implement comprehensive intervention programs that can target a variety of sources of disparity” (Skiba, et al., p. 270). In Bell Gardens, therefore, there is ample room to support Sp. Ed. students who are already facing multiple levels of marginality.

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**English Learners, Special Education, and Tracking:
systemic marginalization of non-dominant social groups**

The United States (US) Declaration of Independence included high ideals “that all men are created equal” and that they are endowed with the “unalienable rights of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.” According to critical scholars of the United States (Zinn, 1995), in the US Constitution, on the other hand, the Framers embedded marginalization into law and society by declaring only White, property-owning men as full citizens. Indeed, the dominant culture’s ideological conceptions of race, class and gender have constructed legal, political and social structures that marginalized people of color, the poor, women, the non-heteronormal, and the differently-abled. Marginalization, therefore, is at the heart of how the United States designs its socio-political structures, practices, and beliefs. In order to provide students with “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” social justice leaders must be critical, creative, and collaborative in order to explicitly challenge how US systems attempt to marginalize those who do not fit the Framers’ dominant cultural perception of full members of society.

Marginalization is a process whereby non-dominant groups of people are placed at the margins of the center, where power is negotiated and enacted, to systematically attempt to impede them from living full, productive lives. In the US, as indicated above, people are marginalized due to their race, class, culture, language, gender, sexuality, age, and/or perceived ability. Young (1990) argues that “marginalization is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression. A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life” (p. 63). Moreover, “marginalization is unjust because it blocks the opportunity to exercise capacities in socially defined and recognized ways” (Young, 1990, p.63). On a macro level, marginalization is instilled throughout US social, political, and economic institutions. For

example, Massey (2007) argues that elites within the United States deliberately created social strata that “distributed people across social categories that are characterized by differential access to scarce resources” (p.1). Significantly, Massey (2007) demonstrates that “the fundamental mechanisms producing stratification have not changed much [creating]... ‘categorical inequality’—a pattern of social stratification that is remarkably ‘durable’ in the sense that it is reproduced across time and between generations” (p.5-6). According to Massey (2007),

Categorical inequality results whenever those in power enact policies and practices to give certain groups more access to markets than others; offer competitive advantages to certain classes of people within markets; protect certain groups from market failures more often than others; and systematically channel social and cultural capital to certain categories of people (p.23).

Elites, therefore, use the categorical differences discussed above, to marginalize non-dominant groups who do not reflect the dominant culture’s rigid normative categories, placing them on the margins of society. Thus, by being placed on the margins, marginalization systematically attempts to impede members of non-dominant groups from participating equitably as recognized, productive members of the community.

Ladson-Billings (2011) argues that the historically pervasive educational achievement gaps between African-Americans and whites are so drastic and chronic, that “the historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society have created an educational debt” (p. 5). African-Americans were marginalized through legal segregation under Jim Crow laws and a “separate, but equal” legal framework enacted in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). While legal segregation was overturned in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), Ladson Billings argues that its framework had negligible impact. Indeed, she illustrates how the historical, economic, sociopolitical and moral decisions created a bifurcated society:

No nation can enslave a race of people for hundreds of years, set them free bedraggled and penniless, pit them, without assistance in a hostile environment, against privileged victimizers, and then reasonably expect the gap between the heirs of the two groups to narrow. Lines, begun parallel and left alone, can never touch (Randall Robinson, cited in Ladson-Billings, 2011, p. 8).

Within the educational context, moreover, the “educational debt” has pervasive effects. For instance, “In the 2005 NAEP results, the gap between Blacks and Latina/o fourth graders and their White counterparts was more than 26 points. In fourth grade mathematics the gap was more than 20 points... these gaps persist over time” (Ladson-Billings, 2011, p.4). Race and racism, therefore, are part of the US’s marginalizing legacy to US society. Indeed, the systematic marginalization of African-Americans through slavery, Jim Crow laws, racial covenants, de facto segregation creates a clarion call to all groups of how the US systematically disenfranchises non-dominant groups: “those who are racially marginalized are like the miner’s canary: their distress is the first sign of a danger that threatens us all” (Guinier and Torres, p.11). This is because “political race... recognizes that the impetus for seeing patterns of injustice usually comes from the group that has the greatest connections to this experience” (Guinier and Torres, p.19). In fact, within this racist and historical political context, Critical Race Theory “adopts a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage” (Lynn and Parker, p. 261). As such, the marginalization African-American students have confronted historically, influences on-going systems of educational marginalization—like tracking and/or pullout programs that are over-represented by students who do not reflect the dominant culture, like English Learners (ELs) and Special Education students (Sp.Ed).

As social and political institutions, schools use marginalizing categories to impose a racial, cultural, gendered, and linguistic hegemony to marginalize non-dominant students so they

have less access and practice to exercise their capacities in socially recognized manners. Indeed, Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack (2001), argue that the US educational system is designed to consistently replicate an effective model of failure for the marginalized. Their “mismatch” perspective incorporates how school cultures marginalize students who do not match the mainstream values of schools, causing “failure to become an artifact of the rigidity of a system that sought to process large batches of children in uniform ways” (p. 530). Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack (2001) argue that attempts to reform the system have only reified failure, “a differentiation of curriculum, grouping, and methods of teaching...led to ability grouping in elementary schools and to specialized curricular tracks in high schools” (p. 537). As they indicate, “the system might have appeared efficient to the urban reformers who created and supported it, but for vast numbers—especially immigrants, Blacks, and other groups—it was geared to produce failure” (Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack, 2001, p. 531). Indeed, schools use the dominant cultures norms to marginalize non-dominant students—like ELs and Sp. Ed students—so they have less access and practice to exercise their capacities in socially recognized manners.

Schools administer a plethora of tests, starting in kindergarten, that exalt people's home cultures, and not necessarily what is learned at school, to begin the process of systematic marginalization of non-dominant students. Indeed, the tests assess access to unquestioned cultural norms of the dominant culture. Essentially, the tests use cultural imperialism to marginalize non-dominant students. As Young (1990) explains, “Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm...often without noticing they do so, the dominant groups project their own experience as representative of humanity as such” (p.66). Consequently, when students do not meet the culturally imperialistic norms, the “standards” of the dominant culture, they are placed in

“alternative” tracks or in “intervention” classes that marginalize them from the center of power. Indeed, *Larry P. v Riles* (1972/1974/1979/1984), a US federal courts concluded that tests have been used inequitably to marginalize students because “IQ tests used by the California school system to place children into special classes were culturally biased against minority students” (Biegel, et al., 2016, p. 748).

In the case of English Learners (ELs) and Special Education (Sp.Ed.) students, culturally imperialistic tests often place them in segregated tracks for the duration of their tenure at schools. As stated above, marginalization systematically attempts to impede members of non-dominant groups from participating equitably as recognized members of the community. In schools, this occurs through tracking and pull-out programs for non-dominant students. According to Oakes (1992), tracking students within a school is a pernicious practice since it creates inequitable access to the curriculum as students are placed in separate contexts, often with lower expectations, and with less access to the core curriculum. Indeed, Oakes (1992) describes, “Low track courses offer less demanding topics and skills, while high-track classes typically include more complex material and more thinking and problem-solving tasks” (p.15). In addition, schools track students through “pull-out programs” that remove non-dominant students from the mainstream class. Pull-out programs also have deleterious effects:

In addition to being the most expensive and least effective means to educate students, separate pull-out programs typically segregate and track students of color, low income students, ELL students, and students with (dis)abilities... Consequently, students who need the most routine, structure, and consistency in their day experience the most disruptions (Bell McKenzie, et al, 2011, p.127).

Thus, through tracking and/or pull-out programs, ELs and Sp. Ed. students are systematically marginalized, receiving an inequitable education in relation to students of perceived higher abilities.

Tracking reinforces racial marginalization since, “institutional structures, such as ability grouping and separate special education classrooms continue to keep minority students segregated from their White peers” (Skiba, et al, 2008, p. 265). Almost fifty years ago the Court reached a similar conclusion that tracking students was unconstitutional in *Hobson v Hansen* (1967), arguing that tracking in the operation of the school system “unconstitutionally deprive the District’s Negro and poor public school children of their right to equal educational opportunity with the District’s white and more affluent public school children” (Biegel, et al, 2016, p. 434). To buttress its argument, the court included specific findings of fact:

9. The aptitude tests used to assign children to the various tracks are standardized primarily on white middle class children. Since these tests do not relate to the Negro and disadvantaged child, track assignment based on such tests relegates Negro and disadvantaged children to the lower tracks from which, because of the reduced curricula and the absence of adequate remedial and compensatory education, as well as continued inappropriate testing, the chance of escape is remote (Biegel, et al, 2016, p. 434).

Thus, as discussed above, systemic marginalization has not changed significantly, even though the courts attempted to address the inequities caused by marginalizing students through tracking.

When tracking is contextualized using Bourdieu’s (1986) notions of social and cultural capital, the effects of school marginalization are even more drastic. For example, if marginalization is analyzed through the lack of access to social capital (through school networks) or through the limited access to cultural capital (embodied, objective, or institutional), marginalization systematically limits students’ access to power. Thus, school marginalization has an impact on social and educational outcomes via limited access to social and cultural capital. Indeed, within the above context of marginalization of non-dominant students through race, class, culture, language, gender, sexuality, age, and/or perceived ability, notions of meritocracy,

of “all men are created equal,” face incredulity since non-dominant students are not provided with equitable access to the curriculum.

Challenging prevailing beliefs

If the research and the law have concluded that marginalization through tracking is harmful, why is tracking such a common practice, particularly for ELs and Sp. Ed students? Students, teachers, parents, and community members are immersed in the structures and practices that reflect and support the dominant cultural group. In this sense, people carry unconscious beliefs that often go unquestioned, unexamined, and are harmful to students and their communities. The effects of tracking go beyond educational opportunity:

tracking is accompanied by public labels, status differences, expectations, and consequences for academic and occupational attainment. Thus, tracking becomes part and parcel of the struggle among individuals and groups for comparative advantage in the distribution of school resources, opportunities, and credentials... This political dimension often encompasses highly charged issues of race and social stratification (Oakes, 1992, p.13).

Marginalized students, their teachers, and their parents often develop identities around the designated label, accepting a lesser status for the marginalized within the school with lower expectations for their futures. As such, marginalizing students through tracking has far-reaching consequences on people's beliefs that impact the potential of the lower-tracked students. Social justice leaders need to find critical and creative manners to help the school community—teachers, parents, students—critically question their unconscious beliefs.

Marginalizing students by perceived ability or English language proficiency, therefore, may resonate with people's beliefs since people are steeped in the aforementioned marginalizing structures and practices. Furthermore, people may have multiple unconscious biases, including a confirmation bias, whereby “once people have a hypothesis about something, they tend to look

only for things that confirm it, rather than challenge it” (Katz, S. and Ain, L., 2013, p. 37).

Consequently, school leaders need to develop critical and creative manners of challenging prevailing beliefs and biases around tracking. Katz and Ain (2013) contend that the effective use of data, while making people aware of how cognitive bias affects perception, can have an effect on unconscious bias. Indeed, by acknowledging peoples' biases enables them to “spend time considering all possible directions that the evidence suggests, rather than proceeding with initial thoughts” (Katz and Ain, 2013, p.44). Exploring unconscious bias through multiple data points is essential for critically exploring the beliefs that buttress tracking and/or pull-out programs.

A school leader attempting to reduce marginalization, therefore, would help stakeholders critically examine biases of the dominant culture that are disseminated throughout the institutional structure. Conceptually, introducing Guinier and Torres's argument that “individuals have common experiences of marginalization, [and] those experiences often function as a diagnostic device to identify and interrogate system-wide structures of power and inequality” (2002, p.12) would help the school community understand how marginalization has operated historically, how, in terms of tracking and/or pull-out programs, the system is a stubborn anachronism of segregationist practices. As the dominant cultural standards around tracking are interrogated, school leaders can open avenues of inquiry that enable stakeholders to determine the structures, practices, and beliefs that privilege dominant norms at a school site, laying the conceptual foundation to change marginalizing systems.

Improvement science's notion that “every system is designed to achieve exactly the result it gets” (Berwick, 2003) opens up more opportunities to challenge prevailing beliefs around tracking and marginalization. School stakeholders—administration, teachers, parents, community members, and students—generally do not want to exalt and praise their system's

failures. Analyzing the data around tracking—surveying tracked students around their self-perception while in their track, developing formal and informal interviews, analyzing longitudinal results—can help school leaders develop multiple counter-narratives that challenge prevailing beliefs. If the discussion around tracking revolves around data, then school leaders need to provide data that tells local counter-narratives around tracking of non-dominant students.

A tool from improvement science that may help the community conduct in-depth analysis of tracking, including possible unconscious biases, would be root-cause analysis through a fishbone diagram that started off with the question, “Why does our school track students?” This question would be supported by asking “why” questions to probe deeper. “Over and over, we ask, ‘Why do we get the results observed? Initial explanations are offered, and the cycle repeats, probing deeper: ‘Well, why does that occur?’ Depending on the particulars of the issue being considered, this probing may go on for several rounds” (Byrk, et al., 2015, p. 67). Moreover, brainstorming possibilities around specific structures that are endemic to organizations—the people, materials, methods, environment, measurement, and systems—might help stakeholders to investigate multiple biases that inform a school’s decision to implement tracking.

Disrupting systems of power to create change

How does a school principal enact change that disrupts current systems of power that inform and sustain the structures, practices, and beliefs that marginalize students and the community? Disrupting systems of power takes courage and collaboration, especially since change does not occur in a vacuum. Indeed, change occurs through collaboration and relationship-building with multiple school community stakeholders. This is the case today, as it

was in Harlem in the 1930s, as Johnson (2006) describes. Johnson (2006) provides a broad direction of how to enact culturally relevant leadership to transform a school community:

If Gertrude Ayer were alive today, what would be her leadership stance as an urban school principal? My guess is that she would do many of the things that she did in the 1930s in Harlem to make her school a more culturally responsive environment for her students and her neighborhood a better place to live. She might form alliances with community organizations to bring local cultural knowledge into the classroom, use her political savvy to garner economic, medical, social service resources for the families in the her school, and join with parents, community activists, and progressive politicians to agitate for educational equity in the larger society (p.33).

Like Ayer, current school leaders must realize that community members care deeply about their children, their community, and the educational community. Indeed, social justice educational leaders need to create alliances with marginalized members of the school community who do not currently have access to social services or a high quality education in order to demonstrate that the school and the community are in a “linked fate” (Guinier and Torres, 2002, p.289) . For coalitions to succeed, marginalized parents, community members, and students must feel welcome on school grounds for productive purposes.

How do leaders welcome all community stakeholders on school grounds for productive purposes? As indicated above, using tools like a fishbone diagram enables participants’ voices to come together with specific aims, like interrogating the practices and beliefs that support marginalization through tracking or an ethnocentric curriculum. Moreover, from a socio-cultural perspective, the productive “linked fate” enables learning and identities to shift for all participants—school and community members—as people collaborate. For instance as Lave (1997) describes an “apprenticeship approach, or more generally in theories of learning-in-practice, assume that processes of learning and understanding are socially and culturally constituted, and that what is to be learned is integrally implicated in the forms in which it is

appropriate” (p. 18). The “learning in practice” that occurs through community collaboration supports all stakeholders negotiate how to critically collaborate to disrupt the systems of power that build structures, practices, and beliefs that marginalize students and the community. Indeed, using a socio-cultural perspective to inform coalition-building enables “learners participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalize the effects of working together, they acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture” (Scott and Palinscar, 2013, p. 1). These interactions enable experimentation with varied identities in socially-situated contexts for all members of the coalition. In that sense, socio-cultural theory informs coalition building and learning for all members of the school site—teachers, administrators, students, parents, community members, staff. Indeed, Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) contend,

that the role of school leaders is at least in part to advocate on behalf of traditionally marginalized and poorly-served students carries a corollary contention that traditional hierarchies and power structures must be deconstructed and reconfigured, thereby creating a new social order that subverts a longstanding system that exalts certain students while oppressing or neglecting others (p. 4).

Thus, by creating authentic community collaboration at school sites, the coalition has the potential to disrupt the marginalizing systems of power, while creating a new social order that empowers increasing numbers of the community.

Collaboration and relationship-building with the community, therefore, must be embraced as it jointly empowers participants. For example, Guinier and Torres’s (2002) notion of “power-with” suggests that collaboration enables “psychological and social power gained through collective resistance and struggle and through the creation of an alternative set of narratives” (p.141). As defined above, marginalization is the “*attempt to impede marginalized people from living full, productive lives.*” As Bell Hooks (1990) argues, however, marginality is

a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance... a central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives... it offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternative, new worlds (p. 341).

Moreover, taking into consideration that Hooks' (1990) notion that marginality can be a space of critical counter hegemonic discourse, "power-with" has the potential to not only transform external hierarchies of power, but also empower the internal affect of those individuals who participate in social justice collaborative work. Indeed, building upon Foucault's notion that "power is a pervasive force that constructs all aspects of human interaction...[and that] power is not merely repressive but can be a life-giving force [which can] either repress or liberate" (Guinier and Torres, 2002, pp. 138-139), coalition- and relationship-building empowers all members of the school community, while developing sites of resistance to the *attempts* to marginalize students and the community. Indeed, power-with "prepares people to struggle against external challenges in ways they have not yet imagined, while also struggling with internal conflict. It should disrupt certain habits of individual thought or self-defeating rituals, while introducing new possibilities for reciprocity, collaboration, problem-solving, networking, and innovation" (p. 159). Coalitions embracing "power-with," therefore are able to disrupt systems of marginalization while enacting powerful change.

Guinier and Torres (2002) suggest that power has an "under-explored social aspect that is creative, generative, and conscious of domination while resisting domination as a primary goal" (p.143). "Power-with" enables school leaders to create participatory spaces where those who are marginalized can question the multiple injustices and systems of marginalization students encounter. In this sense, by building authentic "power-with" coalitions with community stakeholders, self-sustaining communities are created that "prepare people to oppose external

oppression while also struggling with internal conflict [in this case, the various privileges people experience]. They recognize the need for cultural rituals that create trust and familiarity, while also challenging embedded internal hierarchies” (Guinier and Torres, 2002, p.144). Thus, “power-with” collaborative spaces enable coalitions to

(1) [work] together over time in groups rather than as individuals in isolation; (2) [see] problems in context rather than as small units independent of the whole; (3) [approach] problem-solving in ways that spark joint participation from diverse perspectives; and (4) [define] problems locally, by the immediate stakeholders, and then networking to similar efforts going on elsewhere (Guinier and Torres, 2002, p.146).

Using the tools of improvement science, moreover, can tangibly support coalition work through an analysis of root causes, as indicated above, but also through driver diagrams that are created jointly with the community coalitions. Indeed, this enables the coalition to approach problem-solving that integrates the community’s diverse “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 1992) in order to solve local problems of marginalization.

What are the “local problems of marginalization” that community coalitions could solve?

According to Theoharis (2010), there are entrenched systemic injustices that social justice educational leaders must transform:

- (5) School structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement, such as pullout programs.
- (6) A deprofessionalized teaching staff who could benefit from focused staff development.
- (7) A school climate that needed to be more welcoming to marginalized families and the community.
- (8) Disparate student achievement levels (Theoharis, 2012, p. 332).

The coalition envisioned above would directly disrupt systems of marginalization, like tracking and pull-out programs of non-dominant students. Moreover, by bringing the community as productive partners and participants into empowering coalitions, marginalized families feel

authentically welcomed and empowered. This coalition benefits the entire community because it can help inform how to promote powerful and inclusive learning.

Promoting powerful and inclusive learning

Building coalitions enables school communities to promote powerful and inclusive learning as the entire community takes a direct stake in the decisions enacted at the school. As Ayer did in the 1930s, by forming coalitions with the community, local cultural knowledge can be brought into the classroom in order to empower students and the community. Moreover, as the coalition engages in disrupting and transforming “macro” school structures, practices, and beliefs that marginalize and attempt to impede student achievement—like tracking and pull-out programs of non-dominant students (ELs and Sp. Ed)—“micro” marginalizing school structures, practices, and beliefs that inform instructional decisions might also be in need of systemic disruption and transformation. For instance, the curriculum, instruction, and assessment within each “de-tracked” classroom might reflect a Euro-centric approach. In that sense, disrupting marginalization also entails promoting powerful and inclusive learning that is negotiated and renegotiated with the “funds of knowledge” from the community. Indeed, the coalitions become part and parcel of how the school informs all decisions on campus. Therefore, powerful and inclusive learning requires that a broad cross-section of stakeholders in the community—students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, community liaisons, community activists—take ownership of the school’s curriculum, instruction, and assessments in order to be intricately and intimately invested in student learning.

Through coalitions, learning becomes powerful and inclusive as the community’s hybrid cultures, student learning, and community empowerment are at the heart of the decisions jointly

enacted at a school site. This perspective of learning and empowerment takes on an explicitly additive perspective to address marginalization within the school and community. For example, Howard (2011) contends that curriculum, instruction, and assessments promote powerful and inclusive learning when it

[i]s situated in a framework that recognizes the rich and varied cultural wealth, knowledge, and skills that diverse students bring to schools, and seeks to develop dynamic teaching practices, multicultural connections, multiple means of assessment, and a philosophical view of teaching that is dedicated to nurturing student's academic, social, emotional, cultural, psychological, and physiological well-being (p.2).

Moreover, while a socio-cultural perspective informs the manner school leaders approach the community coalition, as mentioned before, a socio-cultural perspective also informs the manner curriculum, instruction, and assessments are implemented within the school's learning spaces. Thus, the community's knowledge informs the collaborative instructional decisions that promote powerful and inclusive learning.

When the community promotes powerful and inclusive learning, there needs to be consideration of shifting, socially-situated hybrid identities at the heart of collaborative learning. Indeed, when students consistently collaborate, identities shift, "Transformation (rather than internalization) occurs as participants in the activity assume increasing responsibility for the activity; in essence, redefining membership in a community of practice, and, in fact, changing the socio-cultural practice itself" (Scott and Palinscar, 2013, p.3). These shifting identities are particularly relevant in hybrid, heterogeneous, "de-tracked" classes that encourage non-dominant students to constantly shift their multiple identities. Socio-cultural theory centers learning and identity-formation in socio-culturally relevant interactions. Thus, school-based interactions must foster constant interactions among diverse students that embrace students' backgrounds. When

“students’ primary discourses (those used in the home, community, and informal social interactions) and students secondary discourses (those endorsed in school and other formal institutions) intersect” (Scott and Palinscar, 2013, p. 6), students are able to merge worlds to build upon their funds of knowledge.

While the coalition can inform classroom instruction, ultimately teachers need to collaborate on how to implement powerful and inclusive learning. Powerful and inclusive learning across a school requires teacher collaboration—whether through Professional Learning Communities or groups of teachers implementing PDSA cycles (Darling-Hammond, 2014). From an improvement science perspective, “quality teaching is likely the single biggest source of variability in student outcomes: differences in how instruction is organized and carried out” (Byrk, 2015, et al, p. 76). Indeed, Guinier and Torres (2002), conclude that “successful performance among many highly competent professionals often depends on a team of individuals, no single one of whom possesses all of the necessary expertise but all of whom, working together, are able to accomplish their task in a reliable way” (p.145). Katz and Dack (2013) emphasize the importance of teacher learning, particularly in collaborative, inquiry-based manners: “Student achievement is most influenced by classroom practice, and classroom practice, in turn, is most influenced by teacher learning. Teaching something differently (or rather, better) depends on teachers learning something new” (p.36). As such,

Collaborative inquiry is one of the most powerful enablers of changes in practice that can influence student learning. This process merges deep collaboration (in the form of rigorous and challenging joint work) with inquiry...suggesting that conditions for improving learning and teaching are created when teachers collectively consider evidence about the current state of affairs, question ineffective teaching routines, examine new conceptions of teaching and learning, find generative means to acknowledge and respond to differences, and engage actively in supporting one another’s professional growth (Katz and Dack, 2013, p.36).

Fostering teacher collaboration within a context of embracing the community's funds of knowledge, therefore, promotes powerful and inclusive learning.

Instructional leaders need to constantly foster powerful and inclusive learning that reflects students' hybrid cultures. In order to foster change, stakeholders must develop a caring culture of trust, constant improvement, and a willingness to take risks. Leaders must foster a caring culture so teachers and students are willing to honestly engage in risk-taking in order to grow and learn something new. Furthermore, leaders must lead through example, showing that they are willing to take risks and learn from their mistakes. Cooper and Chickwe (2012) argue that "care is a critical dimension of constructive human relationships; one that is positive, mutually beneficial, and allows both parties to grow and develop" (p. 11). Schools can thus promote powerful learning through caring forums where dominant cultural norms are contested, creating ever-evolving hybrid identities. For this to occur, all students need to be engaging in the center, in diverse classes since "marginalization... also involves the deprivation of cultural, practical, and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in context of recognition and interaction" (Young, p.64). Consequently, in integrated, heterogeneous learning contexts, all students, including ELs and Sp. Ed students, constantly work on manners to live full, productive lives.

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