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Dedication to the craft: developing pre-service teachers into social justice advocates through PDS and poetry

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this poetic inquiry was to understand how the professional development school (PDS) model can help pre-service teachers (PSTs) develop an inclusive philosophy of teaching while positioning themselves as social justice advocates. Four clinical interns collaborated in the research process guided by the university professor-in-residence (PIR).

Design/methodology/approach – To conduct this poetic inquiry the interns kept journals, participated in individual interviews and weekly book club discussions to help us understand how education is situated within a broader social justice framework. Transcription poems were created from discussion and interview transcripts to capture the interns' perspectives and experiences in developing their philosophies.

Findings – The findings, shared through transcription poems, indicate that the interns established inclusive beliefs, experienced tensions between their beliefs and practices and emphasize the importance of community in developing as social justice advocates.

Originality/value – By sharing the findings through poetry, this study invites a more focused look into the nuances of PST's emerging beliefs on inclusive education in a PDS.

Keywords Pre-service teachers, Teacher identity, Poetic inquiry

Paper type Research paper

Introduction: our PDS context

Dedication to the Craft
Invested 4+ years of your life to do this.
So now, toward the end,
was it worth it?

And, I know it will be,
it's just,
I've never been so sure of
wanting to do something
in my entire life,
but it's just

NAPDS Essentials Addressed:
Essential 1 - A Comprehensive Mission
Essential 2 - Clinical Preparation
Essential 4 - Reflection and Innovation
Essential 8 - Boundary-Spanning Roles

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my brain is telling me I can't.
I'm so anxious.
But,
you feel dedicated to your craft.
If I didn't care,
I wouldn't be so anxious.

Before entering the classroom, pre-service teachers (PSTs) may worry if they are prepared, if they are good enough, or if they have what it takes to meet the needs of all students. The above transcription poem (Glesne, 1997) was crafted from a conversation between four PSTs completing their year-long clinical internship at our professional development school (PDS). The poem highlights the PSTs' dedication to teaching while also showing their nervousness and questioning of their ability to teach.

As our college of education centers social justice as one of our key tenets, part of our PDS mission statement (essential 1) focuses on building antiracist and inclusive pedagogies. At the time of this inquiry, our PDS was entering into the second year of the partnership. Our PDS model is structured around having a university faculty member, the professor-in-residence (PIR), working at the PDS for at least one full day a week assisting with in-service professional development, PSTs' professional development, research and student achievement. During our first year as a PDS, the inservice teachers elected to focus on increasing student stamina, but myself and my co-PIR introduced the goal of moving toward more inclusive practices as a means of increasing stamina. The premise was that if all students felt a sense of belonging and if instructional practices accounted for diverse needs, then students may be more motivated to engage in their learning. This goal caused some tensions, and our PSTs, who were introduced to inclusive philosophies in the course they took with me, were walking into this tension.

Recognizing that their clinical internship is a critical year in developing their emerging teacher identities, as the PIR, I offered the four PSTs at our PDS the opportunity to participate in a book club. Guided by our college and PDS missions, the book club became a place for the PSTs to reflect on social justice and the content of their coursework alongside their experiences in the classroom through a more critical lens. In this safe space the PSTs were able to explore and talk out the complex emotions they felt throughout the final semester of their internship. Our inquiry focused on two questions:

(1) How can our PDS model be used to help develop PSTs as social justice advocates?

(2) How can our PDS model be used to foster an inclusive philosophy of teaching among PSTs?

Conceptual framework

This study's foundation was built upon the work of two conceptual frameworks, critical pedagogy and disability studies in education (DSE). Scholars within critical pedagogy argue it is essential for PSTs and early career educators to have an understanding of school's role in the construction of social norms and practices. As Giroux (1997) argued, we are taught in schools to see societal problems in isolation rather than as an interconnected network of systems, but instead we must come to understand our world holistically and identify the ways in which our lives and systems are interconnected. Before entering the classroom, PSTs need to begin to explore the connections between oppressive systems. This work must be undertaken not in silos but as a community of educators engaging in inquiry so that we can respectfully challenge each other in order to move toward a "shared struggle for justice" (Oakes & Rogers, 2006, p. 76). Situating PSTs as colleagues with something to add to the community both welcomes them in a community of practice and situates them as

knowledgeable practitioners. Within this community, we must commit ourselves to learning alongside our students in order to respect our students as human beings and resist sending students any message that they are somehow deficient in their learning and being (Freire, 1998; Hooks, 2003).

Similar to many ideas in critical pedagogy, scholars in the field of DSE call on educators to investigate ways in which disability is "interpreted, enacted, and resisted in the social practices of individuals, groups, organizations, and cultures" (Danforth & Gabel, 2016, p. 5). PSTs need to be prepared to understand how disability is socially created and difference is stigmatized. Educators working from this lens are encouraged to embrace inclusive practices while also being mindful of what types of spaces students are being included into (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). It is not enough for all students to be in the same classroom, they must feel they belong and are accepted in that space. PSTs need professional development that fosters an understanding of the "complex forms of exclusion" and encourages collaboration with "other professionals and families to dismantle intersecting barriers that keep certain groups of students from accessing and participating in meaningful learning experiences" (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013, p. 322). DSE scholarship, in conjunction with works from critical pedagogy, can further deepen PSTs knowledge and understanding of the ways students' identities are socially constructed in schools (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). From these frameworks, we can understand inclusive pedagogies as philosophies that allow educators to embrace the diverse identities and ways of being that their students bring to the classroom.

Supporting literature

PSTs entering their clinical placements undertake the work of developing their teacher identities. According to Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) teacher identity is informed by a sense of self, self-esteem and/or efficacy, and commitment. They explained:

> teachers will define themselves not only through their past and current identities as defined by personal and social histories and current roles but through their beliefs and values about the kind of teacher they hope to be in the inevitably changing political, social, institutional and personal circumstances (p. 610).

Navigating and creating professional identities is an ongoing, emotional, nonlinear process (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Day *et al.*, 2006; Hordvik, Fletcher, Haugen, Moller, & Engebretsen, 2021). Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) emphasized that developing a teacher identity requires one to ask "who do I want to become" rather than "who am I in this moment" (p. 122). For PSTs, their clinical internships can offer the space to explore who they want to become. While many PSTs explore these concepts in their coursework, the exploration of who they want to become is deepened during their internship.

Upon entering the field, interns may feel that there is a disconnect between their initial teacher preparation program and the realities of the classroom (Brown, Barry, Ku, & Puckett, 2021; McKay, 2016). In one case study, demands of their academic, personal, and professional responsibilities led to interns feeling unprepared during their internship (Brown *et al.*, 2021). In a similar qualitative study, McKay (2016) explored PSTs emotional responses to inclusion, and observed that their frustrations often centered on feeling as though they were not reaching all students' needs. These findings demonstrate that PSTs may struggle with their sense of self-efficacy, related to their identity development. Clinical internships can be a time of difficult transition as PSTs establish their practices and experience the emotional turbulence of identity development.

However, several qualitative studies found that PSTs sense of self-efficacy regarding students with diverse needs increased as they gained more experience (Cho, Lee, & Herner-Patnode, 2020; Friesen & Cunning, 2020; Gigante & Gilmore, 2020). As PSTs spent more time

working in inclusive spaces, their confidence to teach and reach diverse students grew. As their emerging sense of agency and efficacy are tied to their emerging teacher identity, teacher educators need to help PSTs understand their strengths in order to frame their future ideal identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2010). Not being prepared for the emotional work related to teaching can impact future professional identities (McKay & Manning, 2019), and so it is important to help PSTs both envision their future ideal identity while also recognizing that they may not become their ideal self-right away (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2010; Beijaard *et al.*, 2004). Speaking to how their future identity relates to their inclusive philosophy, McKay (2016) found that, "in order to support beginning teachers to develop and enact an inclusive philosophy it is important to understand their emotional struggle as they contend with a range of contradictions and struggles in day-to-day teaching" (p. 394). These findings suggest that the supportive structures of PDS can be beneficial to help PSTs balance the demands of their culminating internships, especially as it relates to turning an inclusive philosophy into an actionable practice.

Several studies have been conducted that centered on fostering inclusive philosophies through reflection. In their study, Black-Hawkins and Amrhein (2014) found that PSTs were supportive of inclusive education but expressed anxiety around feeling prepared to work with students with diverse needs. Using metaphor elicitation, they worked with PSTs on reflecting on their beliefs and experiences working with diverse populations. They found that PSTs felt teaching diverse learners was a complex and emotionally challenging task that often went against the demands of the curriculum.

In a similar study, McKay and Manning (2019) conducted a single case study with one PST in which she worked with the researchers to reflect on her identity development through metaphor elicitation and writing I-poems. Through the poems, the PST expressed concerns with the perceptions around teaching diverse learners, while also identifying her perception of her mentor teacher's lack of agency in their role. The PST expressed frustration around her personal commitment to social justice initiatives and the pressure to conform to systemic and district demands. The poems also revealed the PST's feelings that in-service teachers had low expectations of her and dismissed her positive ideals. Like Black-Hawkins and Amrhein, McKay and Manning (2019) discussed the emotional labor PSTs experience during their internships, with their participant feeling silenced by the need to mask their social justice beliefs.

Given the emotional labor associated with clinical internships, the opportunity to frequently reflect is necessary for PSTs. Critical reflection, in which PSTs dig deeper into the assumptions behind the "why" of their practice, can lead to ruptures in previously held beliefs about students' abilities, leading to more inclusive approaches (McKay, 2016; Mezirow, 1998). Critical reflection also helps PSTs develop resiliency, with mentors helping PSTs talk through their beliefs in order to build inclusive pedagogies (McKay & Manning, 2019). Such reflections should not occur in isolation, as the perspectives of others can help us to grow in our own understanding. In a case study, Brown *et al.* (2021) found that offering PSTs a sense of community helped them feel less isolated in their internships, while also finding that a mentor was helpful in guiding them through reflecting on their coursework and field experiences.

Rather than focus on retrospective reflection, Beauchamp and Thomas (2010) argue for the practice of future reflection by allowing PSTs to imagine the possibilities of who they may become. Anticipatory reflection related to inclusion helps PSTs recognize their strengths and work toward their ideal professional self and who they wish to become (Beijaard *et al.*, 2004; McKay & Manning, 2019). In a phenomenological study conducted at a PDS, Higgins (2018) found that participating in inquiry work helped PSTs reflect on their practice, support their belief development, and come to understand that their practice will be ever-changing. With these ideas and findings in mind, the four PSTs and myself as PIR, felt that a book club centered future reflection that helped us grapple with the emotional labors associated with their internships was an appropriate inquiry as part of our wider inclusive PDS work.

Methods

The PSTs' practicum occurred during a transition to more inclusive practices within our PDS. There was hesitancy among some cooperating teachers related to inclusive practices, but for the PSTs many of the inclusive concepts were ideas shared by myself and fellow instructors in their coursework. Often the theories and pedagogies learned at the university become lost when PSTs are not freely able to implement them in their practicum, and so mentorship is key to help them navigate the politics of education (McKay & Manning, 2019). I sought to explore the ways my role as PIR could support PSTs in upholding the inclusive practices studied at the university. To capture PSTs perspectives, experiences and growth, a poetic inquiry was conducted that centered around a book club. Several approaches were used to collect and analyze data, including book club discussions, interviews and writing transcription poems. Each is discussed in detail in the following section.

Conversations as data collection

At the end of the first semester of their internship, the PSTs and I discussed starting a book club to help them navigate their experiences at our PDS. The four interns looked up books related to teaching, and as a group elected to read Schwartz's (2016) *I Wish My Teacher Knew: How One Question Can Change Everything for Our Kids*, which explores several of the systemic issues facing education, creating inclusive classroom cultures, and supporting all students. At the start of the second semester, we met as a group to discuss our book club goals, routines, and norms. All the interns agreed to weekly meetings during their lunch, discussing one chapter each week, and keeping a journal of their reflections as they read.

Along with our book club discussions, I interviewed all four PSTs twice during the semester, at the beginning and end of their internship. All interviews were semi-structured interviews in order to understand the "themes of the lived everyday world from the [PSTs] own perspectives" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 31). Questions were open-ended to invite a range of answers and perspectives (Bhattacharya, 2017), and I asked the PSTs to describe their beliefs on teaching, perceptions of special vs general education, and what kind of teacher they hoped to be. All interviews and book club discussions were recorded so transcripts could be used to create transcription poems in the next phase of the inquiry.

Poetic inquiry for analysis

Arts-based research methods are beneficial in promoting reflection, as these experiences allowed teachers to help connect words to the emotions experienced in the classroom (McKay & Manning, 2019). As a form of arts-based research, poetic inquiry as Leavy (2015) explained, "merges the tenets of qualitative research with the craft and rules of poetry," (p. 79). Poetry in this sense can be used before or during data analysis, or even serve as the data itself (Faulkner, 2020). Poetic inquiry is beneficial for research, as McCullis (2013) argued, because poetry is a holistic practice that exposes the "heart of the human experience" (p. 83). Similarly, Cahnmann (2003) encouraged educational researchers to take up poetic inquiry as it "enhances our ability to understand classroom life and support students' potential to add their voices to a more socially just and democratic society," (p. 34). Poetry is well-suited to capture salient moments in education that may otherwise go unnoticed.

With these foundations in mind, the PSTs allowed me to create transcription poems to make sense of their emerging teacher identities. Transcription poems are poems created from interview transcripts that aim to capture the essence of a person as if in a brief moment (Glesne, 1997), and in analyzing transcripts the poet-researcher "choose[s] phrases that capture participants' stories, conveys their voices, and would speak to a general audience" (Kennedy, 2009, p. 1419). At the conclusion of our interviews and book clubs, I read through all of the transcripts collected, noting salient lines that evoked strong feelings (Glesne, 1997;

Kennedy, 2009; Lahnman, Richard, & Teman, 2019) and/or captured the PSTs unique perspectives related to social justice. I then structured the selected lines into transcription poems, paying attention to line and form but not creating poems that follow the more literary rules of poetry. Instead these research poems, or poemish (Lahnman *et al.*, 2019), were created to highlight the emotional struggles and ways the PSTs grappled with their emerging identities and social justice advocacy. Some of the poems feature only one intern's voice, while others are polyvocal as they include a merger of several voices that showcased the PSTs experiences during their internship. Two of the interns elected to review and present the poems along with discussing their experience at the 2020 National Association for Professional Development Schools conference. Four poems were created that speak to the PSTs experiences with inclusion, identity development, and social justice advocacy, which have been shared here - both as the opening and in the findings below.

Findings

The three transcription poems shared here speak to PSTs emerging philosophies, their critiques of educational practices, the ways they situated students' identities, and the pressures they put on themselves. The first polyvocal poem was created from snippets of dialogue between the PSTs that occurred at different points during one book club meeting.

Teaching *ALL* Students

When I visit the autism support rooms,
the students know they're amazing.
Maybe they're not completely verbal
but,
they know what you're saying.
They know the concepts
they're grasping it,
but they're relaying it
in a different way
or it needs to be altered
a little bit.

I feel like there's just such -
How do I put this?
A stigma on the special ed kids.
Like, "Oh, they're not going to know that."

No,
they can know that!

Just give it to them
in the right way.
This kid is going to learn
this concept,
because *he can*
but through this way.
This kid is going to do it
because *they can*
but through this way.

Even if they're not the autistic kids,
even the lower level ones.
There's a way

to make it work
while they're still in the room.
I don't really like the whole pull out thing
to be honest.

I don't like it.
It's just like,
what do you even say,
if a kid asks "Oh, why did they leave?"
What do you say?
Those little things are
things that I definitely need to,
something I didn't think about
navigating.

But the autism class,
a lot more student centered.
You do things differently.
Little things,
like bigger font, bigger this.
Why can't we just do that in the other room?

They need to have
interactive environments.
They need to feel
safe and comfortable in the room.

I never want to make a kid feel
like they're less than another one
ever.
*I **never** want them to feel like I think*
they're any less capable than the other kid

You got to learn all the stuff,
but you also have to learn
how to be a decent human,
too.

So I don't know what word
would describe my philosophy.

Inclusive.

The thoughts captured in this first poem show how the PSTs grappled with the separation of special and general education programs. They recognized how stigma was being created by removing students for services for part or all of the day, and also emphasized the need to presume competence when working with all students. The PSTs discussed their emotional frustration with the separation of students based on ability, but also shared how they see their future selves in the classroom and the foundational philosophy they wish to have.

Conversely, the second poem demonstrates how one PST took up a negative view of one student in their classroom. This student was a 10 year old student of color, who was struggling to complete his assignments. In this poem derived from an individual interview, the dialogue between the PST and PIR are captured with the PST's words shared on the left and probing questions from the PIR shared on the right.

The Heart of the Matter

Some students,
regardless of how hard you try,
aren't going to listen.
It's the fact that
they just don't care.

You're taking away from kids
who want to learn,
because you have to address that.

But,
do you think
they truly don't care?

I think they
truly
don't
care.

We've met with parents.
What it boils down to is
you can only want it for them so much.
We care.
Even after putting in time and effort with them,
they
still
don't
care.

But,
do you think
there's some
deeper underlying issue?

Potentially.
It kind of boils down to
the kid eventually is going to need to
want it for himself.
Some kids have it harder than him.
That's not necessarily
an excuse.
As you get older there's less and less support systems.

The onus is on you.

Man, he's just got to want it.

But, it feels harsh,
to me,
to say a
10 year old
just
doesn't
care.

Isn't that a lot
to put on
a 10 year old?
So for me,
it's like,
what can I be doing differently?

I mean,
he just doesn't care.
I physically just think he doesn't care.
Every excuse in the book.
What it boils down to,
is he doesn't care.

It's not just me who said it.
Even my supervisors
I've tried to do things with the kid,
my supervisor's tried to do things with the kid.
He doesn't appreciate your help.

Like I said, I want him to do well.

I like the kid.
I want him to do well,
but just,
he doesn't want to do well for himself.

But he is
only
ten
years
old.

- *Later* -
Professor, I'm sorry
if I sounded mean
talking about that kid.

In this poem, the PST discussed their struggles with reaching one of their students. They had a difficult time getting the student to complete his work, and expressed their belief that the student simply did not care about school, a statement they repeated six times throughout this portion of the interview. They also shared how other educators and mentors, both the cooperating teacher and supervisor, also struggled to reach the student. In my questions, I pushed them to consider the implications of putting this label of being "unmotivated" on a ten year old. What struck me was that later in the day after our interview together, the PST returned to apologize for how they were speaking about the student, showing that they may have reconsidered how they were framing this student in their classroom. As the PIR I felt it was my goal to remind the PST of our mission and purpose. This speaks to the importance of having a strong link between social justice oriented teacher preparation and clinical experiences, especially when the reality of classroom challenges can cause PSTs to deviate from their stated philosophy.

In the last poem, the PSTs critiqued the district's curriculum during a book club discussion, and then emphasized how they wished to situate themselves in their classrooms.

Mental Health on the Backburner

We talk about wanting to
make these kids better people.

But we feel like there's so much emphasis on academics
and you need to do this
and you need to score this high
and you need. . .
But
there's no one sitting there
giving them life lessons
and advice,
teaching them to
be good people.

If we isolate them
from these real life things. . .
They'll know how to do that new Eureka math,
but
I'm not going to balance my checkbook
and be like,
okay, did I move the tens into the house?

That serious stuff
takes such a back seat
because
everyone's afraid to approach it.

Thinking about
    the pain they feel
    the words they cannot form,
is much more important to focus on
instead of
if they are learning your objective that day.

Mental health - it's just *on the back burner*.

Children know what is bothering them.
But they must feel cared about
in order to talk about it.

We said from day one,
we promise we have your backs
and we told them,
we're here for you
in the smallest things
and the biggest things.

In this poem the PSTs were frustrated by the lack of emphasis on students' mental health, and expressed concern that the focus was placed too much on academic objectives rather than on students' socioemotional wellbeing. Their frustration led them to consider their future selves and how they wish to treat their future students. Interestingly, in their conversation they acknowledged how young students often know of their social-emotional needs, but often lack the words needed to express their emotions. Focusing on students' social-emotional learning will enable the PSTs to take a more holistic and inclusive approach to teaching. At the end of

the poem, the PSTs reaffirmed their holistic commitment to students, caring about both their academic and socioemotional needs.

Discussion and implications

This inquiry explored how our PDS model of having university faculty embedded in the schools with PSTs can be used to help PSTs develop as social justice advocates with inclusive philosophies. The findings, captured across the three poems, show that the PSTs (1) expressed inclusive beliefs, (2) experienced tensions between matching their beliefs with their practice, and (3) emphasize the importance of communities in helping PSTs develop as social justice advocates.

Expressing inclusive beliefs

In the poem "Teaching All Students" we see how the PSTs demonstrated presuming competence, a key tenet of inclusive practice (Biklen & Burke, 2006). The lines from the poem, "the students know they're amazing/maybe they're not completely verbal/but,/they know what you're saying," demonstrate that the PSTs supported the notion that disability is constructed (Danforth & Gabel, 2016) as well as their acknowledgment that the nonverbal students are competent and capable of fully participating in their learning. Also in the same poem, the PSTs emphasized the need to alter practice so that students can meaningfully engage in the work when they stated "this kid is going to learn/this concept/because he can/but through this way." In this way they showed an understanding of what inclusion looks like in practice, and rejected the idea of a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. They aligned with the idea of tailoring our practice to meet the diverse needs of our learners rather than forcing diverse learners to conform with one means of instruction. The PSTs also acknowledged the creation of stigma in schools in that how teachers label students impacts students are perceived by adults and peers (Collins, 2011), and expressed that they "never want to make a kid feel/like they're less than another one/ever." Yet interestingly, at the end of the poem they struggled to identify such a philosophy as inclusive. Perhaps this speaks to a lack of confidence in their beliefs as they start out in their careers, a hesitancy to identify as a social justice advocate, or a failure to recognize inclusion as social justice. Their uncertainty in naming their philosophy as inclusive signals the need for a space to reaffirm their teaching philosophies during their clinical internship. As this year sets the tone and foundation for their career in education, having an affirming space to commit to social justice advocacy is essential.

Similarly, in the poem "Mental Health on the Backburner" the PSTs again shared inclusive ideas and approaches when they discussed "the pain they feel/the words they cannot form," showing they acknowledged their students' social-emotional needs despite never explicitly discussing social-emotional learning. They further emphasized the need to care for students, which highlights the importance of relationships and trust between students and teachers. In line with the notion of caring for the souls of our students (Hooks, 2003), the book club reading and discussion inspired the PSTs to consider their future selves and the type of teachers they want to be for their students (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2010; Beijaard *et al.*, 2004). They wish to holistically care for and teach all of their students. The poems captured the future reflection inspired by their reading and observation that they then shared in our discussions. The poems also highlight the emotional work the PSTs experienced, in that their dedication, passion and level of care for their students clearly came through in their commitment to their students. Providing holistic care for students by tending to both their academic and social-emotional needs allows us to center the diverse needs students bring into our classrooms, as well as allowing us to identify areas in which more equitable approaches and solutions are needed.

Through both of these poems, it is clear through their expressed beliefs that the PSTs desired to see themselves as advocates for inclusion and social-emotional learning, two key aspects to achieving equity in socially just schools. In this sense the PSTs saw their future selves as teachers willing to engage in practices that enable them to be positioned as social justice advocates. However, the tension was revealed in the ways their stated actions did not always match the beliefs shared in our book club discussions.

Advocating for some, not all

Despite stating their intentions to holistically care for all students, the poem "Heart of the Matter" reveals a discrepancy between espoused beliefs and PSTs' commitment to all students. While this poem only centered the voice of one PST, it is interesting to see the difference between the sentiments of the group in the previous two poems and this intern's actions as discussed in their interview. The PST repeated six times that their 10-year-old student just did not care, and felt the "onus" was on the child to engage in their education. While true to an extent, the PST did not account for possible barriers the child might have been facing, as evidenced in my probing questions captured in the poem. They wrote the child off as not motivated, which goes against inclusive, equitable practices and is more in line with the banking model of education (Freire, 1970) where the child must passively accept the knowledge that is being given to them. In a social justice approach, the PST might have further investigated what is preventing the child from engaging with the content and materials. To position such a young child of color as uncaring is extremely worrisome and even dangerous, as seeing the student as deficient impacts the social construction of the student's identity and sends a powerful message about their inclusion and belonging in the classroom to both the student and the class as a whole (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Freire, 1998; Hooks, 2003; Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). Further, it creates stigma that can potentially follow the student throughout their educational career by positioning the student as struggling and/or as an outsider by both peers and future teachers.

The exchange in "Heart of the Matter" highlights how the PST struggled to commit to inclusive and social justice practices despite saying they believe in such ideas. Whereas in "Mental Health on the Backburner" the group stated "we promise we have your backs" when speaking about their students, in "Heart of the Matter" the one PST struggled to put this idea into practice. The student they spoke about may have had diverse learning needs that were not well suited for traditional, banking model forms of instruction. So while the PST expressed wanting the student to do well and promising to have students' backs, their ability to reach all students was lacking. Perhaps this PST in particular was struggling with the differences between what was taught at the university regarding reaching all students and the realities of the classroom (Brown *et al.*, 2021; McKay, 2016), in that they believed in inclusion but did not know or feel comfortable putting it into practice, especially when it can be challenging to do so. One would hope that the cooperating teacher might also offer this support, but the PSTs shared that "it's not just me who said it" related to the young student not caring. They shared that their supervisor tried to work with the student and that the intern and cooperating teacher met with the child's parents. This indicates that such beliefs about the student being uncaring may have come from other mentors and extended beyond the PST. Being new to the classroom, the PST may have struggled to match their stated inclusive beliefs and practices if the prevailing impression of the young student by all adults in the classroom was that of being unmotivated and uncaring.

Most importantly, the PST perhaps recognized the disconnect between their stated beliefs and actions after our interview together, as seen by them coming to apologize for sounding mean "talking about that kid." This revelation speaks to the importance of having a mentor to help PSTs reflect on their present actions as they relate to who they see as their future self and

also their ability to advocate for all students' diverse needs. If a new teacher or PST is struggling to reach a particular student with diverse needs, the role of mentors committed to social justice is critical.

Establishing communities to support advocacy

The revelations across the three poems demonstrate a tension between theory and practice that the PSTs were experiencing. While they expressed beliefs in inclusion, they did not always have the confidence, courage, or skills to speak up or align these beliefs to their practices. Their uncertainty around critical conversations and their frustration with the system speaks to earlier findings that PSTs need guidance in navigating the emotional work and politics of teaching (Black-Hawkins & Amrhein, 2014; McKay, 2016; McKay & Manning, 2019). While the PSTs identified several inequities, they did not feel bold enough to speak up about these issues. However, the book club provided a space for them to reaffirm who they wish to be because of these inequities. It acted as a place to commit to ideas they wished to enact once they found a classroom of their own. Becoming a social justice advocate requires both community and mentorship to support critical reflection, as social justice is a shared struggle (Brown *et al.*, 2021; Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Mentorship through this shared struggle is essential, and for PSTs it is critical that such mentorship occurs in a non-evaluative, comfortable setting built on trust (McKay & Manning, 2019), which I feel was built in our book club and my weekly support of the PSTs in the school.

Implications

There are three implications for practice and PDSs that emerge from this study. The first is the importance of having university faculty situated in boundary-spanning roles that help bridge theory and practice among university and K-12 spaces. A university faculty member working in a PDS setting can be a critical mentor for PSTs, especially teaching faculty who have already played a role in the development of PSTs' teacher identities. As a professor in the PSTs initial preparation program, I was familiar with the coursework the PSTs had completed and often referred to it during our conversations. Fostering the connections between coursework and clinical practice may be a way to strengthen PSTs' confidence in their emerging practice while also providing a foundation for them to consider their teacher identities. As their PIR I was able to serve as a reminder of the foundations they built for themselves in their coursework while also assisting in helping them consider ways they can commit to becoming advocates in their future classrooms. It further helped that as PIR I already had an understanding of the school environment and the politics at play, which assisted in helping the PSTs navigate these dynamics.

A second implication is that PSTs need to be provided the space for critical reflection that focuses on their future self and who they wish to become as teachers. Book clubs and poetic inquiry are well situated to help in this regard, and future studies could explore having PSTs write their own transcription poetry from their discussions. While that was our original intention here, the demands students experienced during their internship prevented their participation in poetic writing. Future studies can explore the impact of poetic writing on PSTs' critical reflection on their future selves. Through these means, PSTs can be empowered to identify systemic areas of weakness and supported to find solutions that their future selves can act upon.

Finally, it is essential for PSTs to have mentors who themselves are social justice advocates. PDSs are well structured to help address educational inequities, especially if they are sites that can develop early career teachers who set out to tackle such inequities from the start, confident in their philosophy and beliefs in their own self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Exploring how PDS structures can help PSTs develop as social justice advocates who embrace inclusive philosophies is essential for understanding how PDS can be used as a vehicle to address educational inequities. This inquiry echoed many earlier findings that showed that PSTs need to be supported in the emotional work tied to their identity development, and that community and arts-based approaches are useful tools for such exploration (Black-Hawkins & Amrhein, 2014; Brown *et al.*, 2021; McKay, 2016; McKay & Manning, 2019). PSTs often have a hopefulness about teaching and their future classrooms, that if cultivated through a strong foundation, can help them sustain their beliefs in their abilities to truly advocate for all students throughout their careers.

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