COLLECTIVE CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS: ADDRESSING EQUITY IN
TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS

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by

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Collective Critical Conversations: Addressing Equity in Teacher Induction Programs* by Maia Christine Steward and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at San Francisco State University.

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This case study explored the viability of using a Critical Friends Group (CFG) dialogue protocol within a novice teacher induction program to facilitate dialogue about equity in a diversifying suburban school setting. The study included two research questions: How do novice teachers in a suburban school district with shifting demographic diversity make sense of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequities? How does an equity-focused community of practice using a dialogue protocol affect novice teachers' praxis through their understanding of how to address issues of student equity in their instructional practice? Even in a high performing suburban school, novice teachers had significant dilemmas of equity in their classes. Consequently, the novice teachers did not feel suitably trained or capable of providing the range of differentiation necessary to equitably meet the needs of their students. Thus, the novice teachers admitted to teaching by subjective intuition and asking for guidance from colleagues. The effects of adding the dialogue protocol included both an improved sense of trust among participants and of personal efficacy among the novice teachers. Questions posed during the dialogue protocol challenged the novice teachers' personal biases, ethics, and decisions. Overall, the dialogue sessions created a space to help each of the novice teachers understand their options, responsibilities, and resources to improve their instructional praxis. This study recommends future research be conducted about the longitudinal impact of implementing a Critical Friends Group (CFG) dialogue protocol into the California induction credentialing process. This includes research into how to train mentors to facilitate group dialogue sessions, and collect and analyze student outcomes data.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this dissertation.

Chair, Dissertation Committee

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xii
List of Appendices	xiii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Background of Induction	4
Study Context: Springfield Demographic Data	6
Purpose of the Study	14
Research Questions and Design.....	15
Study Propositions	17
Graphic Representation of the Conceptual Framework.....	18
The Conceptual Framework.....	19
Study Rationale: Building Equitable Instructional Capacity	19
Statement of Delimitations and Scope of Study	23
Significance of Study	24
Conclusion	25
Chapter Two: Literature Review	26
Teacher Induction: Theory and Research	26
An Intersection of Induction and Dialogue.....	30
Dialogue in Theory and in Practice	32
Theory of Dialogue	32
Dialogue vs. Debate	35

Dialogue as Strategy for Practical Reasoning.....	39
Dialogue as Means of Grappling with Social Context.....	44
Dialogue as Means to Self-Efficacy	46
The Structure of a Dialogue Group.....	48
Communities of Practice.....	49
Promising Practices within a CoP.....	51
Comparing the Benefits of CoPs vs. Singular PD Opportunities	55
Common Pitfalls of CoPs	58
Implementing a CoP Effectively.....	58
CoP Pitfalls Related to Group Development	60
Privacy Within a CoP.....	62
Issues of Sustainability for CoPs	63
Critical Friends Groups.....	65
Critical Friends Groups as CoPs.....	66
Research Outcomes of CFGs.....	68
How CFG Barriers Can Be Alleviated Within Teacher Induction	70
Suggested Facilitators for Implementing a CFG Protocol.....	73
Conclusion	76
Chapter Three: Methodology	80
Study Design.....	80
Rationale for the Research Design.....	82
Participation and Sampling	82
Role of the Researcher	84

Research Questions.....	86
Context.....	86
Participant Selection	87
Description of Novice Teacher Participants	89
Statement of Ethical Considerations.....	89
Data Collection	92
Internal Validity	96
External Validity	98
Data Analysis	99
Chapter Four: Report of Findings	101
Research Question One Findings.....	101
RQ1: Understanding the Opportunity Gap	101
RQ1: Instructional Practices that Affect the Opportunity Gap	105
RQ1: Novice Teachers' Understanding of Equity vs. Equality	106
RQ1: Systemic Barriers to Praxis	109
RQ1: Understanding Student Diversity	114
Research Question Two Findings	117
Nathan's Dilemma	118
RQ2: Findings for Nathan.....	125
Hippo's Dilemma.....	126
RQ2: Findings for Hippo	133
The Fonz's Dilemma.....	135
RQ2: Findings for The Fonz.....	145

Betty's Dilemma	147
RQ2: Findings for Betty	157
Nina's Dilemma	158
RQ2: Findings for Nina	164
RQ2: Intersections Across Dialogue Sessions	168
RQ2: Making Skills Instruction Explicit	168
RQ2: Advocating for Particular Students	170
RQ2: Collaborating with Colleagues	171
Summary of findings.....	172
Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations.....	173
Interpretation of Findings for Research Question One	174
Interpretation of Findings for Research Question Two	179
The Process of Creating Trust Comes from Trusting the Process	180
Probing Questions Reveal Bias and Encourage Self-Reflection	185
Espoused Theory into Praxis	188
Connections to the Conceptual Framework	189
Dialogue Protocol Effects Awareness and Articulation	193
Study Limitations.....	195

Implications.....	201
Novice Teachers Are Not Fully Prepared	202
Significant Dilemmas of Equity Exist	204
CFG Dialogue Bolsters Induction.....	205
Recommendations for Action	209
Recommendations for Further Study	218
Reflections on the Research Process.....	221
Conclusion	223
References.....	225
Appendix A: The CFG Structure Behind the Protocol	240
Appendix B: The Critical Friends Consultancy Protocol	243
Appendix C: Chronology of Participant Activities.....	244
Appendix D: Conceptual Framework Graphic	245
Appendix E: CFG Trust-Building Activities	246
Appendix F: Enrollment Data.....	248
Appendix G: Pre-Interview Questions.....	249
Appendix H: Post/Exit Interview Questions.....	250

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. U.S. Census Comparison of Springfield Residents from 1990-2014.....	9
2. Percent English Language Learner (EL) Students by Ethnicity 2013-14	11
3. The Population of Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students in the Springfield District	14

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. 1990 US Census Population by Race for Springfield, Ca.	7
2. 2000 US Census Population by Race for Springfield, Ca.	8
3. US Census 2014 American Communities Survey for Springfield, Ca.	8
4. 2014 Subpopulations as a Percent of the Asian Population	12
5. Conceptual Framework	18

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A. Appendix A: The CFG Structure Behind the Protocol	240
B. Appendix B: The Critical Friends Consultancy Protocol	243
C. Appendix C: Chronology of Participant Activities	244
D. Appendix D: Conceptual Framework	245
E. Appendix E: CFG Trust Building Activities	246
F. Appendix F: Enrollment Data	248
G. Appendix G: Pre-Interview Questions	249
H. Appendix H Post/Exit Interview Questions	250

Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

One of the foundational critiques of education is the inadequate preparation of novice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Elmore, 2004). In California, the current credentialing system includes a university-based preliminary credential and two additional years of district based on-site professional development, known as induction, to earn a permanent credential. According to *The Report on New Teacher Credentialing* by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2015), district induction programs vary in terms of their structure, content, mentorship and program requirements for the novice teachers. In a 500-article literature review of induction programs, Ingersol and Strong (2011) found that induction increased teacher retention and variation in instructional strategies, with a particular focus on English Learners (EL) and Special Education students. However, induction programs have not yet been found to improve equitable instructional practices that address the needs of the range of socio-economic and racial/ethnic student diversity found in California (Ingersol & Strong, 2011; Torlakson, 2012). This includes suburban induction programs that have lagged behind meeting the needs of a rapidly diversifying student population (Zozakiewicz, 2010).

The student populations of suburban school districts across California and around the United States are rapidly diversifying (Frey, 2011; Fry, 2009). Families of historically and currently marginalized students and new immigrant families with a wide socio-economic range are increasingly moving from the cities to the suburbs in hopes of better

schools and better employment opportunities (Fry, 2009). Low-income families are also migrating into suburban areas due to displacement caused by high rates of gentrification in urban centers, exemplified by the San Francisco Bay Area (Baron, 2014). Thus, as urban areas experience a transformation of gentrification and loss of labor-based employment, residents of varying socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic diversity have been moving out from these urban centers into the metro region's suburbs (Baron, 2014).

Compounding these demographic shifts, many suburban school districts are identified as high performing, even though opportunity gaps persists (Rury & Saatcioglu, 2011). The opportunity gap is the broader issue of systemic inequalities that result in disproportionate access to resources or opportunities for historically and currently marginalized students. Most districts monitor what they deem to be the opportunity gaps through measures of the achievement gap (Darling-Hammond, 2010). According to Ullucci and Battey (2011), "many White teachers have little awareness of racism and a dysconscious understanding of their own Whiteness (Swartz, 2003, p. 302)...creat[ing] internal obstacles to the implementation of both effective pedagogy, curriculum, and a transformative response to inequitable policies" (p. 1199).

Hence, the opportunity gap is perpetuated when district leaders continue to serve a racially, ethnically and socioeconomically diversifying student population without directly addressing systemic inequities or educator biases toward the students (Carter & Welner, 2013; Diarrassouba & Johnson, 2014; Turner, 2015; Welton, Diem, & Holme, 2015).

Most leadership in suburban districts have addressed the increasing diversity of their district by adopting a neutral or colorblind approach to the growing socioeconomic, linguistic, race, and ethnic, diversity of their formerly homogenous communities (e.g., creating one size fits all intervention programs) (Cooper, 2009; Diarrassouba & Johnson, 2014; Turner, 2014; Welton et al., 2013). This includes creating policies that are race, ethnicity, and class neutral which leaves little guidance for teachers to address issues of equity in their practice (Diarrassouba & Johnson, 2014; Turner, 2014; Welton et al., 2013). Examples of these equality based practices range from English-only communication with parents to colorblind policies focused on neutral equality rather than equity through social justice. Such policies may lead teachers to believe that their students are the source of school failure which reinforces their deficit thinking (Pollock, 2004; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). Thus, unexamined and seemingly benign neutral district policies and practices continue to both intentionally and unintentionally exacerbate opportunity gaps and the achievement gap as student demographics shift (Diarrassouba & Johnson, 2014; Turner, 2014).

One such practice of a seemingly neutral policy that perpetuates systemic inequities is the placement of novice teachers into entry-level courses at the high school level. This usually happens as a side effect of the seniority system because more experienced teachers prefer to instruct students in higher-level courses (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Elmore, 2004). Meanwhile, disadvantaged students are placed disproportionately in entry-level courses. This is often due to issues surrounding the

opportunity gap, such as a lack of computer access or enrichment opportunities. Others enter a district under-prepared for grade level course work due to other structural inequities, such as a lack of credentialed teachers in their former district (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Diarrassouba & Johnson, 2014). This often leads to students with the greatest need for instructional equity and institutional supports being placed with novice teachers who may have the least instructional capacity and institutional knowledge to address these needs. Therefore, this common staffing practice places novice teachers in a position to have a large impact on student achievement and learning and therefore the opportunity gap at their school, which places a responsibility on the district to support and improve the capacity of these novice teachers (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Elmore, 2004).

Background of induction. The current system for novice teacher support in California is a two-year induction program that novice teachers are required to complete in order to earn their permanent credential referred to as a clear credential. Teacher induction programs vary dramatically across the country and within the state of California in terms of content, mentorship structure, and funding (CCTC, 2015a; Ingersol & Strong, 2011). To give context to teacher induction as it has evolved in California, the following section is a brief history of teacher induction within California.

In 1988, the California legislature passed SB 148 to create an exploratory project, the California New Teacher Project (CNTP). CNTP was aimed at supporting novice teachers through job embedded mentorships. CNTP was designed to match successful

veteran teachers with novice teachers to increase novice teachers' instructional capacity. In 1992, an evaluation of CNTP found that participating novice teachers used a broader variety of instructional strategies and materials to provide students with more complex and challenging activities than did non-participating teachers (Success for Beginning Teachers, 1992). Subsequent studies found that induction programs also addressed the isolation created when novice teachers are forced to "sink or swim" without mentorship or guidance within the context of their classrooms (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

The findings of the 1992 CNTP evaluation spurred legislative expansion of new teacher induction in California by requiring induction for all teachers to earn their clear credential. California Senate Bill 2042 (1998) required all teachers with a preliminary credential to participate in a Commission on Teacher Credentialing accredited two-year induction program called Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA). The teachers were required to earn their clear credential through BTSA within five years of their initial employment by a school district.

Beginning in 2009, further expansion for new teacher support was halted by a funding shortfall across the state. Budget cuts, due to the recession of 2008, claimed the dedicated funding for BTSA (SB X3 4, 2009; Torlakson, 2012). More recently, the enactment of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2013 has left BTSA in an even more uncertain position. Not only does LCFF not directly fund district BTSA programs, it does not fund the salaries of BTSA personnel at the state or regional level (SB 97, 2013). Thus, districts must now run their induction programs without the support

of regional directors funded by the state.

Study context: Springfield demographic data. The location of this study is listed under its pseudonym, Appleton High School in the Springfield School District in Springfield, California. The City of Springfield, California has dramatically changed over the past 25 years, racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, and in terms of an increased number of immigrants. Using U.S. Census and California Department of Education (CDE) data the following tables and charts were created to make visible these changes. All census data related to 2014 is based on the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) annual surveys and five-year estimates. The five-year period on which the estimates are based is 2000 to 2014. The 1990 and 2000 data is derived from each decennial census. Charts 1-3 below show trends in race, ethnicity, income, and immigration status in Springfield's population between 1990 and 2014.

Chart 1. (California Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) & Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), 1990)

NOTE: 1. Less than 1% for Pacific Islanders, Native Alaskans, and Indian Americans
2. Hispanics all races 12.9% (California MTC & ABAG, 1990).

Chart 2. (California MTC & ABAG, 2000)

Note: Less than 1% for Pacific Islander, Native Alaskans, and Indian Americans

Chart 3. (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, 2014)

Note: Less than 1% for Pacific Islanders, Native Alaskans and Indian Americans

Charts 1-3 clearly show the shift in race and ethnicity among Springfield residents from a predominantly White to predominantly Asian community. Table 1 further reflects the demographic shifts in Springfield for median household income, residents living below the poverty line, and the percentage of immigrant residents from 1990 to 2014 (California MTC & ABAG, 1990; California MTC & AGAB, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2014). It is important to note that The U.S. Census data for household income is not available to be broken down by ethnicity and as this reported income is median rather than average income, 50% of households are below this number.

Table 1

U.S. Census Comparison of Springfield Residents from 1990-2014

Resident Description	1990	2000	2014
Median Household Income	51,231	76,579	103,591
Population Living Below the Poverty Line	4.2	5.4	6.3
Foreign Born Residents	N/A	37.1	44

Although the affluence of the overall community continues to rise, Table 1 shows the population of people living below the poverty line rising as well. Although this may appear to be a small percentage of the overall community, it disproportionately affects children with 7.1% of the population under the age of 18 living at or below the poverty level by 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2014).

Table 1 also shows that foreign-born residents in Springfield have increased over 14 years (California MTC & AGAB, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2010-2014). Of those residents, the percent who are not U.S. citizens has increased from

20.5% in 2000 to 44.2% in 2014 (California MTC & ABAG, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2014). The U.S. Census ACS data for 2014 also shows that 58.0% of the City of Springfield's 2014 population over 5 years of age speak a language other than English at home and, of those, 19.5% speak English less than very well. Therefore, there is an increase in families who do not have the language skills or experience to navigate the Springfield public school system.

In addition to a gap in experience with the public school system, there is an increasing linguistic gap between new Springfield residents and the school district. Table 2, collected by the Springfield School District and reported to the California Department of Education Educational Demographics Unit (CDE EDU) for 2013-14, shows the number of English Language learners in the district. The Appendix F table with data from the CDE EDU, shows that demographic data for the student population of the Springfield School District and its five comprehensive high schools reflects the demographic shift occurring in the city as a whole. Meanwhile the teachers and administration continue to be predominately White middle-class.

Table 2

Percent English Language Learner (EL) Students by Ethnicity 2013-14

School	EL students	White [1]	Asian	Black	Hisp.	Filipino	Pacif . Isl.	Am Ind./ Alask.
Springfield USD	6,703 (19.8%)	5.9	58.6	[2]	29.5	3.9	[2]	[2]
Appleton HS	211 (9.7%)	3.3	62.1	0	28.9	7.1	[2]	[2]
Borican HS	157 (8.0%)	10.2	53.5	0	26.8	8.3	[2]	[2]
CLK HS	224 (15.95)	8.5	25.9	[2]	54.0	8.0	[2]	[2]
Dorision HS	84 (3.9%)	7.1	85.7	1.1	59.5	5.9	[2]	[2]
Ellington HS	220 (11.9%)	7.2	40.0	[2]	43.6	7.2	[2]	[2]

(California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) *District and school enrollment by ethnicity English learners*, 2014)

Note: [1] White not Hispanic; [2] less than 1 percent

Digging deeper into the issues of race, ethnicity, and immigrant status brings forth the issues of cultural diversity and language proficiency. It is important to recognize that the broad U.S. Census race category of “Asian”, which is also used by the CDE for reporting data on race and ethnicity, includes widely disparate subpopulations of ethnicities, cultures, and language groups. Asian Indian and Chinese are by far the largest subpopulations in the Springfield school district. The following pie chart shows the breakdown of the Asian subpopulations in Springfield.

Chart 4. (U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2014)

Combining the details from Table 2 and Chart 4 clarifies that the majority of Asian EL students at Appleton High School are of Asian Indian and Chinese decent, followed by Filipino students.

Income variation and increasing diversity is occurring in neighboring communities as well. For example, in neighboring Unity City the median household income grew from \$71,926 in 2000 to \$82,564 in 2014 (+14.8%) (California MTC & ABAG, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau ACS, 5 Year Estimates, 2014). The percent of population under the age of 18 living at or below the poverty level in Unity City was slightly higher than Springfield, at 7.9 in 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2014). Like Springfield, Unity City had a significant increase in Asian

population (+26.9%) and a significant decline in White not Hispanic population (-50.2%), (California MTC & ABAG, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2014).

One pitfall of a classroom with the majority of students considered middle to high income, in communities like Springfield and Unity City, is the potential for bias among teachers that all the students have the resources and support necessary to complete assignments, which is an inaccurate belief. For example, requiring all essays to be printed may only be a hardship for three students in a class of thirty. However, holding students accountable for resources they cannot obtain perpetuates the opportunity gap for the most vulnerable students. This issue may be a particular challenge in suburban districts that have a perceived degree of wealth; more so than in an urban district where the majority of students live in poverty.

Under the pressure of rapid socio-economic, linguistic, and racial/ethnic change, suburban school district leaders are still in the process of assessing the implications of this shifting demographic diversity (Diarrassouba & Johnson, 2014). Data reported by the CDE now includes a category for students entitled “socio-economically disadvantaged.” This data is based primarily on the number of students receiving free or reduced cost lunches. Table 3 demonstrates that for the 2013-2014 school year, the following numbers and percentages of socio-economically disadvantaged students attended Springfield’s public schools.

Table 3

The Population of Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students in the Springfield District and its high schools

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGED (SED) STUDENTS, 2013-14	SED students	% of school population
Springfield School District	6,639	19.6%
Appleton HS	347	15.9%
Borican HS	434	22.1%
CLK HS	536	38.0%
Dorision SJ HS	77	3.6%
Ellington HS	450	24.5%

(California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS))

District and school enrollment by ethnicity socioeconomically disadvantaged, 2014)

Thus, Springfield and its school district must adapt to the changing demographics of its residents, in terms of race/ethnicity, immigration status, language proficiency, and socio-economic status.

Purpose of the Study

Novice teachers in suburban districts need mentoring and support in identifying and managing issues of inequity in their classrooms to avoid contributing to the persevering opportunity gap in our schools and society (Carter & Welner, 2014; Coburn & Russell, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2010). For this study, novice teachers are defined as: teachers who are within their first five years of teaching and are currently participating in their district's induction program to earn their clear credential. Although there are a vast number of opportunity gaps that can affect student performance, they will be referred to herein as the singular *the opportunity gap* idea that many gaps exist, and are unique to each individual student. Although novice teachers may have learned the

latest theory and research on equity and addressing the opportunity gap through their preliminary credential program, the application of theory into action is necessary to create praxis (Freire, 2000). Once employed, novice teachers must engage in the complex process of building the instructional capacity, classroom management, culturally relevant pedagogy, bureaucratic navigation, communication, and political skills needed to apply these theories into practice. To accomplish these objectives, novice teachers need support to successfully navigate interactions involving inequity that are not addressed in the current induction programs across the state of California (Ingersol & Strong, 2011). This study seeks to contribute to the literature about how suburban district leaders can proactively address student demographic diversity and equity through increasing the instructional capacity of the novice teachers.

Research Questions and Design

There is growing evidence that suburban areas around the country are shifting from White majority to becoming more racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse (Frey, 2009). Despite the lack of research on how district induction program policies address issues of equity in suburban settings, this issue is quickly arising as significant to current suburban teacher practice.

This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do novice teachers in a suburban school district with shifting demographic diversity make sense of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequities?

RQ2: How does an equity-focused community of practice using a dialogue protocol affect novice teachers' praxis through their understanding of how to address issues of student equity in their instructional practice?

This in-depth qualitative study provides the opportunity to research the dynamics, successes, and complications inherent in a small dialogue group. The findings from this study can inform future induction specialists and district policy makers. The study is designed to suggest the importance of bolstering one-on-one mentorship with dialogue groups. The findings can make known potential pitfalls and suggest strategies district leaders should consider for increasing novice teachers' instructional capacity. The study seeks to explore how teachers respond to a protocol that uses semi-structured questions to facilitate dialogue about instructional practices that can address equity issues and the opportunity gap. The study evaluates the dialogue protocol's impact based on the teachers' praxis, focusing on shifts in understanding and the identification of action aimed at providing equitable instruction as articulated through their instructional dilemma. Therefore, this study evaluates teacher: 1) Ability to articulate their understandings of equity; 2) Awareness of the implications of providing equitable instruction on student outcomes; and 3) Ability to apply this understanding by making appropriate shift in instructional practice. This study does not seek generalizable outcomes but, instead, seeks to identify the elements of the dialogue protocol that are facilitators or barriers to increasing novice teacher capacity to address issues of equity.

Study propositions. The study relies on four propositions about novice teacher induction and equity, namely that:

1. Intentional teacher dialogue groups, with a structured protocol for conversation, may create a safe space for teachers to discuss issues of equity and the opportunity gap within their instructional practice.
2. Within such intentional and structured teacher dialogue groups, novice and experienced teachers are able to articulate issues of equity and the opportunity gap and are willing to receive feedback from colleagues including novice teacher peers and mentor teachers.
3. In dialogue, teachers can translate a conversation about an issue of equity and the opportunity gap into an action plan to improve their instructional practice around that issue.
4. Creating communities of practice reduces teacher isolation within the induction framework.

Graphic Representation of the Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework

A wide variety of factors affect the daily instructional decisions of novice teachers. External factors that affect decision-making might include influences such as state curriculum standards and administrator expectations. The novice teachers must reconcile these external factors in relation to their own internal factors, such as prior experience, personal values, and assumptions.

The dialogue protocol used in this study is embedded within an induction program to help novice teachers' awareness of organizational characteristics and personal biases that affect their instructional decisions, and to critically reflect on whether these decisions help to provide an equitable and robust learning environment for their students.

Study rationale: Building equitable instructional capacity. There is very little research on social justice as a key aspect of suburban novice educators' induction into the teaching profession. The majority of articles addressing social justice or diversity are based on urban districts (Daniel, 2009; Riegle-Crumb, Moore, & Ramos-Wada, 2011; Zozakiewicz, 2010). Therefore, the literature on student equity in suburban districts lacks breadth. Of the three articles addressing this issue identified in this study's literature review, the major issues of equity articulated include the impact of teacher beliefs on student equity, teacher resistance to in-depth conversations about racism and inequity, and the importance of self-reflection (Diarrassouba & Johnson, 2014; Shodavaram, Jones, Weaver, Márquez, & Ensle, 2009; Zozakiewicz, 2010).

A key entry point into thinking about equitable instruction in suburban districts is that a mostly-white teaching force is in need of more training on how to develop culturally responsive pedagogy in order to teach an increasingly diverse student body (Zozakiewicz, 2010). As the national majority of the teaching population, white teachers can perpetuate the *centrality of whiteness* (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nakayama & Krizeg, 1995) within the educational system by unintentionally expecting white cultural norms (Zozakiewicz, 2010). This can have vast impacts on students because teacher capacity has been cited as one of the most important individual factors in student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2010). For example, the lack of teacher preparation for educating immigrant students, in combination with teacher beliefs, is a major factor affecting immigrant students' performance (Shodavaram et al., 2009).

Teacher resistance to deep conversations about race and their own positions constitute another barrier to work aimed at increasing educational equity (Cooper, 2009). Teacher discussions on race may need to be facilitated to remain civil and get past surface level distractions to the real conversation beneath (Daniel, 2009). Daniel (2009) attributed teacher fear and a desire for comfortable neutrality as two of the factors that prevent genuine dialogue about how to address the needs of a diverse student body.

In fact, critical reflection can be facilitated through critical inquiry and group dialogue (Cooper, 2009; Daniel, 2009; Welton et al., 2013). Individual, intrapersonal reflection can open the door for more public forms of reflection in group interactions (Street, 2004). Ironically, though, if teachers are not pushed to reflect in a mentor

situation, they may never learn to reflect individually (Street, 2004). Novice teacher induction is the institutional structure that is already in place to support developing these critical reflections.

Teacher induction programs have been found to increase teacher retention but have not been found to significantly improve novice teachers' ability to address issues of equity in their classrooms (Ingersol & Strong, 2011; Riegle-Crumb et al., 2011; Zozakiewicz, 2010). Other factors, such as a reduction in isolation and a space for critical dialogue, have been attributed to supporting novice teachers in increasing their equitable instructional capacity (Duncan Andrade, 2012; Ingersol & Strong, 2011). Creating a community of practice (CoP) is one format for bringing teachers together for critical dialogue about their practice in a safe space (Newman, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996). Of course, the creation of a CoP can create disagreement and disproportionate power dynamics (Grossman et al., 2001). However, adding the Critical Friends Group Consultancy Protocol (hereafter referred to as CFG or Critical Friends Group), created by the National School Reform Faculty (2012), affords the opportunity for critical reflection and maintains space for everyone to speak. This should help contend with disagreements and power differences.

For the purpose of this study, I have chosen the CFG consultancy dialogue protocol because it stands out among the research as a protocol that is centered on participating teacher expertise and praxis with positive outcomes. A Critical Friends Group is a professional learning community committed to improving their practice

through protocols (National School Reform Faculty, 2012). “Protocols are structured processes or guidelines to promote meaningful and efficient communication, problem solving and learning” (National School Reform Faculty, 2012). See Appendix A for the protocol. The Critical Friends Group model and methodology was originally developed in 1994 through the pairing up of the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) with the Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) (NSRF, 2012). In 2000, NSRF joined Harmony Education Center to continue working under new funding (NSRF, 2012).

Critical Friends Groups were first created to facilitate deliberate professional learning communities among teachers to help them address ever-changing education reforms. The first study of the effectiveness of CFG’s was funded by the Annenberg Foundation in partnership with the Coalition of Essential Schools (Dunne & Honts, 1998). That large-scale study consisted of seventy-five schools, joined with ninety original coaches willing to participate for a two-year period (Dunne & Honts, 1998). These original members formed peer observation groups to de-privatize their practices and to provide each other with feedback (Dunne & Honts, 1998). The outcomes of the study include the participants stating that their CFG experience was one of the most profound and useful professional developments in which they had participated (Dunne & Honts, 1998). Unfortunately the study did not include direct causal elements to test whether the CFGs affected student learning outcomes (Dunne & Honts, 1998).

Currently, NSRF (2012) defines a Critical Friends Groups as “a professional learning community consisting of 8-12 members who are committed to improving their

practice through collaborative learning and structured interactions (or protocols). CFG members meet at least once a month for about two hours". NSRF describes participants in a CFG as "members committed to improving their practice through collaborative learning" (NSRF, 2012). In addition, a CFG is a type of PLC where teachers lead the school reform initiative (Curry, 2008). Across the research on CFG groups, deprivitization of practice, teacher-driven collaboration, and interpersonal reflection surface as elements that drive the effectiveness of the program (Burke, Marx, & Berry, 2010; Curry, 2008; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014; Key, 2006). CFG groups are designed to be flexible enough to accommodate these factors while maintaining a strict protocol structure. Each protocol is designed with a time limit, topic focus, and rules for who is able to speak (NSRF, 2012). Although this may appear confining, the structure allows participants to trust the format and use it to promote equitable talk time for all participants (Curry, 2008; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014).

Statement of Delimitations and Scope of Study

This study is designed to focus on the impact of the Critical Friends Group dialogue structure on novice teachers' instructional capacity as self-reported by the participating teachers. This includes the interpretation of student performance data as explained by the novice teacher. One major limitation of the study is the lack of statistical student data and student interviews. The rationale for this limitation is the current induction structure. The novice teachers are beholden to a pre-determined accountability structure within the California induction program, to earn their clear

credential. That accountability structure includes an action research project. The novice teachers are required to select an instructional dilemma and create an action plan to improve their instructional capacity to address the dilemma. The teachers are required to collect student evidence for one class period and interpret how the relevant student data informs their future practice. In an effort to verify that the protocol structure of this study can fit within the current California induction program, the study is designed to work within this pre-determined framework. Yet, student scores from a single class period per teacher would not provide significant data for this research study.

Significance of the Study

Under the current Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) structure, no state funds are reserved for novice teacher induction. This places the onus of funding on individual districts (SB 91, 2013; SB 97, 2013). Since novice teachers have the highest rates of attrition, they represent a volatile investment for school districts (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Ingersoll & May, 2011). District leaders are presented with the problem of how to most effectively balance providing support for novice teachers by building their instructional capacity against the cost of investing in an unpredictable return (R. Ingersoll & May, 2011).

Ingersoll and Merrill (2010) noted that decisions on investment in novice teachers have become more pressing for many districts because of the dramatic growth in first year teachers being hired to fill positions formerly held by veteran teachers. Nationally, positions filled by first year teachers went “from 50,000 in 1987-88 to 200,000 in 2007-

08” (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010, p.16). “In the late-1980s the modal teacher had 15 years of teaching experience; by 2008, the modal teacher was a beginner in his or her first year of teaching” (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010, p.16). This also means that novice teachers are the largest group within the national teaching population, giving rise to an insufficient number of mentors in the system with historical knowledge of school site politics (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). Therefore, suburban district leaders need sufficient data to rationalize funding quality induction programs and guide them in how to build a program that increases novice teachers’ capacity to provide an equitable education for a diversifying population of students.

Conclusion

Novice teachers require support in translating what they learned in their university preliminary credentialing program to the context of their classroom, especially to equitably serve the needs of a diverse student population. The presence and structure of induction programs directly impact novice teacher retention and instructional capacity. This study seeks to explore the impact of a structured dialogue protocol on novice teacher awareness of equity and the opportunity gap, and their ability to address them through shifts in instructional practice. The study is also designed to provide in-depth descriptions of the facilitators and barriers involved in implementing the Critical Friends Group consultancy dialogue protocol within the current California induction accountability structure.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

While theories of learning suggest that group dialogue is a promising practice for the teacher induction and professional development of beginning teachers, the research in education is still in a relatively nascent state. For this study, I have reviewed literature on group dialogue in communities of practice (CoPs) to gain a greater understanding of group dialogue and its potential use in teacher induction. To better understand the significance of the literature, this chapter has been organized into the following sections:

1) Teacher Induction: Theory and Research; 2) Dialogue in Theory and in Practice; 3) Communities of Practice; 4) Critical Friends Groups.

Teacher Induction: Theory and Research

This subsection is organized into the components of novice teacher induction programs that have been shown to affect novice teacher efficacy. These components include situated learning, mentors, and mentorship program designs that foster social justice. The final component of this section is a brief description of the intersection between the topics of induction, dialogue, and communities of practice.

The overarching theory that differentiates induction from pre-service training is *situated learning* which refers to job embedded learning within the context of each teacher's classroom. Situated learning is a framework that places a high priority on the ability to directly apply learned theory to practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In their landmark book, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that, after novice teachers develop their breadth and

depth of education theory in a credential program at a university, they require the opportunity to infuse their new understanding with prior knowledge and apply it to their own teaching context. Without direct application of theory to practice, novice teachers are more likely to follow their personal beliefs than what they were taught in teacher credentialing programs (Haim, Strauss, & Ravid, 2004). Thus, teachers will continue to teach by subjective intuition unless guided to apply what they learned (Haim et al., 2004; T. Williams, Johnson, Whitecotton, Alvarado, & Mills, 2013). Therefore, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggested that job embedded learning can help novice teachers navigate the application of theory into practice.

One of the major components of job embedded learning for novice teachers identified in the literature is mentorship. Through the California state induction program mentors are matched to each of the novice teachers to help develop their pedagogy through situated learning. The theory holds that by working together, participating novice teachers and their mentors can help facilitate the translation of theory learned in the university into explicit practical application in the classroom. One of the main critiques of such induction programs is the lack of high quality mentors, for which there is no consistent definition (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

In their review of over 500 articles on teacher induction, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that new teacher induction programs enhanced the effectiveness of novice teachers, added to the attractiveness of the job, and improved teacher retention. However, there was not enough evidence of improving long-term teacher quality or

moving the equity agenda forward. They suggested more research be done to find the best methods for addressing social justice in practice directly.

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) also discovered that the mentorship component varied significantly. Mentors can vary from a veteran teacher with decades of experience, to a teacher that is within his or her first five years of teaching, a veteran teacher who may or may not share a common subject area or student population with the mentee, or a veteran teacher who may or may not be teaching within the mentee's school. Quality mentorship can help teachers gain the instructional capacity to foster any number of skills within their students, such as promoting higher order thinking, active citizenship, tolerance, non-violence, acceptance of diversity, and raising test scores (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Conversely poor mentorship has been cited as a reason teachers have left the field of education (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

In California, the induction program assigns qualified mentors and provides guidance and clear expectations for the mentoring experience based on the program's design. Per the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing 2015 Program Standards and Preconditions:

“Qualifications for mentors must include but are not limited to:

- Knowledge of the context and the content area of the candidate's teaching assignment
- Demonstrated commitment to professional learning and collaboration
- Possession of a Clear Teaching Credential

- Ability, willingness, and flexibility to meet candidate needs for support
- Minimum of three years of effective teaching experience

Guidance and clear expectations for the mentoring experience provided by the program must include but are not limited to:

- Providing “just in time” support for candidates, in accordance with the ILP, along with longer-term guidance to promote enduring professional skills
- Facilitation of candidate growth and development through modeling, guided reflection on practice, and feedback on classroom instruction
- Connecting candidates with available resources to support their professional growth and accomplishment of the ILP
- Periodically reviewing the ILP with candidates and making adjustments as needed

The program must provide ongoing training and support for mentors that includes, but is not limited to:

- Coaching and mentoring
- Goal setting
- Use of appropriate mentoring instruments
- Best practices in adult learning
- Support for individual mentoring challenges, reflection on mentoring practice,

and opportunities to engage with mentoring peers in professional learning networks" (p. 3)

Therefore, the CCTC (2015b) is explicitly setting the expectation for district induction programs to find and nurture high quality mentors to meet the immediate and long term needs of their designated novice teacher. Currently, the timing structure of the mentorship component of the California clear credentialing process can vary widely from a few check-ins throughout the year to a fully structured weekly program, with frequent meetings over a two or three-year timespan (CCTC, 2015a; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Situated learning through quality mentorship can help a new teacher fuse his or her own student learning expectations with those of the school community (Elmore, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991). To facilitate the creation of situated learning among several novice teachers at the same school site, one suggested framework is small group collaboration (Grossman et al., 2001; Picower, 2011). A district's education leaders must weigh the above-mentioned mentoring factors in comparison to the time they feel should be allotted, as well as to their budgetary constraints. One method that districts can use to improve mentorship quality with minimal cost is to provide release time opportunities for mentors and mentees to share ideas such as in a dialogue group where mentors and participating novice teachers can address issues of practice together.

An intersection of induction and dialogue. Dialogue is defined in this study as an inquiry process that allows participants to pose a dilemma and consciously reflect on the process by which they form tacit assumptions and certainties that comprise their

understanding of the dilemma. The reflective process is participatory, and all members of the group can develop understanding through speaking, listening, and learning together. Dialogue is not banking or conveying experienced teachers' wisdom to less experienced teachers. All members of the group converge as equals, and any information or understanding is presented for the benefit of the group without a direct recipient or expectation (Bohm, 1996; Freire, 2000; Vella, 1994).

One of the key advantages of a dialogue group built within an induction program is that dialogue allows for *impersonal fellowship*, the ability to reduce isolation by creating shared meaning and collective consciousness (Bohm, 1996, p.31). Dialogue groups reduce isolation because they can help participants build allies, facilitate intercultural understandings, and reduce the banking style of education (DeTurk, 2006; Freire, 2000; Hyde & Bineham, 1995). Bohm (1996) posited that the ability to articulate our world through language can move people from a position of feeling victimized by the world to being a participant in its constant re-creation.

DeTurk (2006) tested Bohm's theory through a phenomenological study of community members' attempts to re-create their community through weekly dialogue sessions for six weeks. Forty-five community volunteers chose to participate because the guiding topic for their dialogue sessions was "a better understanding of self, community and ways in which to improve the climate for diversity" (p.34). Some members reported forms of praxis based on their shift in perspective, such as confronting racist jokes or welcoming Muslim community members. This is a good example of how people can use

impersonal fellowship to build allies and improve their community. This applies to novice teachers because dialogue provides the opportunity to articulate what they understand of their daily instructional experiences. This can draw out assumptions of what they believe they have the responsibility or power to change. With an increased understanding of social justice and their own goals, participants in a community of practice can dialogue about strategies to address dilemmas of equity (DeTurk, 2006).

Dialogue in Theory and in Practice

Dialogue is both a theory and a practice. As a theory, dialogue has many empowering aspects and possibilities. As a practice, dialogue can be difficult to accomplish. One common statement across my theory based articles and research studies on dialogue is that there is a need for further research-based articles on how to sustain dialogue groups and methods to measure the effect of teacher dialogue on student learning outcomes.

This section of the literature review describes dialogue as a practice and theorizes about how dialogue can be used as a method of praxis. This includes a series of structural suggestions for how to make the practice of dialogue more successful and likely to evoke teacher praxis.

Theory of dialogue. Two of the best known theorists on the topic of dialogue are Martin Buber and David Bohm. Martin Buber wrote the landmark book, *I and Thou* (1937). Bohm, originally a physicist, wrote the landmark book, *On Dialogue*. Bohm (1996) described dialogue as a process of making our thoughts explicit by way of

articulating our own assumptions in a group without hierarchy or judgment, for the purpose of creating shared meaning. Buber explained dialogue as the *interhuman* space between the *I and Thou* (Buber, 1958). This idea of dialogue existing among or between the participants has been articulated in many forms, including a cause of empathy between people, mutual meaning construction, and the interdependence between participants while each constructs their identity in interactions.

The common focal point of these definitions is the use of dialogue as a way to construct understanding through mutually generated meanings. Participants are simultaneously creating and navigating the meanings of their language and the ideas presented (Geren, 2001; Hyde & Bineham, 2000).

Buber argued that dialogue can only occur when each participant is open to the otherness of the other participant, thus allowing them to be a completely separate entity (Morgan & Guilherme, 2012). To be in conversation with another person when they are merely an object to speak towards or an object not defined by their own experiences is not dialogue (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005). Buber thus made the distinction between accepting the other person completely versus accepting only his or her ideas that are parallel to one's own. Instead, dialogue is a means for one participant to validate and hear the self-defined ideas of the other without filtering them through judgment (Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1958). Bakhtin (1984) added that dialogue is not synonymous with consensus. Dialogue requires the distance necessary to provide objectivity for additional ideas, without the goal of converging ideas into consensus (Bakhtin, 1984). Consensus may

occur, but it is not the direct goal of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1984; Bohm, 1996). Instead, the focus of the dialogue depends on the original intended purpose as navigated by the participants (Bohm, 1996; DeTurk, 2006; Hyde & Bineham, 1995).

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2000) connected dialogue to praxis by incorporating action. He described dialogue as a way for the oppressed to name their circumstances in order to reflect on their reality, and then change it through action. The action he termed praxis (Freire, 2000), similar to Aristotle's definition of praxis, is *wisdom in action*. The interpersonal nature of dialogue encourages participants to see each other's perspectives while building capacity for action. Their increased capacity for action comes from developing self-efficacy and building alliances among their peers (DeTurk, 2006; Freire, 2000). Therein lies the basis of dialogue as a means to social justice through praxis: "the reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, p. 52).

In dialogue, language is a social construct. The meanings of the words used are defined both by the speaker choosing the words and the listener who interprets the words (Bohm, 1996). There is a constant tension and negotiation created by the ambiguity of language in its different uses by different speakers (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005). Understanding cannot exist without conscious comprehension on the part of the listener (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005). Although language can move participants' views toward action, in practice dialogue is based on emergent understandings as the participants navigate their realities. Therefore, the outcome of any open dialogue is unpredictable

because the participants negotiate the meaning of their language as the dialogue unfolds (DeTurk, 2006).

Hyde and Bineham (1996) presented two possible conceptions of dialogue within the overarching construct. The first, *dialogue 1*, refers to a, “form of discourse [as a]... fusion of all perspectives to enable a larger, more inclusive view, one which allows tension and disagreement” (p.212). In the second, *dialogue 2*, “dialogue is a relational space...a way of being with another person...it is characterized by openness, trust, presence, and an understanding of the other that arises not from psychological compatibility but from shared humanity” (p.212). This second version of dialogue is paralleled by Buber’s *interhuman* space between the *I and Thou*, referenced above (Buber, 1958). Penlington (2008) added that this relational space affects teacher’s *subjective substratum*, the range of “beliefs, emotions, personal theories, identity, and personal practical knowledge” that affect their instructional decisions (p. 1305). Therefore, dialogue can be an end in itself, expanding participants’ viewpoints. Or, dialogue can be a tool for change through affecting a person’s set of beliefs.

Dialogue vs. debate. The binary nature of American cultural communication assumes two views with a winner and loser. Conversations are often approached as arguments, with the objective to convince the opposition to change sides. Hyde and Bineham (1996) made the important terminology distinction that *conversation* and *discourse* (and I would add *discussion*) are overarching terms within which *dialogue* and *debate* are more specific descriptors. Argument is also broken down into two distinct

meanings: *Argument 1* refers to a polarized form of debate that is often recognized as contentious. *Argument 2* refers to a position presented, or an idea put forth, to solicit communication (Hyde & Bineham, 1995). Gillispie and Chrispeels (2008) added to this distinction using the terms argument and confrontation as synonyms to *Argument 1*.

Gillispie and Chrispeels (2008) used discourse analysis to conduct an in-depth case study of one particular dialogue group that experienced significant tension and conflict over a four-day collaboration session. This dialogue group was composed of insider district leaders, outsider consultants, and researchers brought together in an attempt to create a plan to bring the subject school district out of Program Improvement. The case is particularly relevant because it focused on the causes and results of conflict in a dialogue group. One key focus of the study was on the use of the pronouns *us* and *them* by the participants. The use of these indicative pronouns expressed the tension between insiders and outsiders. This study provides useful insight into possible linguistic indicators participants may use to refer to other faculty members as outsiders because they are in a different social group (e.g., different department, or new versus experienced teachers).

Gillispie and Chrispeels's (2008) version of argument was described as a conversational confrontation in which oppositional perspectives are presented and participants attempt to draw the other closer to their side. Confrontation is described as an aggravated opposition between two participants where distinctions between perspectives are used to highlight their differences, and participants are meant to hold

their ground until one participant concedes (Gillispie & Chrispeels, 2008). Gillispie and Chrispeels (2008) found that the dissonance created by argument or confrontation cannot move the topic forward if defending their own position and attacking their opponent consumes the mental focus of the participants.

Dialogue fundamentally differs from debate (a.k.a., *Argument1*) because dialogue actively encourages the participants to move away from binary, polarized views, and toward the goal of collaboration by adding more perspectives (Bohm, 1996; Hyde & Bineham, 1995). By not focusing on sides, dialogue can widen the topic through the addition of increased perspectives rather than contributing to oppositional sides (Bohm, 1996; Hyde & Bineham, 1995). After the initial conflict surrounding the use of the pronouns *us* and *them*, Gillispie and Chrispeels' (2008) participants were able to use the structure of dialogue to address the conflict and grapple with an uncomfortable situation. The participants were able to directly address why the issue was affecting the group and how to alleviate the tension between those perceived as insiders or outsiders (Gillispie & Chrispeels, 2008).

Dialogue can offer an alternative to argument because it can "redefine conflict as recognition of difference and the widening of perspective" (Nagda & Gurin, 2007, p. 40). The following review of several smaller studies of dialogue among adult university students is relevant here because it focuses on dialogue as a method of praxis. Using references from both a quantitative pretest/posttest survey study (Nagda, 2006) and a qualitative study of a group of 15 undergraduate student participants (Gurin, Nagda, &

Lopez, 2004), Nagda and Gurin (2007) explained how dialogue could be used to bridge racial and socio-cultural divides among participants. By broadening fellow participants' perspectives and negotiating conflicts that arose during interactions, participants gained a sense of efficacy and felt stronger bonds within the community.

Another fundamental difference between debate and dialogue is the use of human experiences, tacit understandings, and human worldviews. Nagda and Gurin (2007) described dialogue as including emotional elements such as building "empathy and mutual respect" (p.37). This is in contrast to debate, which is a form of "evidence based thinking on issues [to] develop presentational skills, and strengthen ability to influence others" (p.37). In formal academic debate, personal experience is traditionally discouraged and holds little empirical weight. Therefore, emotions are of little value in debate (Hyde & Bineham, 1995).

Dialogue differs in its acceptance of human experiences and feelings as valid information. In dialogue, broadening the perspectives of the participants can occur via understanding another's experience, as well as through presenting scholarly empirical data (Bohm, 1996; Hyde & Bineham, 1995; Nagda & Gurin, 2007). An example of the nuance between debate and dialogue is a description of family. A debate could be structured around the question, "What defines a family?" A dialogue could be structured around the question, "What are the range of definitions that could be generated by the distinction *family*" (Hyde & Bineham, 1995, p.213).

The next section will provide a theoretical basis for why dialogue affects personal

growth and builds teacher capacity through self-reflection.

Dialogue as a strategy for practical reasoning. In her review of dialogue philosophers, Penlington (2008) argued that dialogue is particularly important for teacher praxis because it fosters practical reasoning. *Practical reasoning* can be described as the process of thinking that brings a person to a decision about an action (Penlington, 2008). This definition encompasses the subjective, objective, and unconscious thoughts that drive personal decisions. Analyzing one's own practical reasoning as a teacher can lead to an understanding of where one's personal biases may be affecting instructional practice. For example, an instructional decision first interpreted as an objective decision, may be later seen as a subjective choice based on a formerly hidden bias.

Practical reasoning is not something people can develop alone (Penlington, 2008). Instead, it is through social interactions that people learn to compare their initial understandings with the social values of the broader community. These social interactions affect both the content of participants' deliberations, and the *way* that participants deliberate about their choices. The broader context of the socio-cultural landscape, which includes ethnic, generational, historical, and geographic considerations, also plays into individuals' practical reasoning (Bakhtin, 1981). To make a practical decision, therefore requires a considerable amount of thought and consideration of context (Penlington, 2008).

Self-reflection is the common practice of drawing conscious attention to the underlying factors that affect practical reasoning and, therefore, decision-making. Self-

reflection also can be described as an internal dialogue with an *other* within ourselves. This other is the aggregation of internal thoughts that act as our addressee in a dialogue to create a process of deliberation with another perspective (Bakhtin, 1981; Buber, 1958; Kant, 1996; Penlington, 2008). For example, a teacher may convince *herself* about the equity of an instructional choice; *herself* being the other critical perspective in her mind that she uses to assess the validity of the instructional choice.

Kant (1996) suggested that the quality of reflection can depend on how consciously deliberative the individual is about the reflection; the opposite of this is making habitual or uncritical decisions. Yet, even the most deliberative self-reflection can result in decisions that are blind to important considerations because of personal blind spots, biases, and incentives that are well hidden from conscious awareness (Penlington, 2008). Some people may be completely unaware of their own lack of self-perception, thereby imprisoning themselves within an unexamined perspective (Geren, 2001).

Humans may remain blind to subconscious drivers in their decision-making, due to their tendency to attribute their actions to their most credible reasons, instead of more self-centered and less admirable reasons (Kant, 1996, as cited by Penlington, 2008). This can happen when teachers rationalize their decisions or ignore strong personal motivators of their practical reasoning while self-reflecting alone. For example, the decision whether to grade a math test for correct final answers versus the accuracy of the work presented to reach the answer may be heavily predicated on the time of day the teacher is grading,

rather than on his or her laudable philosophy of teaching.

Even though dialogue can lead to recognition of hidden personal motives, there are several aspects of the dialogue process that can lead to a *block* or inability to recognize one's own contradictions. These can include identity defenses, lack of active listening, and defending one's own ideas as non-negotiable or necessities (Bohm, 1996). Dialogue can seek to make defensiveness non-personal by recognizing that being defensive is a human inevitability rather than a flaw (Bohm, 1996). Recognizing defensiveness as usual and customary might allow participants to move beyond it (Bohm, 1996; Hyde & Bineham, 1995; Picower, 2011). Neither indulging nor resisting the defensiveness frees the participant from it (Bohm, 1996). By recognizing one's own egocentrism and ethnocentrism, participants suspend the filters of their own worldview in an attempt to take in and appreciate the perspective of other members (DeTurk, 2006).

A particular danger of invisible biases in practical reasoning for teachers is the tendency of the teachers to act out patterns of teaching that they have experienced as students. Just as parents will often use phrases their parents taught them, such as "actions speak louder than words," teachers may unconsciously fall back on antiquated teaching practices. Essentially the teachers are acting out familiar patterns of behavior, rather than making autonomous decisions based on their own philosophy of teaching (Penlington, 2008). Dialogue as social interaction with other people allows for a possible disturbance in this pattern, and draws out unconscious drivers into conscious dialogue. Therefore, the possibility exists that disrupting rote patterns can lead to praxis (Bohm, 1996; DeTurk,

2006; Penlington, 2008).

Calarco (2014) addressed a more invisible aspect of instructional inequity, the reproduction of social class in student-teacher interactions. After observing students over three years (third through fifth grade), and interviewing their parents and teachers each year, Calarco (2014) argued that families at different levels of social class implicitly and explicitly socialized their children to interact with educators differently. Calarco's (2014) study mitigated race and ethnicity as factors by studying only white students and teachers.

Working class families encouraged their children to respect the teacher's authority without question, solve problems alone, and avoid asking the teacher for help (Calarco, 2014). Middle class parents conditioned their children to use the *logic of entitlement*. They taught their children to be vocal about their needs and to get the help *they deserved* from teachers in order to solve problems. The logic of entitlement often translated into the teacher giving middle class students more attention or believing that they were more engaged in their learning. The corresponding *logic of constraint* holds that the working class students' learning resulted in teachers being unaware of their need for help, or in the teachers assuming that the students' low performance was due to lack of effort (or ability), i.e., the student's deficit. "Teachers' expectations for providing students with *help* or for *being asked to help* a student may be implicitly biased, based on their own educational experiences" (Calarco, 2014).

Welton et al. (2013) posited that, whether issues such as social class are addressed or ignored during demographic change will define the outcomes of student achievement and educational equity. This has significant implications for novice teachers who may judge a student's interest in school based on their level of interaction and self-advocacy. However, the pitfall of the centrality of whiteness remains (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). The current challenge for suburban educators is to address student equity when the contributing factors to student engagement and performance, such as socio-economics and culture combined, are completely outside the educators' prior experience.

By participating in a group dialogue, teachers can present their ideas for critical reflection among a peer group who can search for hidden bias and alternative perspectives on the topic (Penlington, 2008). This does not mean giving up personal autonomy in the interest of a peer group driving decisions. Rather, it affords the opportunity to expand an individual's *otherness* by broadening perspectives in dialogue, so that people can build greater awareness within their own self-reflective capabilities (Bohm, 1996; Penlington, 2008).

One method of drawing out our inconsistencies of thought or unsubstantiated beliefs is asking for an explanation. Internal dialogue may be fooled by a half-formulated explanation, but dialogue among peers requires a more complete explanation or the recognition of the gap in explanation (Penlington, 2008). This may bring formerly accepted ideas into question and critique. Furthermore, when conducting dialogue among peers, teachers cannot hide behind jargon. This can force deeper reflection through

layers of rationalization and socially normative behaviors to seek the underlying motivations for decisions (Penlington, 2008). By creating a space that encourages explanation of personal perspective, dialogue groups facilitate all participants to better understand what drives their actions, thereby making their decision process more open to change.

Dialogue as a means of grappling with social context. Education reform does not exist within a vacuum. Therefore, reform programs must consider the contextual elements that will affect the reform efforts. Dialogue is a structure that can facilitate understanding of the greater social context while allowing participants to grapple with their role in how to change or perpetuate the current context (Nagda & Gurin, 2007). This includes whether to maintain one's worldview or allow it to change (Nagda & Gurin, 2007).

If one elects to change, then there are several shift points in the process of broadening one's own limitations (DeTurk, 2006): First is the motivation to see another perspective. Second, awareness brings further complexity to reality such as that oppression is not just limited to race. Third, it can lead to an examination of how the circumstances of another group such as their oppressors also inform how that situation affects one's own reality (DeTurk, 2006). It is the responsibility of each individual in a dialogue to exercise his or her self-reflection to perceive the more subtle ways that inequality can be manifested (Geren, 2001).

Picower's (2011) two-year study incorporated dialogue groups into a situated learning setting. This phenomenological study was organized around issues of social justice. It tracked 12 novice teachers through bi-monthly dialogue meetings, annual interviews, and classroom observations, in much the same way this study is organized (Picower, 2011). Picower (2011) postulated that discussions around race, gender and various other social issues are often uncomfortable, intense, and rarely end with a positive or productive outcome. Although social justice theory may be a component of preliminary teacher credentialing programs, such learning may not transfer to practice without repeated opportunities to use situated learning to apply social justice theory. Picower also highlighted timing and intention as major factors that influenced group outcomes. Conversations that require courage and trust cannot be accomplished in a rushed fashion; it requires "long-term and intense investments in the relationships and well-being of aspiring social justice educators" (Picower, 2011, p.23). Any job-embedded support structure that is attempting to address social justice theory in the context of a diverse student body needs to facilitate brave discussions on how to apply educational theories to classroom practice (Duncan-Andrade, 2012; Picower, 2011). However, this can be a scary and uncomfortable discussion. It can easily devolve away from open and honest conversation and into a realm of defensive degradation of the discussion (Grossman et al., 2001).

In an increasingly pluralistic society, dialogue groups allow teachers to acknowledge egocentric and ethnocentric tendencies and limitations, and then move

beyond them to create and reflect upon a broader and more nuanced worldview (DeTurk, 2006; Hyde & Bineham, 1995). Participants in several studies were identified as having increased their awareness of the complexities of social diversity and the power dynamics involved in prejudice and social oppression.

After only a six-week program, participants in DeTurk's (2006) study were described as having a more pluralistic view of diversity, with less fixed ideas about a range of identities from Muslims to Marines. By pushing on formerly invisible biases, participants can see the limits to their own empathy and push those boundaries (DeTurk, 2006). "Participants demonstrated perspective taking, increased awareness and more complex thinking about diversity, increased confidence with intergroup interaction, and commitment to action in the interest of social justice" (DeTurk, 2006, p.39). DeTurk (2006) made the important distinction that awareness alone does not lead to social change; humans require a certain level of self-efficacy to move perspective into action.

DeTurk (2006) does not include an epilogue as to whether the participants followed through on their motivations for action after the study ended.

Dialogue as a means to self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy is a broad term to describe the ability of teachers to use their confidence and instructional capacity to address an issue in education (Picower, 2011). The crucial distinction for praxis is whether or not teachers feel a sense of efficacy. Without efficacy teachers may think of themselves as victims or onlookers rather than active agents of change. Efficacy can be built from a combination of factors, including personal agency, legitimacy within the

power structure, allies, cultural capital, social capital, resources, voice, confidence, strategy, and clarity of purpose (Picower, 2011). Although not all of these factors are required together, creating allies within a dialogue group can augment any one participant's efficacy.

Personal efficacy often begins with personal awareness and self-determination. Dialogue can help participants reframe or broaden their perspectives about any issue including how they wish to be identified. Self-representation of one's own identity by removing bias or aiding other participants in their efforts to understand can be a stepping stone to personal efficacy (DeTurk, 2006). Dialogue is also designed to add more voices and perspectives without judgment. This opens a space to discuss growing understanding of oppression, social change, and diversity, with less fear of using the correct terminology. Building a space for allies to help each other build better vocabularies and ways of speaking about equity issues can further all the participants' efficacy in terms of increasing cultural competence and personal confidence (DeTurk, 2006). "The more diverse the group, for example, the more likely participants were to have their worldviews expanded, rather than confirmed" (DeTurk, 2006, p.47). An example would be determining how to talk about ethnic labels, rather than scolding a participant for using the incorrect term.

Conversations about race and other issues of social justice are often tense and fraught with the possibility of conflict. In contrast, dialogue is a means to replace argument and create another method for discussing cross-cultural questions or

misunderstandings. When debate has been the standard method of communication for participants, dialogue may take practice. However, it carries the potential to de-escalate contentious issues into productive sharing of ideas (Grossman et al., 2001; Picower, 2011). Once freed from the fear of not knowing how to talk about issues of social justice, participants increase their participation (Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Picower, 2011).

The structure of a dialogue group. There have been many suggestions regarding the structure of how to run a dialogue group, which include several fundamental components that have been agreed upon by all the authors thus far in my research study. First, there is a need for ground rules to protect individual integrity and perspectives (Bohm, 1996; DeTurk, 2006; Hyde & Bineham, 1995; Vella, 2002). Having roles and a protocol allow for timing concerns to be managed because people are less worried about talk time and knowing when to chime in (Bohm, 1996). This keeps people's minds focused and more present. Second, there can be an imposed structure and/or a facilitator to fill the void of leadership, but the facilitator's job should include a gradual reduction in control over time (Bohm, 1996; Grossman et al., 2001). Third, assumptions will arise and tension and frustration will occur but wading through them to find a way to suspend them can lead to something better (Bohm, 1996; DeTurk, 2006; Hyde & Bineham, 1995).

A function of the facilitator is to make people aware of when they cannot get past their assumptions, and it leads to conflict. Suspending assumptions is not the same as suppressing feelings; to suspend assumptions could be to metaphorically dangle the

assumption in front of the person and allow for awareness of it without being victim to its force or opinion (Bohm, 1996). An example could be the assumption that students who don't ask questions are not interested in learning the content. By allowing all the ideas and assumptions to surface, everyone is working with the same content. The more that assumptions are unarticulated and ideas withheld, the more people are working from different vantage points with different content. Once there is shared understanding of meanings and assumptions, people can begin to make change, if they are willing to do so. Drawing attention to the differences in the ways students are raised to interact with teachers, including the *logic of constraint* from asking questions, could be an example of acknowledging an assumption and presenting an alternative reason for consideration (Calarco, 2014). For teachers, this kind of change is facilitated by the ability to collaborate with colleagues also engaged in similar inquiry. One widely adopted method of teacher collaboration is communities of practice.

Communities of Practice

Neither *professional learning community*, nor *community of practice* has a standard definition-across the research literature. After writing two heavily cited books on the concepts of situated learning and communities of practice with Lave (1991), Wenger (1998) published a definition of communities of practice which states: "Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 1998, p.1). For the purposes of this research, Wenger's (1998) definition serves as a useful base concept, but other

authors have continued to develop the concept to better fit the field of education in specific contexts (Horn & Little, 2010; Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Little, 2002a, 2002b; Supovitz, 2002). Each study of CoPs continues to clarify the concept. Therefore, like the term professional learning community, the term community of practice is not capitalized in this literature review to avoid the implication that a standard or single defined meaning for the term exists.

In the field of education, CoPs have been implemented with varying degrees of success to the point that most large-scale education organizations have some variety of CoP initiatives (Grossman et al., 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Vescio et al., 2008; Wenger, 1998). Across the educational research on CoPs, each implementation shares two fundamental parameters. First, the underlying philosophy of CoP includes a shift in teacher professional development from individual personal learning and cognitive development, such as one-time professional development seminars, to social engagement and learning as a social act (DuFour, 2004; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Nagda, 2006; Vescio et al., 2008). Second, a CoP differs from a group of professionals discussing their practice, such as teachers in a staff lounge because involvement in a CoP requires dedication over time to both personal and group development through intentional critique of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Picower, 2011; Vescio et al., 2008).

In order to better distinguish the purpose and structure of a CoP, researchers would benefit from further clarification of quality practices to establish and sustain a CoP (Grossman et al., 2001; Ritchie 2012). What follows is an attempt to condense the

various research findings on CoP development. Therefore, the following section is organized into: (1) promising practices within a CoP; (2) comparing the benefits of communities of practice vs. singular professional development (hereafter professional development or PD) opportunities; (3) common pitfalls of communities of practice; (4) the issue of privacy in a CoP; and (5) issues of sustainability for CoPs.

Promising practices within a CoP. Using Wenger's definition and the two aforementioned basic commonalities among CoPs, this study will focus on practices that have been identified to encourage interpersonal communication and reflection, and which move participants beyond congenial pleasantries to active and challenging critiques of practice with the intention of improving instructional practice, student outcomes, and social justice (Grossman et al., 2001; Levine & Marcus, 2007; Little, 2002a; Picower, 2011).

One promising practice is creating group norms that will allow for collegial collaboration among educators to sustain productive group dynamics over time. The earlier these norms are negotiated, the less likely members will run into misunderstandings and unnecessary tension (Little, 2002a). To guide thinking about components that contribute to a functional CoP, Wenger (1998) created a list of CoP aspects that should be considered when creating initial group norms. These aspects included:

- (1) intentionality of the members; (2) the pursuit of a *shared enterprise*; (3) responsibility for the process which is continuously negotiated and shared among

members; (4) a *shared repertoire* including vocabulary, resources, routines, etc., that the members develop overtime; (5) careful avoidance of generalities; and (6) mutual engagement among members (p. 2).

Regardless of the contextual decisions for how to manage the above listed components, the components require intentional consideration and may affect a group's ability to build trust.

In their review of five empirical studies on implementing quality CoPs, Lieberman and Miller (2011) compiled a list of common practices that improved CoP outcomes:

They meet regularly and take the time to build collegial relationships based on trust and openness. They work hard to develop a clear purpose and a collective focus on problems of practice. They create routines and rituals that support honest talk and disclosure. They engage in observation, problem solving, mutual support, advice giving, and peer teaching and learning. They purposefully organize and focus on activities that will enhance learning for both the adults and students in the school. They use collaborative inquiry to stimulate evidence-informed conversations. They develop a theory of action. They develop a core set of strategies for connecting their learning to student learning (pp.1-2).

These practices bear strong resemblance to Wenger's (1998). However, Lieberman and Miller's (2011) practices better connect actions to their respective beneficial circumstances. This is important because the goal and relevance of each group

norm should be clear. By combining these lists of characteristics and practices, a CoP can create a set of group norms that are built to create trust and collegial critique in a sustainable environment.

Access to time is a critical factor for any CoP (Lieberman and Miller, 2011). Time is both a necessity to address points of communication failure as well as to create the norms of successful communication. Conflicts that inevitably occur in social relationships require time to process (Grossman et al., 2001). A lack of time has also been identified as one of the key barriers to effective CoP practices (Supovitz, 2002). Most studies reviewed for this paper make at least one finding on the impact of time, particularly in terms of the structure of time within the school day or compensated time outside school hours (Little 2002a; Supovitz 2002). Less formal and dedicated allocation of time leads to less consistency and predictability of outcomes.

Clearly articulated shared values and norms are the next essential components to a successful CoP (Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Newman et al., 1996). One essential norm for breaking down barriers between teachers and enabling them to share and receive critiques of their practice is deprivatization (Grossman et al., 2001; Newman et al., 1966; Picower, 2011). Supovitz (2002), whose case study addressed CoPs that focus on improving teacher practice to improve student outcomes, concluded that for instructional CoPs to develop, “groups need to develop a culture of instructional practice, one that encourages them to continuously and safely identify, explore, and assess instructional strategies that show promise of success with their students” (p.1618).

After reaching a point of trust and deprivatization, the group dynamics must then be maintained. The act of respectfully navigating points of tension is, in itself, a promising practice (Grossman et al., 2001). Grossman et al. (2001) studied a single CoP of 22 English and History teachers with the goal of improving instructional practice through literature discussions over a 22-month period. They discovered that CoPs struggle through phases of tension, (which the authors termed *fault lines*), when practitioners reached a point of pressure, where change must occur for the group to continue.

As participants hear challenging feedback or negotiate meaning among contrasting viewpoints, they must navigate that point of tension. Individual biases can become more apparent, perspectives can broaden, and new perspectives can be revealed. By creating an opportunity for participants to be the *other* and provide an alternative perspective, points of tension challenge participants' invisible biases. They can compare future circumstances from yet another viewpoint, for example: what would Bob think of this? (Grossman et al., 2001; Picower, 2011).

Fault line negotiation can sharpen viewpoints as well. If participants have never been challenged about their opinion on a given issue, articulating their perspective can clarify their own thinking (Grossman et al., 2001). The opportunity to fully represent one's perspective without interruption, be listened to, and asked clarifying questions, is a validating and empowering experience (Picower, 2011). By participating in the roles of listener, speaker, and presenter, each member of the group is given opportunities to build

confidence, active listening skills, and key leadership qualities through navigating challenges to their original perspective (Grossman et al., 2001; Picower, 2011; Vescio et al., 2008).

Finally, after navigating time, trust, values, norms, and other needs of the participants, the CoP must return to “a clear and consistent focus on student learning” (Lieberman & Miller, 2011, p.182; Newman et al., 1996). As the Supovitz (2002) case study demonstrated, maintaining a strong CoP structure from the top down to the school level does not ensure focus on the purpose of CoP to improve student outcomes. The goal of improving student achievement must be built into the fabric of the CoP (Lieberman & Miller, 2011).

Comparing the benefits of CoPs vs. singular PD opportunities. CoPs have been consistently identified as advantageous for long-term instructional improvements over single session workshops or conferences (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Lieberman & Miller, 2011). Three differentiating qualities that separate PD opportunities from communities of practice are content, consistency of implementation, and time. PD opportunities, often implemented singularly or in episodic arcs, are better suited for the fast dissemination of information to large groups, training on bureaucratic tasks, or immediate issues of implementation such as a school-wide use of a new writing rubric (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Grossman et al., 2001). Alternatively, communities of practice are designed to provide time to grapple with participant identified issues and content, and to create implementation strategies designed by the practitioners who will implement

them (Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012; DuFour, 2004; Grossman et al., 2001; Levine & Marcus, 2010).

During their analysis of their two-year qualitative study of teacher PD, Levine and Marcus (2007) raised the important issue of teacher autonomy. The authors conducted over 120 hours of classroom observations and interviews to compare two teacher groups exposed to different professional development structures. Some of their findings include that singular professional development opportunities are often prescriptive and bureaucratic, designed to transfer knowledge to teachers as passive vessels to be filled (Levine & Marcus, 2007). This is akin to a banking model of pedagogy in the classroom (Freire, 2000). The response from teachers was often resentful due to the perceived lack of relevant and authentic support. This led to a lack of consistency of implementation (Levine & Marcus, 2007).

For these reasons, single or episodic PD opportunities are not suited for difficult or sensitive topics such as race relations or social justice pedagogy (Levine & Marcus, 2007). Singular or episodic PD opportunities lack depth, context-specific implementation strategies, and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues who are attempting the same reform (Levine & Marcus, 2007; Picower, 2011). Such topics require more time and content autonomy to promote honest, yet difficult conversations (Picower, 2011).

Alternatively, when teachers were active designers of their professional development opportunities, they responded with less resistance and an increased likelihood of fidelity of implementation (Levine & Marcus, 2007). Wenger (1998)

addressed the issue of teacher autonomy and proposed that “communities of practice enable practitioners to take collective responsibility for managing the knowledge they need, recognizing that, given the proper structure, they are in the best position to do this” (p.3). Teachers are the roots of institutional knowledge and hold power over whether a reform initiative is genuinely implemented or ignored (Levine & Marcus, 2007; Wenger, 1998). Education reforms, administrators, and students come and go while the base of a teaching population remains. Teachers hold the power to outlast most initiatives without ever changing their instructional practice (Elmore, 2004; Grossman et al., 2001). Therefore, the consistency of any implementation initiative is dependent on the buy in of the teachers (Elmore, 2004). Levine and Marcus (2007) proposed that schools offer multiple trajectories for professional development due to shifting personal, situational, and philosophical differences among participants. Therefore, communities of practice could be implemented as one possible trajectory among other initiatives as well.

Again, adequate time allows teachers to reach the necessary depth of relationships to foster relevant conversations, and to address underlying causal factors while avoiding surface level generalization. As noted, time has been identified as a necessary component for teachers to grapple with, among the practical issues that arise during implementation. Committed time is key to promoting honesty, working through tensions, creating an iterative learning process, and tracking instructional change from implementation to student results.

Many of the PD opportunities for teachers are based on in-depth training during the summer, necessarily limiting the pool of participants to volunteers who are often not the people most in need of training (Grossman et al., 2001). Instead, communities of practice meet over time rather than in one period of condensed time. Thus, they have the added advantage of a greater number of staff members able to participate due to fiscal and geographic feasibility, particularly relative to summer trainings.

Common pitfalls of CoPs. There is a danger in over romanticizing communities of practices (Smith, 2003). Any education reform effort is implemented by fallible people. Therefore, it is prudent to consider common pitfalls that have been identified by empirical research. Although there is a gap in the literature around the sustainability of professional communities, Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, and Stein's (2012) study does provide some initial insights into the factors that affect the long-term viability of CoPs. Specifically, this section is organized around pitfalls that (1) occur during implementation; (2) relate to group development; and (3) raise issues of privacy.

Implementing a CoP effectively. Implementation of any education reform is fraught with opportunities for disastrous outcomes, beginning with introducing the idea to the teachers. Any teacher who has taught for more than a few years has been involved in at least one education reform effort. Some teachers may have experienced more reform efforts than their number of years in education (Elmore, 2004). Therefore, any reform effort starts with an uphill battle for the motivation of the teachers (Little, 2002b). The trajectory of any reform implementation is heavily influenced by unpredictable

circumstances, such as the interactions between teachers, their students, the curriculum and other external factors, such as district and state mandates and additional, intervening reform movements (Levine & Marcus, 2007; Supovitz, 2002). Through a three-year longitudinal study of how teacher social networks affect the sustainability of a reform initiative in math, Coburn et al. (2012) discovered teacher social capital could have a serious impact on implementation initiatives. Therefore, the literature does not direct practitioners towards a standardized set of implementation practices but rather identifies aspects of implementation that should be considered with intention and focus before beginning a reform effort.

The first step of implementation is deciding on the structure of the group and whether to make the group voluntary or mandatory. Research has shown that mandatory membership and forced attendance detracts from group dynamics, and can lead to outright failure (Grossman et al., 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Little, 2002b). Conflict is also likely if the members of the group have already worked together and formed inflexible opinions of each other, necessitating spending precious time on mitigating personal assumptions from past frictions (Grossman et al., 2001). A factor that can alleviate this concern is time. With ongoing time for dialogue, participants become conditioned to expand their views and accept others in the group without judgment (Bohm, 1996). There may also be a pre-determined sense of membership among some participants to the exclusion of others. Early vigilance in building groups with enough diversity of perspective can avoid group dynamics where one opinion is reinforced and

dominates over others (Grossman et al., 2001; Little, 2002a).

CoP pitfalls related to group development. Once groups have been established, their participants are likely to go through certain pitfalls on the way to a productive community of practice. One such pitfall is the creation of what Grossman et al. (2001) has termed *pseudocommunity*. A *pseudocommunity* revolves around the guidance principle of remaining agreeable to avoid conflict. In contrast to a CoP, a *pseudocommunity* could be defined as just individuals in a group communicating individually (Grossman et al., 2001). Related to *pseudocommunity*, group members may participate in “*normalizing* responses” (Horn & Little, 2010, p. 192) such as congeniality over collegiality. Those kinds of responses block out social justice topics because those topics tend to arouse opposing viewpoints or personal tensions. Normalizing is accomplished when participants speak with vague generalities to gloss over topics without challenging anyone’s assumptions (Little, 2002a; Wenger, 1998). Participants who recognize and object to these normalizing responses may disengage from the interaction.

Moreover, social fragmentation among group members can also cause friction (Coburn et al., 2012). If the group members are not at least professional in their social interactions, the group can degrade into hostility (Coburn et al., 2012). Therefore, the initial decisions of who to place in each group should be informed by both the academic and social aspects of participant relationships (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, n.d.).

Two non-verbal pitfalls can further sabotage a community of practice. Silence as

a means of conflict avoidance and demeaning non-verbal communication towards others or towards their ideas can increase tension and lead to disengagement. Silence allows offensive comments to remain unchecked and unexamined. Silence can also allow for misunderstanding if a participant chooses to remain silent rather than asking for clarification (Grossman et al., 2001). To address this form of conflict avoidance, the facilitator can directly ask for clarification or require participants to have a signal for when they want further clarification. However, the best option is encouraging participants to directly address points of conflict when they happen. Non-verbal cues, such as eye rolling, can create a hostile environment and, if left unaddressed, can undermine the community (Grossman et al., 2001). Negative non-verbal cues can convey anything from mild disagreement to outright hostility, and must be addressed by the group or risk the emotional safety of all members.

CoP groups can be extremely effective at transferring knowledge. However, it is worth considering what type of knowledge is being transferred. Smith (2003) warned that a CoP could be equally effective at transferring antiquated or unethical practices. CoP is the method for knowledge transfer; the participants are in control of the content and the ethics that are acceptable to the group. Reinforcing organizational memory and passing on entrenched organizational ideas could be as detrimental as beneficial. If voices in the group feel silenced or choose to remain silent, there may be a missing ethical perspective that needs to be voiced. The individual personalities that constitute the group can have a profound impact on group dynamics in terms of exposing inequity,

discrimination, or disproportionate power dynamics. Some individuals will have a heightened awareness of such issues, while others may remain unaware of such issues without guidance (DeTurk, 2006; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, n.d.; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Participants can mitigate this pitfall by remaining vigilant listeners willing to expose discriminatory ideas (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, n.d.). Participants may provide feedback and critically analyze why the event occurred and how to make sure all perspectives are heard in the space (Levine & Marcus, 2007).

Privacy within a CoP. Privacy is a pitfall. Teachers are under constant attack and scrutiny by students and parents, the public, administrators, and even other educators. The current cultural attack on educators has left teachers defensive and private about their practices (Ballock, 2007; Kersey, 2014). Teachers' identities are often fused to the construct of being the knowledgeable person in the room. There is tremendous identity risk in making practice public (Grossman et al., 2001). Levine and Marcus (2007) added that asking for help is particularly difficult among teachers, due to both cultural norms and isolation. Dialogue creates a venue to offer suggestions without fear of impinging on a colleague's private practice. To reduce the use of privacy concerns as a barrier to improvement, trust is required. Trust mitigates guilt, blame, and embarrassment (DeTurk, 2006; Little, 2002a). Strong facilitation and the efforts to work through conflict as it arises can begin to build this form of trust. However, there is no prescriptive formula for such personal acts of courage (Levine & Marcus, 2007). For example, if a teacher discourages colleague observations in the name of privacy, that teacher may also be

struggling with classroom management in total isolation.

Issues of sustainability for CoPs. Sustainability is defined as “teachers’ continued use of reform-related instructional practices in high-quality ways after resources and support for such practices have been withdrawn” (Little, 2002a, p.934). Little (2002a) conducted a two-year comparative case study of two schools’ reform efforts. Both schools wanted to address the achievement gap and included CoPs. The difference was that each school took a different approach to school wide reform. Although there is very little formal research on the topic of sustainability of communities of practice, Little (2002a) had some emerging findings. Primarily, sustainability of an educational reform is reliant on remaining relevant and logistically feasible for the practitioners (Little, 2002a). Relevance can come in many forms including the perpetuation of a reform effort through like-minded practitioners creating a critical mass that can create momentum to drive longer term school-wide change (Coburn et al., 2012; Little, 2002a). Professional development that is directly linked to classroom practice and student outcomes is also more likely to maintain relevance for the teachers (Little, 2002a).

Another significant factor in sustainability is hiring practices. The perpetuation of staff members capable and willing to participate in the reform efforts is as important as the content of the reform itself because the practitioners are at the front lines of implementation (Coburn et al., 2012; Little, 2002a). More specifically, teachers with strong social relations, high levels of expertise in their field, and the ability to participate

in reforms with a depth of understanding and a level of flexibility become the key participants to sustaining reforms (Coburn et al., 2012). During the 3-year longitudinal study of four schools, Coburn et al. (2012) specifically studied teacher social networks and how the teachers were able to sustain the reform initiatives. Strong social relations were an important factor among educators to support each other when the demands of navigating the reform become difficult (Coburn et al., 2012). The problem continues to be that most reform efforts do not have sufficient systems for measuring teacher social relations which is difficult to research and difficult to gauge during implementation (Coburn et al., 2012).

With both relevance and hiring practices in mind, Coburn et al. (2012) suggested that “tie strength, access to expertise, and depth of interaction” affect sustainability (p.142). Tie strength refers to the strength of social interactions among teachers including their frequency of interaction. Level of expertise refers to teacher competency and the resources provided by the institution, which can be physical, monetary, or the ability to access people, power, or information. The depth of interaction refers to privacy concerns and the risks participants are willing to take in conversations about their practice. Depth of interaction is where communities of practice have the greatest possibility of affecting results. Whether participants are able to meet with dedicated time and intention or merely cross paths with quick practical exchanges, depth affects the likelihood of their improving educational outcomes (Coburn et al. 2012). Depth can affect information and

resource sharing as well as the ability to problem-solve issues as they arise (Coburn et al., 2012).

Two major pitfalls to sustainability are compounding reform initiatives and teacher burnout (Coburn et al., 2012; Little, 2002a). School reorganization, state mandates, and district initiatives are just a few examples of reform efforts that can be experienced by teachers simultaneously on a regular basis. Supovitz (2002) provided an example of the adverse impact on dialogue groups within a school-wide CoP due to multiple external reforms and crises over the four-year period of the study. Time, which has already been established as a fundamental requirement to communities of practice, becomes divided among reform efforts and the power of any one initiative is diluted regardless of initial implementation (Coburn et al., 2012; Elmore, 2004). High capacity teachers with strong social relations are often targeted for multiple reform initiatives which leads to burn-out and heavy reliance on individuals to maintain initiatives (Little, 2002b).

Critical Friends Groups

As the number and variety of communities of practice among educators grows, it is important to differentiate between quality programs that have documented success, and sub-par attempts to form such communities with little to no initial training (Kersey, 2014). One of the most powerful aspects of the CFG protocol is that it does not assume that adults know how to collaborate with each other (Kelley, 2012). The CFG protocol teaches and facilitates collaboration by closely structuring participants' roles, their use of

time, and the type of content they address at different points in the interaction (Curry, 2008; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014). Mature CFG groups can break from the exact protocol structure once trust and collaborative norms have been established (Dunne & Honts, 1998; Little, 2002a).

Critical Friends Groups as CoP. It is the argument of this study that the CFG structure can enhance the capacity of a community of practice because the CFG protocols facilitate teacher praxis toward a goal set by the community of practice. CFGs and communities of practice both begin with creating dialogue among a group of participants. Both foster interpersonal communication and reflection among members. Both require teachers to move from their comfort zone of intrapersonal reflection and isolation, and to deprivatize their thinking among a peer group.

During their three-year case study of a district with eight participating schools, Burke, Marx, and Berry (2010) discovered many examples of CFG leaders grappling with how to help participants recognize and affect their theories in use. Burke et al. (2010) completed a large-scale qualitative study of the principals and CFG facilitators, and how the use of CFGs disrupted or maintained current instructional practice among participants.

Burke et al. (2010) concluded that, in order for a CFG group to facilitate teacher praxis, there must be a connection between reflection and action. This can also be described as the bridge between *espoused theory* and *theory in use* (Burke et al., 2010). *Espoused theories* are the initial reasons that a participant may give for their actions

(Burke et al., 2010). These ideas are affected by the reasons left invisible to the participant by way of internalized bias or unrecognized assumptions. *Theories in use* are the actual drivers of a participant's decisions based on some combination of espoused theories and hidden drivers (Burke et al., 2010).

A second aspect of the CFG protocols that could augment a community of practice is structured reflection. In an atmosphere of trust, participants can reflect on where their actions do not match their espoused theory of practice and their theory in-use may become apparent (Burke et al., 2010; Penlington, 2008). Aspects of the CFG protocols that espouse these kinds of reflection sessions include answering probing questions about a dilemma of practice, listening to others reflect on the dilemma, and allowing oneself to be vulnerable to critique and suggestions (Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014; NSRF, 2012). To create an atmosphere where these structures function with authentic dialogue on the part of the participants, there must be a high level of trust established.

Building trust requires both time and deliberate attention to creating group norms (Grossman et al., 2001; Kersey, 2014). "Trust does not emerge accidentally; it must be cultivated," and the CFG structure provides guidelines for how to cultivate trust for those who have never experienced such a community (Kersey, 2014, p.224). Williams (2012) added that the CFG promotion of collective problem solving and information sharing adds to the level of trust among participants. Therefore, trust is not established on the first day while setting group norms. It is created and re-negotiated over time through the act of

participation (Grossman et al., 2001; Kersey, 2014; Key, 2006; Williams, 2012).

William's (2012) survey data on the effect of CFGs does not include statistical data with enough clear causality to support that CFGs are more effective than the traditional episodic model of professional development at the school site. Although this could appear to undermine the validity of the CFG model, instead the data can be interpreted as an example of how time and trust affect outcomes. On a five-point Likert scale, the participants gave the program an average score of 2.22 on the pre-test and 2.63 on the post test (Williams, 2012, p. 101). The lack of time to collaborate and dialogue can be interpreted as affecting trust which was recorded as 2.75 in the pretest and only 3.04 by the end of the CFG (Williams, 2012, p. 101). This study is a reminder of the importance of assessing future research for the degree to which CFG necessities are addressed or not.

Research outcomes of CFGs. Across the empirical research, several common themes emerged as outcomes of using CFG protocols: teachers felt a greater sense of instructional capacity; participants reported effective group collaboration under certain conditions; and student improvement has not been thoroughly studied (Burke et al., 2010; Dunne et al., 2000; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014; Nave, 2000). One contributing factor cited in all of these outcomes is the ability to work with colleagues in a safe and structured environment (Burke et al., 2010; Dunne et al, 2000; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014; Nave, 2000).

In terms of instructional capacity, some participants identified the CFG reform

initiative as one of the most powerful professional development activities in which they had ever participated (Dunne & Honts, 1998). The reasons cited for such dramatic affirmations include: the support and morale built by the group members; a safe *oasis* in which to be vulnerable about their instructional practice; and the increased collaboration among participants (Dunne & Honts, 1998; Dunne, Nave, & Lewis, 2000). In a climate survey conducted by Dunne et al. (2000), participants also specified that they were more likely to collaborate with other participants than teachers outside the CFG structure. This included sharing of ideas, developing curriculum, discussing challenges and seeking advice (Dunne et al., 2000). The reported sense of greater instructional capacity among participants was stronger among participants that reported a high degree of relevance in the CFG. CFG groups that did not maintain a continued sense of relevance dissolved over time (Burke et al., 2010; Curry, 2008). Implementation and topic management during CFG sessions were cited as contributing factors to the degree of relevance (Armstrong & Hyslop-Margison, 2006; Burke et al., 2010; Kersey, 2014; Key, 2006).

A well-articulated and continuous focus, such as student learning, was a significant motivator among the participants (Burke et al., 2010; Curry, 2008; Grossman et al., 2001). However, to maintain this focus led to a disassociation of the CFG from other district wide initiatives because spreading the structure of the protocols across too many reform initiatives diluted the relevance overall (Burke et al., 2010; Curry, 2008; Key, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial that administrators and participant teachers determine the focus and goals of the CFG work in advance and stick to one focus for a sustained

period of time. Administrative changes or changes in focus topics for the group can cause irreparable harm (Dunne & Honts, 1998).

It is important to acknowledge that all current research on CFG groups has focused on the teacher outcomes and not on student data (Kersey, 2012; Key, 2006; Williams, 2012). Broad scale student data collection will continue to be difficult for several years in the future due to the nation-wide transition to Common Core testing. Common Core contains many contributing factors of its own. Another limitation of the current CFG research is the longevity of the studies, as no one has studied the CFG structure past three years (Burke et al., 2010; Dunne et al, 2000; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014; Key, 2006; Nave, 2000).

How CFG barriers can be alleviated within teacher induction. Weaving a CFG initiative into a new teacher induction structure can alleviate several barriers identified in the existing research about CFGs. Alleviating resistance to deprivitization falls within the responsibility of both the CFG group as a whole and the CFG facilitator. Although isolation and private practice are the norms in education, a facilitator can draw attention to the group's behavior and to choices that are leading the group towards deprivitization or away from it. A well-trained facilitator can have a large impact on the direction and climate of the CFG (Dunne & Honts 1998; Kersey, 2014). Another factor that affects deprivitization is the topic focus of the group. Immature CFG groups may choose to focus on school wide issues or general topics in education rather than looking inward to examine personal instructional choices. This tendency can be re-focused based

on group norms or strong facilitation (Burke et al., 2010). The art of facilitation takes time, training, practice, and feedback.

To use CFGs across an entire district to facilitate a new teacher induction program, the induction program needs to train a significant number of mentors to be facilitators. The advantage of this is a natural support system for the facilitators. The larger the number of trained and qualified facilitators present in the area, the greater the social capital, and likelihood that the facilitators can help each other address issues of deprivitization among others that arise (Kersey, 2014).

Another serious factor that can affect deprivitization is the level of trust among participants. Using a voluntary participation structure alleviates much of the conflict that can arise if there is a reluctant group member or a saboteur because any member affecting the trust and working dynamic of the group can be asked to leave (Ballock, 2007; Burke et al. 2010; Grossman et al., 2001). A session may need to be halted to avoid a violation of trust; any such action requires a strong facilitator with training to recognize where conflict may arise and how to address it (Kersey, 2014). Trust cannot be built all in the early rounds of community building. It must be an ongoing development over the course of the group meetings (Ballock, 2007).

The second barrier to effective CFGs is the topic focus being too tightly controlled by other school initiatives. By bringing the CFG initiative under the umbrella of induction it is no longer beholden to any site based school initiative. It can reside under the protection of new teacher induction without being co-opted into being used for

alternative purposes. This is also true for the structure of leadership for the program. Generally, one or two directors of a new teacher induction program administer the program for an entire district. Therefore, induction programs typically demonstrate a consistency of message and purpose across a wide variety of schools. Furthermore, the consistent turnover of school site administrators does not have to impact the viability of the induction program. This includes professional development hours because induction professional development is typically entirely autonomous from the broader school district professional development program requirements.

The third barrier to effective CFGs identified is too much time spent on the initial trust building activities (Burke et al., 2010). Induction programs draw their strength from the incoming cohort of novice teachers who bring with them innovative ideas and contemporary training from preliminary credentialing programs. The CFG structure is designed to help teachers unlearn bias and ineffective practices while acquiring alternative knowledge and skills to inform instructional practice (Burke et al., 2010). By pairing innovative ideas with strong management practices from the mentors, an induction based CFG can create a space for both the novice teachers and mentors to provide equally valid feedback for how to improve instructional praxis (Freire, 2000). The advantage of infusing the CFG group into the induction structure is that trust has already been established between the participating teacher and their mentor, which means there is at least one advocate for each participating teacher within the CFG group.

Although no one should speak for other participants, having an ally in the space may reduce fear and increase individual trust to deprivatize their practice.

The fourth barrier is a lack of research that establishes a causal relationship between CFGs and student outcomes. The use of student data that is an integral part of induction helps to guide novice teacher praxis. Looking at student data and developing metrics for how to assess whether student achievement has been affected by the novice teachers' instructional choices, can lead to shifts in teacher praxis. The feedback loop of student data that is built into the induction structure can help to guide the CFG group back to the initial goal of improving student achievement. Due to the limited timing of this study, student data was not recorded for this study's outcomes.

Current new teacher induction programs are frequently structured around teacher portfolios with evidence of student work to provide evidence of change over time. Using the induction portfolio structure to provide evidence and guide reflection about participation in a CFG could potentially focus the CFG work on the part of the participating teachers. The California induction program is based on a cycle of inquiry model, which has also been identified as a strong guiding structure for CFG portfolios, to help teachers monitor their instructional growth and improvement over time (Ballock, 2007; Nave, 2000).

Suggested facilitators for implementing a CFG for this research study. To successfully implant a CFG initiative into the current one-on-one new teacher induction structure of the Springfield district, I searched the literature for common suggestions and

perspectives to help build a quality research study. Ballock (2007) used a qualitative case study methodology as an exploratory study to compare a mature CFG group to two other struggling CFG groups over the course of one school year. The mature CFG group developed group norms and renegotiated them as necessary to continue an atmosphere of collegial trust and honest feedback (Ballock, 2007). This group also held firmly to their goals of improving student achievement, taking action based on concrete ideas, and monitoring their progress over time (Ballock, 2007). The idea of monitoring progress also requires negotiation because every change initiative is different. However, it is worthy to note that progress monitoring provides opportunities to share successes and failures together in a supportive space. This group also took on a sense of shared ownership because they created time for each group member to discuss the functioning of the group and share their perceptions of the group's development (Ballock, 2007).

Dunne and Honts's (1998) study was one of the larger CFG initiatives researched. They identified common stages of development among CFG groups. This helped me to anticipate participant needs and actions over the course of the study. The first stage Dunne and Honts (1998) identified was what they described as an *oasis* period, where participants enjoyed uninterrupted time among colleagues. The exact content of the meetings varied. The second stage of group development was when the participants began to use their time to strengthen their instructional practice. This is when participants deprivatized their practice and began to share specific classroom strategies (Dunne & Honts, 1998). The third stage was similar to the development of abstract

thought. Participants began to look at questions of education as a whole and how their own practice was affected by the broader context of education (Dunne & Honts, 1998). Dunne and Honts (1998) proposed that by the point the CFG group was in the third stage, participants were able to apply their shifts in perspective to their instructional practice, if their choices were self-directed, relevant, and tightly linked to meaningful outcomes (Dunne & Honts, 1998). Teachers need to shift their perspective from being the keepers of information to being continual learners (Dunne & Honts, 1998).

One aspect of teacher continual learning is the process of learning to affect instructional practice as an instructional leader. One possible pathway for leadership is through facilitation. By studying a weeklong facilitator training session, Kersey (2014) researched the methods that the NSRF program uses to prepare facilitators for the circumstances that will arise in a CFG. The novice facilitators learned how difficult ambiguity and discomfort could be (Kersey, 2014). They also struggled with making their assumptions transparent and avoiding judgment or conflict (Kersey, 2014). These experiences set the facilitator developmentally ahead of the participants and can lead to stronger facilitation by way of anticipation.

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to guide the participants to use the protocol structure to recognize their assumptions, personal and behavioral expectations, and habits (Kersey, 2014). By experiencing the protocols as struggling participants, facilitators were able to anticipate pitfalls and discuss strategies for integrating the CFG protocols into their unique contexts (Kersey, 2014). For example, the master facilitator walked the

novice facilitators through strategies, such as round robin speaking, where everyone speaks in turn, for all voices to be heard (Kersey, 2014). The theory of the CFG program was that once participants could recognize their theories in use, they could plan for practical actions toward their goals (Kersey, 2014).

A strong facilitator can guide the group out of generality and towards more relevant and productive conversation. Kersey's (2014) deep description of the level of development that took place during the training sessions informs my methodology to not allow untrained participants to facilitate the protocols if possible. For future implementation of a CFG initiative, Kersey (2014) made it very clear that district leaders must invest in proper training of the facilitators if the initiative is to succeed.

Conclusion

This literature review has outlined many of the complexities and possibilities of using the Critical Friends Group dialogue protocol as a method of influencing teacher praxis within an induction program. A significant amount of induction research has documented advantages and disadvantages to a one-on-one mentorship model. Some of the limitations that have been found include: a continued sense of isolation among novice teachers; undertrained mentors or inappropriate pairings of mentors; and a lack of explicit training to promote equity. Other findings include that without proper facilitation and opportunities for situated learning, teachers will fall back on tacit understandings of instructional practice and their own experiences as students. This instructional regression can render any earlier training in social justice or successful instructional practices

impotent. This study seeks to research how incorporating a group dialogue model into the induction process can augment and improve current attempts to facilitate teacher praxis and mitigate instructional practices based on tacit understandings.

The empirical dialogue studies presented substantiate dialogue theory in terms of how people relate to each other during a dialogue session. The actions of participants reflect theoretically anticipated outcomes such as in-depth reflections that draw out personal bias and broaden personal perspectives. The empirical studies also illuminate the necessary conditions for a successful dialogue group including a need for ground rules, such as the suspension of assumptions and a need for roles such as a facilitator. The results of participation in dialogue groups included greater participant awareness of their self-reflective capabilities and understanding of what drives their actions. This includes the creation of a space where colleagues can be allies in building cultural competence and personal confidence through the de-escalation of contentious issues into a productive sharing of ideas.

The limitation of these studies is a lack of description of the aftermath of participation in the dialogue groups. The self-reported shifts in perspective across the participants in all these studies are not followed up on with detailed evidence of how the participants implemented their intended actions into practice, or how those changes affected students' outcomes. There are no long-term longitudinal studies about whether participants' praxis was maintained over time. Therefore, the research supports how

dialogue can initiate the personal efficacy necessary to begin praxis, but the outcomes of praxis after a dialogue study have yet to be sufficiently documented.

In an effort to understand how to incorporate a group dialogue model into the current induction system, this study reviewed communities of practice as an example of a widely adopted teacher professional development structure that facilitates group collaboration. This review also sought to discover the facilitators and barriers to using the community of practice as a means for impacting teacher praxis.

The empirical studies on CoP groups in this literature review add practical significance to the groundwork laid out in the dialogue section. The deep descriptions highlight factors that affect teacher efficacy through learning as a social act. These insights help to clarify the variables that affect dialogue as a means of praxis within the context of education. The studies presented describe clear facilitators and barriers to implementing and sustaining successful teacher collaboration in a community of practice. For example, time is defined as a facilitator of the necessary depth that can foster relevant discussions and avoid surface level generalizations. Time is also defined as a barrier to success if teachers are not given a sufficient amount to grapple with inevitable friction points within the group.

The empirical research studies reviewed here also describe issues of sustainability such as maintaining relevance for the practitioners. The practices identified to foster sustainability are also identified to be factors that set apart CoPs from episodic and detached professional development opportunities. These factors inform the design of this

research study about possible pitfalls and promising practices for implementing a dialogue based CoP within the current structure of induction. Primarily, the sustainability of this research study as a possible educational reform is reliant on remaining relevant and logistically feasible for the practitioners. Although the research on CoPs found many positive outcomes, one significant barrier remained across all of the studies. Teachers do not automatically understand how to effectively collaborate in a group setting. This study will research whether the use of a structured protocol such as Critical Friends Groups can improve the outcomes of teacher collaboration through dialogue.

Therefore, this study seeks to discover whether infusing a dialogue protocol into the current induction structure can improve novice teachers' ability to dialogue about issues of equity that arise in their classroom. The second purpose of the study is to research whether these dialogue sessions lead to actual shifts in the novice teachers' instructional practice.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The research design and methodology for this qualitative study are presented in this chapter in two main sections: 1) an overview of the design and the research questions; and 2) the methodology section which describes participation and sampling, instrumentation (interview protocols), data collection, and data analysis.

The extant research on induction mostly focuses on new teacher retention and assessing current aspects of induction (Ingersol & Strong, 2011). There are no current studies that incorporate dialogue groups or communities of practice into the California induction structure. There is a wealth of articles about communities of practice or professional learning communities, but they do not directly address the specific needs of novice teachers or focus on areas with shifting demographics. The majority of documentation on CFGs is in trade journal articles, dissertations, and the original research funded by the Annenberg Foundation to implement a broad scale CFG reform initiative (Dunne & Honts, 1998). This case study provides a model to explore the viability of a Critical Friends Group (CFG) dialogue protocol within an induction program. The study also may help to inform education leaders about the particular needs of novice teachers in a suburban district with shifting demographic diversity.

Study Design

This qualitative study explored the experiences of participating novice teachers using a case study design. The design incorporated data obtained from novice teachers and their mentors, herein referred to as participants. The data included pre- and post-

interviews (also referred to as exit interviews) with the novice teachers, their written journals, audio-recorded dialogue and focus group sessions, novice teachers' interpretations of the student data they collected, and researcher data memos. The qualitative data was used to study novice teachers' struggles and attempts at addressing equity in their classrooms. The novice teachers described both their barriers and facilitators to implementing equitable instructional practices.

Each of the participants took part in seven dialogue sessions and one focus group. The focus group was designed to elicit feedback from all participants, at the end of the study, about the viability of the CFG structure and elicit their recommendations for how to strengthen and expand the model for districtwide implementation. Because induction programs are required for teachers to earn their clear teaching credential, it would be imprudent to implement dialogue groups into induction programs without initial testing.

During the exit interviews, the novice teachers interpreted their summative student data after their shift in instructional practice. The format of self-attribution was an essential component to the conceptual framework of the study because the origin of instructional decisions was not able to be observed directly. Given the wide variety of external and internal factors that affect teachers' instructional decisions, each participant was the only person capable of distilling the effects of the dialogue group from the other contributing factors that affect his or her practice. The in-depth interviews allowed the researcher to obtain descriptions from the participants about exactly what aspects of the dialogue protocol affected their instructional practice. Thus, the study provided a rich

description of the impact of the CFG dialogue protocol on novice teachers' instructional attempts to address equity in their classroom.

Rationale for the Research Design

The scope of this study is intentionally narrow and not designed for generalizable outcomes. Instead, this study sought to identify novice teachers' multiple, subjective realities, specifically the facilitators and barriers to increasing their capacity to address equity in their classrooms. Qualitative research was used because it is helpful for describing the nuances, contextual elements, and complications inherent in the dialogue sessions and the novice teachers' process of implementing participants' suggestions (Miles & Huberman, 2010).

The use of a grounded theory approach in this study allowed themes to emerge from the data collected (Miles & Huberman, 2010). Specifically, this study explored the successes and significant barriers to the implementation and sustainability of the dialogue protocol's design within the California induction structure. Key themes from analyzing this data have the potential to be of use to future induction specialists, participants, and district policy makers. Additionally, positive and negative outcome data were equally useful for informing future research and future attempts at implementation.

Participation and Sampling

The study consisted of a purposeful sample of five novice teachers within their second year of induction and four of the five district selected mentors. Purposeful sampling was used because the use of a random sample was not appropriate, desirable, or

feasible from a methodological or practical perspective. In this study, voluntary participation by both the novice teachers and their mentors was essential to create the trust necessary for teachers to deprivatize their practice. The rationale for allowing participating novice teachers to select their form of student evidence was based on the current induction program requirements necessary to allow participating novice teachers to earn their clear credential (CCTC, 2015b).

In the initial design of the study, the novice teachers were to be videotaped while implementing their chosen instructional practice. This aspect of the study could not be completed because the novice teachers did not consent to being videotaped. Their choice was not due to an aversion to recording their practice. Instead, it was due to the structure of the induction program. The novice teachers were required to collect student data that provided evidence of a shift in their instructional practice. Their chosen pieces of evidence did not lend themselves to videotaping. One novice teacher adapted his curriculum by differentiating the level of questions on his worksheets. Another teacher adapted her in-class essay questions and created more scaffolding about the prompt. One of the teachers actually eliminated the primary source that was giving his students trouble. None of these actions are properly captured in video format. The student evidence was based on student outcomes of various assessments, from which there was no one class session to properly capture the shift in instructional practice. Instead, the teachers collected student outcomes data from the assessments and student surveys. Therefore, the study focused on the novice teachers' descriptions of the shift in

summative student outcomes they identified through the evidence they collected for the induction program.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, I am both a mentor participant and the primary research instrument for collecting and analyzing data. I have seven years of experience as a mentor within Springfield's induction system, which gives me an insider's perspective as well as credibility among my colleagues. I am also a credible researcher because my doctoral coursework in educational leadership includes training in transformational leadership, communication, research methodology and institutional change. The courses were explicitly designed to help me research and address the opportunity gap and equity issues in educational settings.

During summer 2015, I completed the National School Reform Faculty's week long training specifically for dialogue facilitators. I have experience facilitating group discussions about issues of equity within my classroom among my students, and with the five novice teachers I have already mentored. In addition, I have facilitated such discussions with other staff members in informal settings (e.g., in my carpool, where I have participated in long-term, informal, daily peer discussions that often take up topics of equity and social justice at our school site). I was and continue to be a colleague to all of the participants, and I am deeply embedded in the context of this study. I have been a teacher at this high school for eleven years and a mentor for six years. During the time of the study, I was also the mentor of a novice teacher in this study.

As the primary research instrument for this study, I needed to be loyal to prioritizing my participants' subjective experiences (i.e., emic perspective) over my own interpretations, or some more *objectively verifiable* realities. Logging field notes after each pre-interview and dialogue session helped to draw out my own initial interpretive perspectives and biases. Including my personal biases in field notes helped me to avoid imposing those biases on the participants during my interactions with them, and as I worked to discern themes in the data.

Reviewing the transcriptions of the audio recordings of all pre- post/exit interviews, dialogue sessions, and the focus group soon after they occurred, kept the raw data at the forefront of my interpretations. Using the Nvivo software program, I conducted several iterative rounds of data analysis as the transcription proceeded, thereby maintaining an audit trail (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) that connected participants' talk and actions to emerging themes. Both contributed to the validity of my observations. In order to reduce any potential testing effect, I was as transparent about my own point of view as possible throughout the course of this study.

Finally, participants were able to member check the data to be sure they were represented accurately and to increase internal validity. This included an opportunity for the participants to read all chapters of the dissertation prior to the final submission to the supervisory committee for approval. Participants were also encouraged to search for their pseudonym to member check any direct reference to their views or actions, to confirm that their attributions in the interviews, journals, and dialogues were truthfully

represented. In addition, members of my doctoral program cohort read over my transcripts and my analysis in order to check the validity of my interpretations, serving as experts due to their training in equity theory and research.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do novice teachers in a suburban school district with shifting demographic diversity make sense of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequities?

RQ2: How does an equity-focused community of practice using a dialogue protocol affect novice teachers' praxis through their understanding of how to address issues of student equity in their instructional practice?

Context

The setting for this study is Appleton High School in the Springfield School District, California. This site was chosen because it is a large comprehensive high school in a suburban district with shifting racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity.

According to the U.S. Census (2000) and the U.S. Census ACS (2014), the district's annual median household income has risen by over \$2,000 in the last fifteen years.

Although there is no disaggregated data to evidence this point, it is nearly certain that this rise in income has not been evenly distributed across all socio-economic levels.

Appleton High School serves the population of students with the largest demographic shift in the district. Although statistics of the district would suggest that the number of Caucasian students has dropped as Asian students have entered the district

over the past 20 years, this is an incomplete description. The umbrella U.S. Census racial classification, *Asian*, as used in current U.S. Census statistical data and, consequently, California Department of Education and local district data, does not adequately describe the diversity of the student body of the district in which Appleton High School exists. The racial classification *Asian*, when disaggregated into ethnicities, language groups and socio-economic communities, includes everyone from first generation impoverished Chinese Hmong families to fourth generation wealthy Indian families, and numerous combinations of national origin and socioeconomic status in between. It is also important to recognize that Latinos may be from many ethnicities or language groups but are considered one demographic group. Therefore the diversity of the student body remains unsuccessfully represented by current demographic data.

Participant Selection

To gain access to the participants for the study, I mentioned my intent to run a dialogue group to augment the current one-on-one mentorship model of induction during informal interactions with my novice teacher colleagues. The novice teachers who teach entry-level classes all showed an immediate interest in the study and asked for more information. The next step was to provide them with an accurate and thorough description of the study and the informed consent documents for participation. I also answered individual questions and held a lunch meeting to describe in exact detail how the study was woven into the current induction program requirements, as previously

agreed upon by myself and the director of the district's induction program. The precise clarification of the design of the study helped to earn the trust of the participants.

The informed consent documentation, including the non-disclosure information, provided the basic description of the roles of participants and researcher. The NSRF protocol included steps to set group expectations, as well as expectations for personal conduct when interacting with other colleagues. During the initial meeting, the group established norms and expectations for professional conduct during the study. I also maintained consistent and brief email communication with participants, including reminders before each meeting to assure participant attendance. Any additional support a participant needed was addressed on a case-by-case basis.

The purposive sample for this study included five novice teachers and four of their district-assigned mentors. As *primary* participants, the novice teachers were the main focus of the study, completing all aspects of the study, including interviews, journaling, evidence collection of their practice, and participation in all the dialogue group sessions.

The mentors were *secondary* participants in this study. Their role was to improve the instructional practice of the novice teachers, but they were not the focus of the study. In fact, this study of the impact of a dialogue protocol on novice teachers' approaches to equity in the classroom was designed to supplement the mentor-mentee relationships, not to replace them. The mentors participated in the dialogue group sessions, and one focus group interview to gather data about their perspectives on the dialogue group design. For

the purpose of limiting this study to the instructional growth of the novice teacher participants, the study did not gather evidence of a shift in the mentors' instructional practice.

Description of Novice Teacher Participants

The novice teacher participants in the study had all taught for at least 1 year at Appleton High School. Four of the novice teachers had taught for at least one year previous to AHS including English in Korea, English in Michigan, Biology in Massachusetts, and various subjects in Stockton, California. The ethnicities of the novice teachers included two Chinese participants, two Caucasian participants, and one Vietnamese participant. All of the novice teachers were born in the United States and speak fluent English. They are all between the ages of 25-35. Three of the participants earned their credentials in California at National University, California State University East Bay, and San Jose State University, respectively. The other two participants earned their credentials at the University of Michigan and Teach For America Boston, respectively. They are all fully credentialed in the subject area that they teach at Appleton High School. They are all in the second year of the Springfield School District induction program to earn their clear credentials.

Statement of Ethical Considerations

This study posed the risks of participants' loss of privacy, and potential misunderstandings between participants. There was also a potential threat to the participants' professional relationships, and an emotional threat during the dialogue

sessions based on how the participants responded to each other. Participants who disagreed during a session may have experienced difficulty maintaining their professional relationship outside of the group sessions. However, no participants expressed concern for this threat during the course of the study.

Privacy was important for the participants because brave conversations require a level of vulnerability and honesty that should not be shared among non-participant colleagues. For example, privacy of the content of the conversations during the dialogue sessions was important for building trust and courage among participants to deprivatize their practice and become vulnerable to critique by colleagues. A violation of privacy could have undermined trust among the participants, and a statement taken out of context could misrepresent a participant with their colleagues. This could have long-term implications for their ability to work with those colleagues.

To minimize privacy risks, all participants were given a description of the study with a non-disclosure clause in the informed consent agreement before initial participation in the study. The measures taken to protect participants' privacy include security of data, confidentiality commitments among participants as a group norm, and the destruction of all audio and text data three years after the study. Data, such as recordings of the dialogue sessions, were stored on a password-protected laptop. All informed consent documents were kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. Participants received a copy of their own consent form for their records. All participants

chose their own pseudonyms for data collection. No other descriptive data was presented in such a way that a participant could be identified easily.

The school site principal and superintendent were both aware of the study and approved the research design. In order to further mitigate the risks to participants' privacy, both the principal and superintendent signed a document stating that no participants would be negatively affected professionally for their participation or non-participation in the study. Therefore, if the principal heard information from the study out of context, she agreed to disregard the information and not to pursue it further.

The threat of *misunderstanding* could have arisen if the participants did not understand the conditions of a doctoral study in terms of time commitment, instructional implications, and the content of the discussions. To mitigate misunderstanding, all participants were given opportunities to ask questions of the researcher, and had at least one week to decide whether or not to participate. The researcher was responsible for answering any and all of the participants' questions to their satisfaction prior to signing their informed consent agreement for the study. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants received no payment for their participation in the study.

The threats to professional relationships were addressed through the following methods. The dialogue sessions were conducted in a neutral safe space with no outside participants allowed. There was a training session on how to conduct the protocol, which included how to create trust and minimize threats to personal identity and how to create a

safe space for self-reflection and exchange of ideas. The training was based on the NSRF protocol design; NSRF has been running CFG protocols for 15 years.

Finally, there was the potential for emotional threat to participants, who may have left a session doubting their instructional abilities, or needing time to process their shift in perspective. The mentors are trained through the current induction program in how to support the participating teachers when faced with self-doubt about their practice. Therefore, the mentors should have been able to address this threat without difficulty. The researcher also stated that she was responsible for helping the participants find a suitable answer to their instructional concerns if the need arose.

Data Collection

The instrumentation involved in this study included pre-interviews, audio recordings of the dialogue sessions and the focus group, participant journals, and exit interviews (which included time to interpret evidence of a shift in their instructional practice). All the data was collected from September 2015 through May 2016. The data was transcribed verbatim and coded using the *Nvivo* software program.

The initial interviews involved several semi-structured questions designed to identify what these suburban novice teachers knew and believed about extant opportunity gaps and equity issues at Appleton High School and in their classrooms. These interviews were conducted over a three-week period. The exact pre- and post- interview questions can be found in Appendix G. This data helped to identify participants' initial understandings, as well as identifying any other external or internal factors that inform

their instructional decisions. In some cases, this included factors that the study's initial conceptual framework did not consider. For example, one of the participants participated in the five-week Teach for America institute training, which was heavily focused on the achievement gap in high poverty districts.

The dialogue sessions were implemented following the Critical Friends Group consultancy protocol (*see Appendix A & B*). The protocol sessions were conducted in eight off-campus meetings, each approximately 90 minutes long. The first meeting was for introductions and setting group norms and expectations. There were also several trust-building activities, and an opportunity for the participants to share their hopes and fears about participating in the dialogue group (*See Appendix E*). The second meeting was designed to make sure the participants had a clear understanding of the protocol itself. To insure that participants understood how the protocol worked, the second meeting included a practice dialogue session, using a dilemma provided by the researcher. Each of the next five meetings focused on one of the novice teachers' self-identified equity dilemma. The group then addressed these dilemmas, using the structured protocol. All five of these meetings were facilitated, audio-recorded and analyzed by the researcher.

Each dialogue session ended with the researcher and the next novice teacher presenter discussing his or her dilemma after the other participants left. The purpose of this discussion was to craft that teacher's dilemma into a clear question (as required by the protocol structure). The novice teacher who had just presented his or her dilemma at

that meeting was expected to spend time writing down his or her own action plan, for how he or she intended to address the dilemma soon after the dialogue session. The action plans were entered into the novice teachers' induction paper work and described in their journals for subsequent coding by the researcher. In the days following each session, the novice teachers completed journal entries about their attempts to resolve their dilemma. All the novice teachers wrote at least one journal entry after each dialogue session. They addressed whether or not their fellow teachers' dilemmas affected their own instructional practice. The journals were private and only read by the novice teacher and the researcher. The journals were a means to research each novice teacher's thoughts and feelings about his or her dilemma, and about participating in the dialogue sessions in general. The journals also allowed for a greater degree of privacy between the novice teachers and the researcher if they had questions or comments they did not want to share with the dialogue group.

After the novice teachers had at least five weeks to attempt to improve their dilemmas in their classrooms, each novice teacher chose a method to collect evidence of their shift in instructional practice. This included collecting summative student data and in one case, inviting the researcher to attend an intervention session. Each novice teacher identified an instructional practice that exemplified the actions he or she attributed to the work done in the dialogue sessions. An exit interview with a discussion of the evidence provided was audio-recorded in a one-on-one setting between the novice teacher and the researcher. This discussion was designed to allow the novice teachers the opportunity to

attribute specific instructional practices to their shift(s) in understanding based on the dialogue sessions. This helped the researcher eliminate possible internal and external factors that may otherwise account for the novice teachers' shifts in instructional practice.

Finally, during the post/exit interviews, the novice teachers answered follow up questions to those used in the pre-interviews, along with new questions for identifying any shifts in understanding or praxis due to the dialogue group. Some of these questions were already embedded in the current induction structure requirements to earn the clear credential in California. The exit interviews also provided a method of identifying any facilitators or barriers to novice teacher praxis that occurred during the dialogue sessions, and eliciting their suggestions for how to improve the protocol for future implementation. The exit interview questions about the evidence collected and the post-study interview questions happened together on the same day. There was also a follow up focus group for the researcher to ask the novice teachers and their mentors questions about the process of the dialogue protocol, such as the effectiveness of embedding the dialogue sessions within induction, the evidence collection component of the study, and suggestions for how to successfully scale a dialogue protocol up to the district level.

The meetings took place after school hours, in a private room of a pizza shop across the street from the school, with an average start time between 3:30-4:00 p.m. The pre- and post/exit interviews were conducted in each teacher's classroom. The total time commitment for each novice teacher participant for the entire study was approximately 25 hours, and about 12 hours for the mentors; *see Appendix C for the specific hours*

required for each component of the study.

Internal Validity

The goal of this study was to explore the viability of using the Critical Friends Group consultancy dialogue protocol in order to facilitate courageous discussions about equity in a suburban school setting. The claims of the study were based on participant attributions and their ability to describe evidence for those attributions. There was a concern at the onset of the study that the novice teachers would overstate their improvements, thus threatening the study's internal validity in the form of false attributions of improvement. In addition, there was a threat to validity related to maturation (i.e., the novice teachers' actual improvements may be due simply to increased experience in teaching). This was a confounding variable considered when analyzing the evidence of a shift in instructional practice and the exit interview data. However, the evidence explanation and exit interviews gave novice teachers the opportunity to self-report which changes they felt were due to participation in the dialogue sessions, versus changes they thought were likely the result of more teaching experience or other internal or external factors.

The key aspects of increasing this study's internal validity were the use of action plans, journaling, and explicit interview questions to triangulate evidence that could be used to support the teachers' emerging interpretations. First, the participants created an action plan with specific implications for their instructional practice after their dialogue sessions. These action plans were also a component of the current induction process.

This increased the validity of the study because each novice teacher had to articulate precisely what aspects of their practice they intended to change and how they planned to seek support or resources to do so.

Second, the action plans and the novice teachers' own notes from their dialogue sessions became the basis for what evidence of a shift in practice they chose to collect. When interpreting the evidence they collected, the novice teachers were asked to explain exactly what instructional practices they adjusted due to the dialogue about their particular dilemma. This process, of having the novice teachers identify the evidence for their interpretations during a conversation with the researcher, provided a clear picture of whether the novice participants could accurately self-reflect about their instructional practices and identify where there were changes in practice, as well as where there were still equity issues to address (Bastien & Hostager, 1996). The subsequent data analysis on these sessions was member-checked by the novice teachers and the researcher's doctoral program cohort colleagues.

Through my experience as a mentor, I assumed a threat to the study's internal validity was that the participating novice teachers may claim more improvement than was present in their evidence or journal entries. To mitigate this threat, the participants were encouraged to articulate, without judgment, their own limitations and the parts of their practice that they still need to improve. The novice participants were reminded that evidence of those areas of needed improvement or support is valuable to the study. To the

surprise of the researcher, the novice participants were extremely humble throughout the process and openly discussed their limitations.

One advantage to the internal validity of the study's design was that the participants had no vested interest in whether the protocol succeeded. If they did not find the protocol helpful, they would not need to continue to participate long term. If they found the CFG protocol helpful, it could be used as a model for the district's future induction program. However, these participants would not receive any professional or financial incentive for the protocol to succeed.

With respect to a maturation threat, the aspect of this study that separated it from average experiential development of novice teachers was its focus on equity. The deliberate focus on equity at the induction level helped to differentiate instructional changes that were due to other confounding variables (e.g., improved classroom management strategies gained from trial and error over time) from changes that were more directly linked to the dialogue sessions.

External Validity

This study was designed to provide vivid, in-depth descriptions of the process of using the Critical Friends Group consultancy dialogue protocol with novice teachers and their mentors, and any resulting self-attributed changes in instructional practice. Instead of generalizability, the purpose is for the findings to be transferable to other induction programs in similarly diversifying suburban settings. The level of detail about how the protocol was delivered and how the participating teachers responded to aspects of the

protocol should be transferable, confirmable, and relevant to directors of induction programs who are interested in fostering courageous and honest conversations about issues of equity and novice teacher praxis.

Furthermore, the pre- and post-treatment interview data may be used as transferable indicators of aspects of the protocol that an induction program should add or eliminate (e.g., group mentor-mentee meetings, action plans, or teacher journals). The interview data also provides ideas and evidence for how to improve teacher sense making around issues of equity and instructional practice.

Data Analysis

All transcript data and interview data was entered into *Nvivo* for the first round of data coding and condensation. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, there were no sets of prior instrumentation or codes. Thus, all of the coding decisions and data condensation were made as the data was collected and patterns emerged. Data memos and jottings were also stored in the *Nvivo* software to be used to attach ideas to the exact transcript points that elicited the ideas. Then the researcher read back through the transcripts while playing the audio to make any corrections and additional annotations for non-verbal cues or details, such as sarcasm.

The dominant coding structure used in this study was *process coding*, to help track whether participants' understanding of equity or personal praxis changed over the course of the study (Miles et al., 2014). The pre-interviews were also coded using *In vivo coding* to extract common themes between participants, and to show how the participants

articulated their understanding of equity, the opportunity gap, and their instructional efficacy (Miles et al., 2014). The transcriptions of all the dialogue sessions were then coded using *value coding* to explore the participants' instructional values, worldviews, and inter- and intrapersonal relations as they developed between participants (Miles et al., 2014). *Evaluative coding* was also used for the dialogue sessions and exit interview transcripts to assign merit or significance to the participants' self-evaluation, or articulation of their instructional shifts in praxis (Miles et al., 2014). Observations of teacher practice were recorded in the form of observational field notes. The novice teacher journals were collected at the end of the study for *process coding* and *in vivo coding*. Using multiple data sources and iterative data analysis over time helped the researcher identify effects of the dialogue protocol on the participants that could not have been anticipated in advance.

Chapter Four: Report of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the potential benefits and barriers to introducing a dialogue protocol with a focus on equity into the current one-on-one mentorship model of teacher induction in a diversifying suburban district. The data has been summarized referencing the voices of the participants through the use of emergent coding. The story of five novice teachers is presented in response to the second research question separately. The names have been changed to self-selected pseudonyms. Each participant is introduced as a prelude to an analysis of the data.

Research Question One Findings

This section summarizes how the novice teachers in a particular suburban school district with shifting demographic diversity make sense of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequities. In turn, this section considers novice teachers' understandings of opportunity gaps; instructional practices that affect opportunity gaps; understandings of equity vs. equality; systemic barriers to praxis; and understandings of student diversity.

RQ1: Understanding the opportunity gap. The novice teachers and mentors believed themselves to have an average level of understanding of the concept with room to improve. In her exit interview, Betty summed up the novice teachers' sentiment about their understanding of the opportunity gap as: "I think I am about average, but you can't know what you don't know."

While novice teachers may have struggled with the vocabulary, it is not clear that all five-novice teachers understood the broad concept of the opportunity gap: that

students start off with varying backgrounds, access to educational opportunities, levels of resources, skills and experiences. Three of the participants felt shaky about defining the opportunity gap, but they could describe it through metaphors. For example, Betty used a 100-meter race as an analogy for understanding the opportunity gap:

Some people are starting already at the race, like the hundred meters; and other people are starting at the 20-meter and other people are not even on the track yet, and like they don't even own gym clothes to run so they are not even there.

Although the novice teachers could tease out the meaning of the opportunity gap through such metaphors, they did not have clear definitions readily accessible in their minds.

Furthermore, although the current induction curriculum includes questions about how teachers address the needs of English Learners, advanced students, and special needs populations, the novice teachers did not explicitly connect any of their previous induction training or their credentialing program to their current understanding of inequity or the opportunity gap. Neither did they relate the opportunity gap to any systemic structural inequity besides the general concept of poverty.

For example, Hippo's response exemplified these novice teachers' sentiment that the opportunity gap is a problem of inequity for socio-economically disadvantaged students. Stating,

I feel like it's, kind of a lot of different things maybe can be attributed to income of different students, like some families they can afford some things like tutoring,

or extra private lessons outside, which isn't really fair to those who can't... afford it or things like that.

Illustrating the novice teachers' predominant perspective that the opportunity gap derives from adverse economic conditions, such as a deficit of financial resources and the academic opportunities that depend on financial access.

None of the novice teachers spoke about the positive academic opportunities that come from well-educated parents or students' ability to advocate for themselves due to familial training. The novice teachers were aware of financial advantages, such as access to tutors or better technology. However, they appeared to have a blind spot to the advantages afforded students in families who had the ability and the time to teach their children soft skills, such as clear communication, self advocacy or code switching in an academic environment.

One of the study participants had a very personal connection to the socio-economic opportunity gap.

I grew up in a low-income household, my parents grossed \$40,000 a year, raising me and my kid sister ... which is completely different than the students here who are gonna be living off mommy and daddy. So I understand what opportunities I missed, and I could see what opportunities I could've had, given the income that these kids' parents had, if my parents had it.

Although this perspective could be interpreted as a bias against students who come from a background of privilege, he stated that a lack of economic opportunity is no excuse not to try.

The novice teachers were noticeably reluctant to discuss the opportunity gap based on race or ethnicity. All but one novice teacher avoided any discussion of race in relation to the opportunity gap, but her answer may be an insight into why the others did not feel the need to discuss race. She stated:

My teacher preparation program definitely gave us the statistics about which students from which race may have less opportunity than other races overall, but then coming to Appleton High, with all the diversity, you have students who are usually in underachieving or under represented races, actually being in honors classes, or you know being pretty high level. So then I just get confused about those statistics that are nationwide and then the ones that seem to be here at Appleton High.

This is an important insight into why teachers at high achieving suburban schools are susceptible to the risk of ignoring the opportunity gap. If the teachers see a few minority students succeeding in honors classes, they may believe that their school has succeeded in closing both the opportunity and achievement gaps. Similar to people who believe that racism ended with the election of Barack Obama, examples of achievement by a few minority students can mask an underlying problem. Therefore, without sufficient data to show the proportionality of race representation in various course levels, such as honors

classes, teachers may remain ignorant to an underlying opportunity gap(s) among certain sub-populations.

Betty was the only novice teacher who attempted, in her pre-interview, to define the opportunity gap in relation to the achievement gap: “the opportunities are the inputs and the achievement gaps are the outputs.” She attributed her understanding of the two gaps to her training with Teach for America. In another pre-interview, one of the novice teachers admitted to believing that the opportunity gap and achievement gap were synonymous. One of the novice teachers could not clearly articulate a definition of either term. As demonstrated by the pre-interviews, the novice teachers were struggling with identifying opportunity gaps within their classrooms, partially due to a lack of clear understanding of the meaning of the concept, how to describe it, and how to identify it in their classrooms.

RQ1: Instructional practices that affect the opportunity gap. When asked in the pre-interviews to describe instructional practices that reduce the opportunity gap, the novice teachers had very few suggestions. None of the novice teachers shared instructional practices for how to bridge the opportunity gap through the lens of race. Three of the teachers focused on improving access to resources, presumably for socio-economically disadvantaged students. This included supplemental materials, dictionaries and visual aids for EL students, and access to hands-on learning experiences including field trips.

In terms of ethnicity, the novice teachers only focused on techniques to address linguistic barriers. Two teachers were able to describe practices that students could do for themselves, such as attending a tutorial period for extra help. One of the teachers could not think of a strategy that specifically targeted the opportunity gap instead of the achievement gap, and declined to suggest any practices. Hippo focused on language as a barrier to educational equity for EL students:

I have a lot of EL's like that are from China. And their English is not that great. Sometimes they do need to look up words and like, I'm fine with letting them use... like a lot of them have little pocket dictionaries that translate for them. And That's totally fine with me, like I think letting them use those kinds of devices, it makes things a lot more fair... so they're able to answer questions that otherwise they wouldn't have been able to answer because of language differences.

Although this does provide more access to the students who can afford the device, he did not address how he provides an equitable arrangement for the EL students who do not have such access. One might assume that the students share their devices, but that possibility was not clear in the pre-interview. Overall, the novice teachers had very few specific suggestions.

RQ1: Novice teachers' understanding of equity vs. equality. To research the degree to which the teachers understood instructional equity, the novice teachers were asked to explain their understanding of the differences between equity and equality. Three of the novice teachers struggled to answer the question because they were still

attempting to tease out the differences in meaning between equity and equality as they tried to answer the question. This led to vague answers that were difficult to follow, but they included some reference to the idea of differentiation based on where students began. One of the novice teachers observed:

Equality more seems that, given the situations that exist, this is what I can do as a teacher, to try to make things fair within the classroom meaning that I'm treating everybody the same. But, maybe equity is more of like linked to the opportunity, like what do they have to begin with. So, even if you are equal to everybody because people have different equities, you're not exactly being equal to everybody. I don't know if that's it or not. But, that's just kind of like how I think of it in my mind.

Although the novice teachers often grasped the concept by the end of their time hashing out the definitions, they recognized the lack of clarity in their answers and were forthright about their own lack of clear understanding of the terms. As one teacher mentioned with nervous laughter, "they sound so similar!" The second half of the interview question asked for an example of equity and equality in the classroom and none of the same three teachers gave a clear answer or any specific strategies.

One of the other novice teachers answered the question from a different angle, stating that equity was the equality of opportunity and equal access to resources. He stated that his philosophy was that it takes a village and not just a classroom or school and provided examples of a number of institutional practices from his former school that

could reduce the opportunity gap and provide more equal access to resources, such as free lunch during school vacations, literacy classes, and parenting classes. Although he did not include examples of how such equitable practices could translate into a classroom environment, he was clearly in favor of providing additional resources to “level the playing field.”

The fifth teacher had a very different understanding of equity, and believed that one on one instructional time with a student was similar to a commodity with instructional minutes as the resource to be spread amongst the students. However, rather than giving students with the most need the most instruction, the teacher had a different philosophy on how to equitably distribute time:

Whereas equality assumes that everybody is equal. Um. As teachers we know that not everybody's the same. And we want to treat everybody equally, but as a teacher, you want to make things as easy for you as possible. So you favor the kids who are better behaved or who understand the material easier, as you, the students who don't understand the material, are struggling with it, they're giving you more hassle, so... Do I want to deal with you today? I know I have to, but how much time can I devote to you. That would be my best guess at equality versus equity.

Although one can make an argument for the efficiency of helping the students who are the most eager to learn, that argument is not based in social justice and equity.

The novice teachers were asked to rate themselves on their capability to address equity in their classroom on a scale of one to five. This question was met with a surprising degree of self-deprecating responses. One teacher placed herself at a 1, stating: “when I say one I don’t mean like I can’t do it, it’s impossible to address. I just don’t feel that I know how to.” This was a common theme throughout the novice teachers’ answers. None of the novice teachers felt prepared to equitably differentiate their instruction.

RQ1: Systemic barriers to praxis. The next question in the pre-interview sessions was designed to illuminate the systemic barriers to novice teacher praxis. The novice teachers were asked what prevents them from implementing equitable instructional practices. Some of the classic barriers to equity were quickly identified: large class size, misplacement of students into the wrong academic level, delayed paperwork identifying students with special needs, and lack of budget for materials. The novice teachers also identified a series of four common barriers.

The first barrier to praxis mentioned was the lack of identifiers to help identify which students needs additional support. This barrier was then compounded by the second identified barrier of a lack of resources to help the students who are identified. The third barrier was the lack of practical ideas for how to differentiate instruction to address various student needs at the same time. The novice teachers identified themselves as the fourth of the major barriers to praxis. Whether described as a lack of knowledge, personal fatigue, or personal motivation, the novice teachers were their own barriers.

The novice teachers did not have a clear method for how to identify students who required an equitable adjustment in curriculum or instruction due to factors, such as socio-economics, race, special needs, ethnicity, or the intersectionality of multiple factors. The novice teachers could identify students who were struggling with the curriculum, but they did not know how to identify or address less obvious contributing factors, such as social class. This finding speaks to the level of student data easily accessible to teachers.

There are very few student demographic indicators provided to the teachers at Appleton High School. Appleton's attendance system provides codes next to the name of each student identified as having an exception, such as English Learners, students with 504 plans, or students with an IEP. There are also notes for students with a history of suspensions, medical needs, or truancy. Student ethnicity is not identified in any teacher portal. There is also no identifying icon for students on free or reduced lunch which would be the only socio-economic indicator collected by the school district. Without clear indicators, teachers can only rely on informal student commentary. However, providing this information is not necessarily the answer. Two of the teachers stated that they did not want to know because they did not want to think of certain students as the poor kids. A lack of knowledge allows them to avoid any personal bias that may result from the knowledge of student's ethnicity or financial circumstances.

The second barrier to praxis was identified as lack of access to and the use of resources. Nathan explains:

I'm struggling... Part of it is I don't know where to go to get resources or I'm learning where to get resources. Then sometimes when I have them, I don't know quite how, what to do with them. I can teach to that middle real well. But, it's my outliers, my kids that are totally checked out.

The issue of where to get guidance for resources was a strong concern. Although the novice teachers each had a specified mentor, the novice teachers did not identify the mentors as their primary source for guidance to find or use resources. This is at least partially due to their specialized needs. For example, the novice teachers who were teaching the lowest level math courses could not expect their mentors who teach upper division math courses to supply them with differentiated, below grade level content.

The third challenge to providing equitable praxis that was identified by all five novice teachers was the lack of practical training for how to differentiate instruction. All five participants mentioned that their credentialing programs included theories about addressing the needs of all learners but did not provide subsequent ideas for how to practically apply the theories of equity in their classroom. Throughout the pre- and post-interviews and journals, there was a resounding cry for practical ways to differentiate their curriculum and their instruction. Nina's quote exemplifies the entire group's dilemma of differentiation:

I think the challenge comes from, um, the fact that that means if you want to meet the students where they're at and you can only be at one place at one time, and you can only be lecturing on one thing at a time, so if you are at too low of the

level than the higher kids, then they aren't learning as much; so I guess I just struggle with a lot of differentiating instruction. It's like a buzzword in teacher prep programs, but they never really taught us how to do it or how... yeah how to at I East... I don't know how to explain it to the students so they didn't feel like I was tracking them in the class and separating the lower level from the higher level students, uh so that's goo..., that's probably my greatest challenge.

These novice teachers are aware of the opportunity gap in terms of socio-economic status and linguistic barriers. However, without practical ideas for how to bridge the gap in their subject area and classroom setting, theory is not applied in practice and, subsequently, praxis is reduced to informal actions on an individual level. Systemic inequities in terms of race and ethnicity were either ignored, or the novice teachers did not know how to address them at all.

Several novice teachers identified themselves as the final barrier to their own praxis. Betty stated, "it's just my own personal knowledge, and, I guess, the priority I placed on other things that I wanted to have in my classroom." This identifies a gap in praxis because, without the awareness of what equity should look like, Betty chose to take action towards other classroom priorities. Therefore, if equity is not her priority, then praxis for the sake of equity is either accidental or absent.

Similarly, Hippo spoke about his awareness as the barrier to providing equitable instruction:

It's a structural thing maybe, that's just how the world is set up... But, is there anything out to stop me from like fixing... I don't know, um like barriers... I feel like to answer that question better, I would need to know, like how I said I would need to know certain strategies to make it more equitable. And once I know what those are, like, am I able to that. And if not, then where would I need to go to be able to... What's stopping me from implementing those strategies? So I feel like to answer that, I would need to be better informed of strategies that could make things equitable. I guess.

Although he struggled with articulation, Hippo reached the heart of the idea of praxis. He needed a basis in awareness before acting on a solution. Lack of awareness was one of the more significant barriers identified during the pre/post interviews and journals. The novice teachers shared their concern for their lack of awareness and how it affected their lack of capabilities to differentiate their curriculum to meet the various needs of their diverse student population. Nathan adds to this concept of awareness by including a self-reflective component:

I gotta have that little voice in the back of my head. Am I doing this, is this gonna benefit the student or am I doing this because it sounds good, or because it's something I personally like, or cuz I'm exhausted! and can't lecture one more time.

Nathan's level of self-awareness was laudable and he brought up an important finding about exhaustion as a barrier to praxis. The novice teachers could have had all the

equitable instructional strategies they needed, but without the energy to implement them, their capacity for praxis was reduced.

One novice teacher provided a very different response, which returns to the fundamentals of classroom management and personal bias. When asked if there was anything preventing him from implementing equitable instruction he responded:

Oh god yes. Just yesterday I had to kick a student out because he was jumping on his chair (nervous laughter). In the heat of the moment I was kinda like, I need you outside...just get out, just get out. That's not fair to the student or the students who see me, kinda blow up at this one kid, that's like...that's not fair at all. But, in the heat of the moment, that was the best option. I can't say Jimmy you can't be doing that, please have a seat, because I've said that already. Because, like he could just escalate things, and I can't just say: you can't do that, you can't do that... he could just take it to whatever level he wants. And I'll just... no, no, no.

So afterwards everybody was quiet, but then they got back up but not to his level.

This response was a clear sign that this novice teacher needed additional support with classroom management which can go hand in hand with equitable practices with the proper training. The traditional induction model was designed to help novice teachers with classroom management overall, but there is not a specific focus on equity or a method to identify personal bias toward or against specific student groups.

RQ1: Understanding of student diversity. The novice teachers did not feel confident in their understanding of the diversity of their student populations. Therefore,

the novice teachers compensated for their lack of instructional capacity to address the needs of whole student groups by focusing on addressing the needs of students on an individual level.

In terms of race and ethnicity, the novice teachers gave no substantive answers for how to either identify or address the needs of specific student populations. The novice teachers either deliberately avoided discussing race and ethnicity or they did not have a clear understanding of the inequities that exist among racial and ethnic sub-groups in their classes, or they were confused by the line between identifying students for the purpose of equity versus racial/ethnic profiling. At most, the novice teachers recognized that certain minority groups exist at the school, but they did not know if these students were disproportionately affected by the opportunity gap. The novice teachers all expressed an interest in helping their students gain equitable access to resources and instruction, but they felt less than capable of filling those needs.

In terms of socio-economics, all five teachers were unclear how to build equitable practices for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds into their instruction. The teachers had an understanding of the financial contributing factors that could affect a student's performance in school, but they remain uncertain of how to remove those barriers in a classroom setting. The novice teachers shared a common interest in leveling the playing field for students in terms of access to basic resources. For example, three of the teachers mentioned ways that they help direct students to on-campus resources, such as computers and printers.

In terms of EL students, three teachers were in favor of the use of student owned translation devices, but they had no plan for how to make the use of such devices equitable for students of all socio-economic levels. Although they may have clear understanding, the novice teachers gave no indication of their awareness of the intersection between socio-economic status and linguistic capability on the part of the students or their families.

In an attempt to address the various needs of their diverse student populations, the novice teachers instead turned to meeting student needs on an individual level. The novice teachers may not have known the academic achievement data for the ethnic sub-populations of the school, but they knew who was failing their classes. The novice teachers did not have research based instructional strategies to reduce the opportunity gap, but they figured out who needed extra time on a test or access to the library's printer, on a student-by-student basis. The novice teachers were working at an individual level attempting to meet the needs of each and every student, individually, through whatever interventions they came up with on their own or by informally asking their mentors and colleagues.

One outlier of the novice teachers was extremely frank about the issue Calarco (2014) raised about whether students showed interest in learning and whether they self advocated in class. When asked about his ability to address issues of equity in his class on a scale of 1-5 the teacher said:

Three, mostly because of the reason I said earlier. Kids who give me more trouble, I just don't want to deal with them. I just wanna follow my lesson plan and have students feel like they succeed. Whereas, kids who aren't putting the time in... Am I spending time with you, that you are going to appreciate? And I'm losing it. Whereas, I could spend it with somebody else who will put in that time and effort. What's my best use of time?

This novice teacher was willing to be honest about his bias towards helping students who showed effort and interest in learning the content. Although this perspective may have worked against the students who needed the most help in his classes, he was willing to truthfully recognize and voice his bias. Other participating teachers may also have taught towards students who expressed interest in learning the subject, but they may or may not have recognized their bias. This type of honest answer creates an opportunity for conversation and intervention as well as expresses a level of trust with the researcher. It also answers the first research question. For this novice teacher, he differentiated his efforts towards his students based on his perception of their effort and dedication to learning the curriculum. His version of equitable instruction was to provide the most support and resources toward the students who expressed the greatest interest and responsibility for their own learning.

Research Question Two Findings

Findings related to research question two (RQ2) were derived from the transcripts of the dialogue sessions, journal entries referring to the individual dialogue sessions, and

exit interview transcripts. Please see Appendix B for the steps of the CFG consultancy dialogue protocol (dilemma discussion, clarifying questions, probing questions, open dialogue, recommendations, and reflections), which appear frequently in the dialogue findings herein.

RQ2: How does an equity-focused community of practice using a dialogue protocol affect novice teachers' praxis through their understanding of how to address issues of student equity in their instructional practice?

To answer research question two, each novice teacher's dilemma of equity was analyzed separately to identify how the dialogue affected that novice teacher's instructional practice. Each novice teachers' exit interview and journal were analyzed along side their dialogue session to explore what instructional practices the novice teachers attempted, and how their dialogue sessions affected their praxis. Then, after the completion of all the dialogue sessions, all the dialogues were discussed as a whole among the entire dialogue group, in a focus group setting, to identify elements of the dialogue protocol that should be maintained or modified for future use in a district wide implementation. Each dilemma presented to the dialogue group by the novice teachers is presented and discussed herein below, along with researcher findings.

Nathan's dilemma. Nathan began his dilemma description with the question:

How can I adjust or scaffold primary source documents for my students while still maintaining the integrity as a primary source document? ... I need additional support for adjusting for any type of special population, learning disability,

ELLs... who am I forgetting? I'm—my brain's running on but empty as well. So, that's my main struggle.

Nathan aided the group by bringing two primary source documents he has used in previous classes, the Declaration of Independence and the Alliance Treaty signed at the end of WWI that contributed to the onset of WWII. He gave over the remainder of his allotted time to explain the dilemma to the group to allow time for the dialogue group to read over the documents. The participants took time to read through the documents and discovered them to be difficult to read both in terms of syntax and antiquated language.

The clarifying questions section of the protocol centered on whether the interpretation of the text was an end in itself or a component of a larger unit. Nathan clarified by stating that the readings were both to challenge students to interpret primary source texts and, as a method, to discuss the documents as pivotal contributing factors to subsequent events. Nathan was then asked about who struggled most with the documents and what elements of the documents were the most difficult. It was determined that all students struggle with the vocabulary and syntax, but recent EL students and students with IEPs had the most difficult time. Some of the clarifying questions faded into probing questions such as when Devil asked: “Why should the average man or woman even care?” As the facilitator, I was concerned that this was an inflammatory question, but “assume best intentions” was one of the group norms and Nathan did just that. He took no noticeable offence and stated:

Well, the documents themselves are intended... The Declaration of Independence was intended for the general public... and the... treaties are intended for diplomats and sovereigns within Europe. Depending on the document, [it] depends why it matters. It once again—it's established in that larger framework of "Why do things happen?" and "Why are we living where we are now?"

The interaction remained positive and it was a useful point of clarification. This is an example of where prior trust among group members and the established protocol norms helped to maintain a positive atmosphere.

The probing questions had five themes: what prevents you from using sources adapted to the students' reading level; why do you care so much about using primary sources; have you tried other adaptation methods; where is the relevance for the students; and have you put yourself in the students' shoes? These themes came out of a rapid fire round robin of teachers just reading their questions off post-its. The teachers did not couch their questions in compassionate phrasing partially due to a lack of time and partially because of the prior agreement to speak directly and assume the best intentions. Nathan listened carefully and responded without any hint of defensiveness. Nathan informed the group that often there are no alternative sources available. "I don't have a musical of the World War I treaties. Anyone knows 'em, I'll take it." He also shared that he wants the students to improve their critical thinking and, if they do not care about the document now, they may develop the tools to be able to come back to it years later when they realize its significance.

The next stage of the protocol was the Open Dialogue portion. Participant comments fell into two categories: people continuing to debate the purpose of using primary sources, and practical suggestions for how to help students access the meaning of the texts. Bernice's comments exemplify the concerns of the people in favor of using secondary sources:

So, there was a couple of things that you said that were—that really kind of resounded with me, the first one was that you wanted to keep like pure to the text, and didn't want to go into too many, like, secondary sources and stuff, but then later you said that you didn't understand the importance of something like World War I until you were in your twenties, and then you would remember things that you learned when you were younger, at which point like, how would like keeping the purity—how important is that? If you want them to understand what happened, you know and they could read this, maybe... but at the same time is it—is it worth the amount of struggle in your classroom and the amount of, you know, nail chewing or whatever that it ensues from the kids to keep these pure sources?

Bernice's comment also alludes to several participants' points about perseverance and how much perseverance should a sophomore be expected to maintain. By the end of the open dialogue session, there was a clear bias in the group in favor of adapting the primary sources to be more accessible, either by way of an interpreted text, contemporary language, or a secondary source commenting on the primary source. The suggestions or

questions to that affect were twice as frequent as suggestions for how to make the primary sources accessible.

The commentary and suggestions for making the primary sources accessible also included ways to make the instruction more equitable. For example, rather than giving the students a vocabulary list in advance, allow the students to read the text in advance and just write down all the words they don't know. Then that compilation of terms becomes the vocabulary list. This would also provide a gauge for percentage of the text that the students did not understand in advance. Another suggestion was to read the text like Shakespeare. In this way, the students can use the auditory cadence as context for meaning and help the students who may have a stronger auditory vocabulary, such as EL students. In terms of the use of secondary sources, one idea was to scaffold the primary sources from a fully interpreted version at the beginning of the year, with additional secondary sources for context and then slowly scaffold the students' ability to interpret a difficult text over the course of the year, so that the last assignment of the year was a full primary source. A popular suggestion was the use of student talent to interpret the text, allowing different groups to make different artistic interpretations of the meaning of text and then sharing it with the class.

During Nathan's time to respond to the dialogue it was clear that he was aware just how many of the participants felt that the original texts were an unnecessary difficulty for the students. He addressed these concerns by admitting that he is

considering cutting the WWI treaty assignment entirely. Then he shared an underlying concern that he did not state earlier:

I—I—I mean I—I'm conflicted because my credential put a lot of focus on primary sources, and that to modify 'em, it's no longer a primary source anymore. So, I think I'm carrying a lot of that... baggage around. And a little bit I don't know what... to do with it.

This admission noticeably took the tension out of the air in the room. Prior to this comment it was clear that several of the participants did not approve of the rigid use of primary sources. The mood was not hostile, but there was a clear divide of professional opinion. Once they realized that Nathan was not the source of this theory, but a teacher stuck between the theories presented in a credential program and the practicality of making those theories work in a classroom, compassion replaced annoyance in a matter of seconds. Participants sat back and dropped their shoulders; people sipped their beverages and smiled at Nathan with empathy.

Nathan continued by addressing the practical suggestions presented:

Nothing's jumping out at me like it's a magic bullet, and I think there isn't one. I like Francesca's idea, and I know she's told it to me before and I can't believe it fell out of my brain, about scaffolding it throughout the year, so that it's building it. I like... your idea about pairing it with the secondary sources early, and then weaning 'em off it.

Nathan was having a moment like Dorothy when he realized he already had the way home. He mentioned that the majority of the suggestions presented were things he has tried in various ways before but he had forgotten. If nothing else, the dialogue session served as a way to remind Nathan of the methods he already possessed to solve his own problem.

After several months of time had passed and Nathan had the opportunity to attempt to implement strategies presented during the dilemma, he reflected in his journal entry:

I do not know if the conversation truly solved my problem, but what I did come to realize is that I was perhaps standing more on form than on function. My credential program had programmed me to believe that the "trend of the future" was the implementation of primary source documents and that modification of primary source documents degraded the value of them as a learning tool. I have come to abandon this belief in favor of what works. It is more important for my students to learn the content than to learn how to decode the complicated and sometimes archaic writing styles present in historical writing.

Nathan has not entirely abandoned primary sources, but he has scaled them back significantly in favor of very specific landmark texts. Nathan has also decided to include a context summary with each text, so that the students are aware of other pertinent events going on in the world at that point in history.

RQ2: Findings for Nathan. The dialogue session's effect on Nathan's praxis began with clarifying his priorities and motivation for using primary sources. Nathan was already aware that his curricular decisions created significant struggle for his students. He also understood that the primary sources were less accessible to EL and special education students. The dialogue group commentary and suggestions for making the primary sources accessible also included ways to make the instruction more equitable.

Nathan's decision to use the primary sources was based on a belief that theories presented to him in his credential program held more validity than his classroom experience. Hearing a group of his respected peers disagree with his prior training gave Nathan the agency to use his own praxis to determine his curriculum. In his exit interview Nathan stated:

I was taught a very definite structure of what a teacher was and I'm still kind of tenaciously holding on to it. And a lot of those pretenses need to go. I just kind of need to adapt what works and what doesn't work... So I think that's probably my biggest ... my biggest kind of revelation and my biggest adjustment in this process.

Members of the dialogue group helped encourage Nathan to recognize that he was the expert on the content that his students could handle. Once he freed himself from feeling beholden to his prior training, Nathan was open to a series of suggestions from the group on how to make the content more equitable for the broad range of his students' needs. Nathan renewed his interest in activities to scaffold difficult texts for struggling

students that he had once learned because the dialogue group gave him the necessary efficacy to deviate from his prior training.

Hippo's dilemma. In his dilemma description, Hippo described how he was struggling with his entry-level math class:

I have 23 kids in that class and 6 of them, I currently feel based off their work, are really like... they should be in a lower class if there was one. Like they are missing some of the foundational mathematics that you learn in elementary school ... I guess my analogy of like how I think they're feeling is like imagine if you only knew 70% of the alphabet and then you're trying to read a book ... Sure you could like kinda get the gist of maybe what is going on, but you're not going to fully thoroughly comprehend that book. That's kinda like how the kids are doing in my class ... So I was thinking, what can I do for these kids so they get the most out of this two period class they have?

He continued to explain the complexity of how to maintain the current curriculum with the majority of the students while figuring out how to build fundamental skills such as multiplication for his six focus students.

When the group moved on to clarifying questions, Nathan asked, "Ok, about what level would you put them? Like grade level." Hippo clarified by explaining that it is not as simple as students below grade level. It is the fact that these students have holes in their understanding that are difficult to predict. One student may struggle to subtract two

digit numbers but understands the concept of fractions. So each of the six students have a “Swiss cheese” understanding of basic math, with holes in different places.

Once the dilemma itself was clear, the conversation shifted to clarifying the student demographics. The group took a few minutes to settle on a common vocabulary and then acknowledged that the focus students did not have a particular racial or ethnic make-up, their social class and family dynamics were unknown, but they all had IEPs, which is an indicator that they are all special education students. Although Hippo had spoken with the resource teachers, he had not formalized any strategy with them.

The group then moved on to probing questions with three repeating themes. The first was about what resources he had accessed, Most every group member had a different angle for how to reach out for help, such as contacting the parents, case managers and colleagues who teach the same level course. The second theme was how to address students’ reactions if they noticed that some students had easier worksheets than others. The third theme was asking about the student arrangements he had attempted in class so far such as heterogeneous grouping. The probing questions that did not fit within the above themes came from Devil who took a more personal angle by asking: “Why is it so important to you that they know their times tables? By heart?” This is an interesting question coming from another math teacher.

Although the probing questions are not designed in the protocol to be answered during the dialogue session, the person with the dilemma is given a chance to respond to the questions. Hippo took this time to answer most of the questions in rapid succession,

in an attempt to be sure that the participants did not spend the dialogue time focused on ideas he had already tried. For example, he addressed the idea of heterogeneous grouping by stating:

So first couple questions were about group work or pairing them up with smarter kids, uh I've done tasks where they had to work like that and typically they just sit there and let their group mates do everything and they just get the answer off of them. Its only when I come around to check on them that they do a bit, and then they'll try, but once I walk away, then they're just back to doing nothing again. Just waiting for people around them to work.

Although this response broke out of the confines of the protocol, it gave the participants important insight into the focus students. It was also an indicator that these students expect to fail and have already created coping mechanisms to avoid working on problems they don't understand. Hippo also directed the open dialogue away from outside help, such as tutors, when he stated:

Are there other kids who can help tutor them in other classes, yeah, I'm pretty sure because I am teaching Calculus also and I'm sure that people who want to help out could do so, but, again, it's a matter of can I make or get my students, those six kids, to want to go to tutoring to begin with. Like on their own. Like time outside of school. Those are typically the kids who don't want to be in school so...

Hippo makes it clear that these six students will not be easy to motivate outside of class hours, nor does he want to assume that to be the answer. Through several answers, Hippo thwarts the use of time or resources outside of the given double block class period. He also shares that the students continue to ask him questions and seek understanding. This gives him some hope that they remain willing to try.

At this point, as a facilitator, I expected that the group had enough context to begin our open dialogue, but Hippo ran out the clock by continuing to address almost every probing question offered. This was worrying to me, as a facilitator because the probing questions are meant to be reflected upon later and not answered in a rapid-fire fashion. Alternately, he did stay within the time allotted and he gave further insight into the dilemma including the factor of time. Hippo admits that he has limits:

Already right now it's very difficult to plan for a full two hour like class in a day.

And that's for just like for the regular class. If I need to plan for another two hours to keep the other kids occupied, that's just like, I don't think I can do that.

This is an important perspective to keep in mind. Although all teachers work to build curriculum, Hippo brings up the harsh reality that novice teachers have to spend a large portion of their free time finding and creating unit plans that mentors or established teachers may take for granted. This is an incredibly difficult variable to account for in an induction program, or any support structure for novice teachers, because some novice teachers have a completely scripted curriculum, while others may begin with an empty

room and build the entire curriculum from scratch. Hippo also made a half-joking comment that what he could really use was another teacher in the room.

As a facilitator, I did not interrupt Hippo because each new answer added depth to the groups understanding of the dilemma. I did encourage him, after the dialogue session, to reflect on the probing questions independently when he had more time.

The first portion of the open dialogue session was led by other math teachers curbing the other subject area teachers' expectations. The math teachers informed the rest of the group that pairings usually turn into one student doing the work and the other copying. They also warned heavily against students teaching each other. It either turns into the blind leading the blind, or the students resenting the fact that they are being expected to teach what they just figured out themselves.

The entire rest of the session, with little exception, turned into a group brainstorming session on how to set up skill based stations like Candy Land, where the students earn small rewards for completing each level, all the way up to the skills necessary to be prepared for Algebra 1, their next course. This included points of concern and subsequent solutions offered by different participants. The entire group also agreed that we all are still motivated by earning stickers. Luckily, the engineering teacher has a sticker machine! Some of the concerns included physical room logistics, assessment strategies, and the ability to include all levels of students in the class. The concerns were either addressed or tabled for later discussion. Everything seemed to be

forming into a real plan that would give struggling students the small wins that they need to increase their intrinsic motivation.

The group was lively and excited by the prospect. There was only one problem. When the time was up and Hippo, in his Dialogue Response, was able to respond to the group, he did not feel capable to take on such a logistical challenge. The idea was predicated on the teacher being willing and able to manage a complex system of stations and physical movement around the room. Hippo explained:

Uh, for the candy land thing, you guys went on about that for a while. It's a good idea. I like it, but when its stations, I'm wondering...It's hard to monitor each station. I'm not sure what you guys had in mind, but how would you determine... Like would you have to check that person's work before they move on? Cuz then there is the issue that there is still 20 kids in the class, so like, I can't be checking everyone's answer or helping out individual students that may need help at that station and another group is calling me over... "Mr. Hippo can you check my work so I can move on now?" and I'm like: "No, I'm helping them right now." I like the idea, it's great, I just don't know how I would...

This is a good example of where mentors can forget the level of anxiety that can come with a complex lesson plan regardless of how seamless it may become in a well-managed setting. This also identified a problem within the protocol because Hippo was not allowed to talk during open dialogue period and therefore did not inform the group that we had strayed too far from what he would be willing to attempt. This idea may have

inspired other teachers in the room to attempt a similar structure, but it wasted time for the group to dialogue about Hippo's dilemma.

Fortunately, the recommendations section of the protocol produced a number of simple ideas that Hippo was willing to consider. Although Hippo's initial comment about adding another teacher to the room was spoken in jest, the mentors agreed that Hippo should ask the administration to give him a T.A. for that class period who wanted to help teach other students math. It could even be a student who has future hopes of becoming a math teacher. [Note: The administration did agree to this for the next school year.] Out of the sticker conversation came a recommendation to have a series of leveled extrinsic motivators. Betty, another novice teacher, added that Hippo should let the students decide on the list of rewards because then it will have more buy-in. Betty also suggested that the students could earn extra credit points for seeking tutoring outside of class time from other students in the class who have been identified to understand the material. Another teacher on campus has an entire system set up for this style of points. Hippo was encouraged to seek guidance from that master teacher.

Upon returning for the reflection portion of the protocol, Hippo was reticent but optimistic about trying any of the new ideas. He listed some reservations about how to make them work, but he did say that he would try them. Hippo also realized he was informally doing one of the major suggestions of extrinsic motivation:

You brought that up too about the extrinsic motivators. I realized I have already been doing that even though I was not thinking about it when I was asked about

the motivation question. There have been times in the past where like, this one kid, he pretty much wouldn't do anything until I said, "if you do your work, with the last few minutes of class, I'll let you go outside and play basketball" because my room is out in the portables right next to the basketball court, and the PE teachers are pretty good about letting the kids use the basketballs. Um yeah so... Especially on like Fridays for the last 15 or 20 minutes they can just go outside if they want...and like, that's why you see them sometimes. I use that as like a bargaining chip. So I think I kinda just did it. I don't think I was conscious of it. I don't know, but I guess I'll be more aware of that, and when I can use something like that.

By the time Hippo realized he already had a system in place, he could envision other uses for it. His awareness of his actions as a strategy for extrinsic motivation, rather than just a deal between two kids, gave him the legitimacy to seek out other similar applications.

RQ2: Findings for Hippo. Hippo began his dilemma believing that it was his responsibility to address the needs of his six identified students. By the end of the dialogue session, Hippo had a long list of resources and allies within the school that he could ask for help. Hippo's praxis shifted from thinking of his dilemma in isolation to a dilemma that can be solved through soliciting help from several sources. Through the groups encouragement of collaboration Hippo expanded his awareness of the importance of communicating with students' case managers, counselors, advisory teachers, etc. Based on his journal entries after his dilemma, Hippo took the group's advice and

expanded the impact of his efforts by leveraging the students' support system through contacting the students' resource teachers.

When the dialogue group described Hippo's pact with students to play basketball as an instructional strategy, Hippo realized he was informally producing positive student outcomes through extrinsic rewards. Once he became aware that he was already leveraging extrinsic motivation for some students, it was not difficult to see other uses for a similar strategy among his struggling student population. However, during the exit interview, when asked about whether he had expanded the use of extrinsic motivators, he had not tried the technique with other students. He said that the majority of his students showed enough intrinsic motivation to complete their work that he did not need to use that strategy. Although he is not currently expanding the use of extrinsic motivators, his awareness of the strategy will add to his repertoire for future use.

Perhaps the most profound shift in praxis for Hippo was not related to his own dilemma but, instead, to his awareness about his EL students and his decision to advocate for them.

I've started to become more aware of how difficult it is to be an ELL trying to learn things being taught in a different language. I feel that supporting ELLs is a real challenge because there are so many different strategies we can use but picking out the ones that are the most effective for our students depends on a huge amount of factors: How proficient at English are they? Are there other kids who are willing and able to translate for them? What is the task they need to do? etc.

I think that getting a better understanding of what to do in various situations comes with experience, reflecting, and refining. From our discussions over the last 2 meetings, I feel encouraged to try several new strategies to support my ELLs in order to get a feel for what they need to succeed.

When he was asked about his EL students during his exit interview, Hippo shared that he had advocated for one of his students to switch math classes to a much higher level. He realized that English was the barrier that placed one of his EL students in a Pre-Algebra course, when Hippo assessed him to be at the Algebra 2 level. This one act of advocacy will have a profound impact on that students' academic transcript.

Hippo made several other significant shifts in his instruction including creating differentiated worksheets with fundamental skills practice on the same page with more complex problems. For example, he has a review of calculating the area of a rectangle on the same page as his lesson on how to calculate the volume of a prism. Although this creates an access point for students at lower levels, this point of praxis does not have a clear connection to the dialogue group sessions. Hippo did research about his dilemma independently and acted on his findings. This particular shift in praxis is more likely a change caused by his increase in expertise that can be expected as teachers gain experience over time.

The Fonz's Dilemma. The Fonz presented his dilemma description as follows:

How can I provide an equitable learning environment for all my students given that (1) pairing is not the answer; (2) class is a CC3 double block with lower

division skills and math class; (3) you have different types of needs, for example socialization, math support and attention, and then there is only one of me?

The Fonz then presented a number of scenarios where groups of students wanted his attention for different reasons at the same time. One particular issue that surfaced several times was students asking for his help when it is unnecessary.

The majority of the dialogue group's clarifying questions were trying to make sure they had a clear idea of what The Fonz was really asking. Nina's question helped to illuminate how The Fonz was thinking about equity for his students.

Nina: My question is "what is your definition of equitable?"

The Fonz: I just want to be able to give everybody the same amount of time because it ends up being a group of students monopolizing my entire time. Today I was working with one or two kids total, and then there's this one kid, I just called on him once, and I am pretty sure there were times when I didn't say another kids name the entire day.

The Fonz's answer brought to light that he believed that an equal amount of his instructional time is the factor that gives his students an equitable learning experience.

The group did not challenge his thinking of equity but, instead, continued to try to clarify his question.

Researcher: I guess just to rephrase the question, I guess, in my own words, your dilemma in my own way, so I can understand it better. So, what I'm interpreting,

you have all your students and there are certain individuals who really need you to work with them like one-on-one, but you're just one person...

The Fonz: Correct. And can't get to ... or you can but, you're spending way too much time with one person versus other people ...

Nina: You are perceiving that some people are not getting enough of your attention. How do you know they aren't?

The Fonz: How do I know? Because I haven't checked in with them the entire day.

Nathan: [interjected] How are they doing grade wise?

The Fonz: They're doing, they're performing. But, I still want to like, I don't want them being, I don't know, I still want to connect with them and see how they're doing and if they have any questions, have no fear of approaching. But, it's like they see me working with one or two kids and it's like: "Oh, The Fonz is working with him or her" and they know, kinda understand because I'm working with them the other kid probably needs more help.

Devil: Is this your perception of their feelings or they've expressed them?

The Fonz: I, I, that's my perception. Because these kids, the kids who like seldom ask questions are kinda like working on their own, and when they're done it's like "chill." So, I don't want them chilling. I want them working on math. So like to help me would be to get them to help others.

Through repetitious clarifying questions and facial expressions, it was clear members of the group did not necessarily agree that an equal amount of time per student was the way to create an equitable environment. However, that was the dilemma presented so the majority of the group followed the norm of assuming the best intentions and carried on with the protocol, until Devil had a chance to speak.

During the probing questions section of the protocol, Devil took on his self-chosen role of asking about the personal motivations behind instructional decisions:

Devil: I think I'll...

Nathan: [interjected] The most devastating [referring to which question to ask], just to get it out.

Devil: I think I'll do that one first. Have you always had self-esteem issues? or feelings of grandeur, the Superman Complex, like you could really accomplish all of this stuff?

Nathan: Holy Crap. I was just joking.

Although the question seemed harsh to the group, it hit directly at the point that The Fonz's bias about his role in the class was dictating his actions. As a facilitator, I was relieved that the protocol did not force The Fonz to answer such a blunt question on the spot. It was also helpful that the question came from the mentor with a history of asking the personal questions, so it seemed to be more a question based on Devil's style rather than a question meant to offend The Fonz. The Fonz did not appear to take personal offense but giggled instead. However, the line of questioning continued with

different phrasing from various participants. For example, Betty asked: “Do you think your method of you checking in with all the students is the most efficient use of everybody’s class time?”

During the Reflection and re-focus time before the open dialogue began, The Fonz did not directly address Devil’s question, but he did explain his ideal scenario: “If I could stop time and help everybody out that would be best. I don’t think the material is difficult for them if I walk them through it. Cuz I, if I sit down and work with one kid she’ll say ‘I can do this.’” This description was in comparison to the current situation, which he described as:

I could just tell those kids that just want me there, just for the sake of being there, that I need to help someone else. So I’ll help another kid out. So I think that would be the fix for it. At the same time, I don’t want those kids running off to do something else because I’m not there.

As a mentor, this statement set off a number of classroom management red flags for me. The Fonz was clearly worried that the students will not be productive unless he is working with them one-on-one. This is a sign that there are not sufficient systems in place to keep the students on task through self-regulation. Several other comments by The Fonz confirmed my suspicions including his comment about his policies regarding what students do when they finish early:

There isn’t a current routine for finishing early. My policy was... is, if you finish the course work, the rest of the time is yours because I have walked through

everything I needed to say, everything I wanted you to do. So, the rest of the time is yours, so spend it however you want. But, then again, at the same time they are kinda just using their cell phones at the end of the period instead of helping some other kids which is what now I would love to be doing.

This is a prime example of why the CFG dialogue protocol structure should augment but never replace the one-on-one mentorship model. Classroom management issues cannot be solved through suggestions. Mentors need to experience the dynamics of the class, the style of the teacher, and the structure of the academic course in order to guide the novice teacher towards more successful management strategies. This is part of the art of teaching that requires time and various trials. One dialogue session may draw attention to the issue, but the solution will need to be addressed through close mentorship.

When the group then shifted to the open dialogue session, the novice teachers took a much more active role in guiding the discussion. It was unclear if this shift was due to the novice teachers becoming more confident with the group or because they felt more knowledgeable about the subject. Hippo initiated the discussion because he also taught the same level course. He supported The Fonz's observations that students at this level have a very difficult time helping each other because they barely understand the concepts themselves. He also reminded the group that it is difficult to keep students engaged in Math for two full class periods a day. His comments reminded the group that time is a difficult logistical element.

Betty then advocated for the use of one-on-one advisory time. Although her advice was met with cynicism, she walked the group through her process of holding the students accountable and involving their advisory teacher. Her explanation addressed the group's concerns and convinced us that advisory was a viable option. She also suggested initiating student pairings during advisory so The Fonz could work with the two students and make sure his expectations for conduct and productivity were clear. This idea seemed intriguing to the group and there were several murmurs of agreement and interest.

Nathan suggested that some students may not need a check in which essentially challenged The Fonz's idea of equity, but the tone was benevolent. Nathan couched his suggestion in a personal example, but his point was that some students do not require personal attention to succeed. His suggestion went unchallenged by the group. He also suggested the use of Khan Academy on their smart phones as a possible tutorial, but it was determined that not all the students had smart phones so the idea did not get any traction. Without explicitly stating it, Nathan dropped the idea of using smart phones as soon as he realized that not all students would have equal access to the technology. There was no discussion of whether the students with an identified need could use their phones as a resource if others did not which would be parallel to the use of translation devices by EL students.

Nina also tried to address The Fonz's concept of equity. She suggested that students may be asking for his attention because of socio-emotional issues and not

because they actually need his help in math. Without getting into the detail of exact instructional strategies, she suggested that he determine his students' motivations for attention. This perspective was supported by Devil who followed up by explaining his earlier probing question:

I wanted to go back to the ... my thing about self-esteem issues. Not as a negative, but more as, I think the real challenge sometimes is when you get into that position where you've got this group of students that, no matter what you seem to try, just doesn't seem to work and you start questioning whether you're doing anything right and ... And then that Superman Complex where I've got to accomplish so much.

This qualification of the earlier question had a much more compassionate tone. It became clear that Devil was trying to relate to The Fonz and help him see that he was assuming that he personally had to solve too much at once.

During the recommendation period, the group pivoted topics and focused on methods for providing small rewards to increase student motivation. This included student choice rewards, exit tickets as a method to check student progress for rewards, and giving rewards to students who help other students. The ideas for motivating students flowed freely and participants were chiming in on each other's ideas. Motivating students seemed to be a much more comfortable topic for the group to discuss.

In the Dialogue Response, The Fonz responded to the dialogue group beginning with the idea to have individual conferences with students. He was intrigued but

trepidatious about the idea. He was also interested in the idea of a reward system but nervous about how to implement it.

The motivators that could work ... Oh, having the kid who needs help reward the kid who helped them. I have a fear that they just might end up gaming the system. If you pretend that you need help, then I'll come over and help you and then you will tell The Fonz that you help me and I ... You helped me and you got it and we both deserve a prize. That's one of my fears because they're not dumb, they're bright and some of them would have the ability to do that.

Although his concerns about students gaming the system may seem harsh, it is also an indicator that he is working with a population that has adapted to habitual failure. Devil addressed this concern by stating:

My recommendation was "Be easy on yourself." So, that's kind of what I was getting at with some of the probing questions. You're not going to be able to get all the way through that way. And, there is always going to be some student or students, unfortunately, that are always going to do whatever they can to get your attention in a negative way, or in a positive way. I mean, they're asking for help. Goodness.

Although Devil's suggestion did not include an instructional strategy, it did give The Fonz license to be a fallible human. It also built a relationship that Devil does not judge him but, instead, understands his challenge. The Fonz responded with vulnerable honesty that actually provided the missing insight into his dilemma:

The Fonz: Ya. That's why I'm so torn because I do want to help them because they are asking for help. And, I'm used to kids who if they do not get it just sit quietly and don't do anything. So, because they are so vocal about it, I want to help them learn and given the fact that these kids will be promoted next year, grade-wise, doesn't really matter because they will be in Algebra I. I want them to be able to have the tools to move on. So, that's why I'm so frustrated that I'm spending so much time with particular kids.

The Fonz wanted to know how to equitably reach the introverts when the extroverts are constantly seeking his attention. I don't think the group fully understood The Fonz's dilemma until this comment, and at that point the session was over. This is another example of when the one-on-one mentorship model needs to supplement the dialogue group. The Fonz needed guidance and perhaps help accessing information about how to reach introverted students, and how to manage extroverted students so they have sufficient talk time.

After the dialogue group ended, The Fonz continued to work on his dilemma through a different support structure. In his journal entry about his dilemma, The Fonz stated:

There are staff members that I can collaborate with, namely the CC3 PLC.

Because we are all in the same boat, we all have to plan for the same classes and we can share ideas and activities for what worked with our students and what did not. Because the PLC also includes veteran teachers they can also share insight on

why these students believe/think/ behave in a certain manner so that we can present the material so that it avoids that problem entirely.

This supports the problem of comparable mentorship discussed in Chapter One.

Although The Fonz's mentor is a dedicated staff member who wants to provide guidance and support to The Fonz, she does not teach lower division math classes.

RQ2: Findings for The Fonz. The Fonz's shift in praxis mostly relates to his sense of awareness. The non-threatening but repetitious suggestions by the group that talking with every student was not the most equitable use of his time did sink in. The Fonz was able to make a shift from his goal of equally talking to each student during a class period to a more equitable method of reaching the students who genuinely still need his help. To reach that level of praxis, The Fonz surveyed his students and directly asked them if they needed his attention as often as they ask for it. During his exit interview, The Fonz described that several of the students admitted that they could work more independently, while others asked for more help. This is an important finding in terms of The Fonz's praxis towards social justice because he shifted to using student voice from the surveys, instead of his own perception to guide his instructional decisions. During the exit interview, The Fonz elaborated:

Researcher: On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being a total a total victim of circumstance and 10 being an active participant in the solution, where do you think you started and where do you think you ended with your dilemma and why?

The Fonz: The solution? Um.

Researcher: More like, um, do you feel like this dilemma is just happening to you and there is nothing you can do about it or do you think you can actively fix the situation?

The Fonz: I definitely do think that I can actively fix it and I think I have, at least from my point of view, and I guess that's the most important. Cuz, at the beginning of the thing I was like "I have so much... like the Devil was saying ... I have all this stuff I want to do; or all these kids I need to check in on and help and our expressions [meaning expressions from dialogue group members] is "Who are they?" No I don't need to check in with every single one of them. I don't need to hold everybody's hand that they are working good. It's just what I wanted to do.

Um. So, I guess, I'm basically at the same point I want to say because if my dilemma was basically forced on myself because I allowed my students to need me that way. And now, I'm kind of at the same place because I'm trying not to hold their hands so much. So I guess 7, 8 is where I was, where I am, ya.

The Fonz shows significant growth in his praxis through this quote. He makes several comments that show a level of self reflection that was previously absent. He also shifts the responsibility to himself rather than blaming the students for taking his time, he now phrases it as allowing himself to be used in that way. This is a profound shift in mentality that can allow The Fonz to improve his praxis because he is aware that his ability to affect change in his room is within his power and responsibility to accomplish.

Devil's comments also affected The Fonz. He stated during his exit interview that he realized that just because a student is loudly asking for his attention, does not mean that he needs to cater to that student. He also stated that he is no longer feeling stretched as thin. This is an important indicator for The Fonz's praxis because, even if he can reflect and be more equitable towards his students by helping those with the greatest need rather than the loudest voices, if he has no energy to do so praxis is thwarted. By working on his student relationships and classroom management, The Fonz has more energy and therefore more praxis to improve his instruction for his students with the greatest needs. He also has continued to focus on adding more structure to his CC3 class including how to keep the students on task throughout a two-hour class.

Betty's dilemma. Betty's dilemma did not stem from an instructional issue but rather an administrative decision. She explains:

So this school year, before the school year started, the Administration said that my 6th period class was an integrated science class. Then, the day before school started, it was changed and now instead of saying integrated science, that science class said it was actually an honors bio class. The kids were not notified of the change. I was told the change was made due to pressure from the parents. So here is the problem. I have kids that have never been in an honors science class before, They were prepared coming in for integrated science, but it actually is an honors science class. Immediately, I noticed a huge difference between these honors kids and my other 3 honors classes, in terms of their behavior, maturity,

academic performance, basically everything... So, my question is: "how can I make accommodations for my 6th period without modifying the curriculum. I can't make it easier, I can't change anything because next year they go on to AP Bio and if I make it easier, I am putting kids into AP Bio that are falsely raising their scores... Also, that class, it is my smallest honors class, and in that class there is a totally different energy but in a good way! That class, they are visibly more driven than the other classes. As soon as I do something they are like "ok! We are in this together! And they do it and they get it done. Is it right? No. Not always, but they try so freaking hard... And the students who are in trouble, they know they are in trouble so they pull me over and ask me for help so it's like a good thing. But, still, it hasn't made that much of a difference in terms of ...class average is extremely consistent even if some individuals have gone up.

It is important to highlight that Betty's dilemma has equity and equality at odds with each other. If she makes equitable modifications to a single class period, it would inflate the grade point average of the class and therefore inflate each student's ability to compete for a slot in Biology AP. That decision would in turn lead to a lack of equality across Betty's class periods in terms of assessing who can move into AP Biology, an impacted subject that does not always have room for all the students who want to take the course. Therefore, Betty is forced into a position between being equal to all the students who are working to gain entry into A.P. Biology and being equitable to a group of students who have been placed into a course beyond their current skill level. Upon

reflection with her mentor, Betty realized her main goal was to increase the accessibility of the content for her students while upholding the rigor of the course. Betty settled on asking for help finding accommodations for the one group of students without modifying the curriculum.

The dialogue group then moved on to clarifying questions including this exchange, which can speak for itself:

Bernice: Are there any kids in the class who are doing well? Who you could see, like being good enough to be....

Betty: Good enough for AP Bio?

Bernice: Well, being good enough to be in the other class? In your other honors class, do you know what I mean?

Betty: There is about... 6.

Nathan: Out of 31?

Betty: Yeah

Nina: What do you consider an accommodation?

Betty: What do I consider an accommodation, like the style of how I teach, not actually the material of what I'm teaching.

Nathan: So they signed up to be in integrated science and the school just decided to switch it to an honors class... without consulting the students at all...

Betty: that's right, or me.

Nathan: So they are in a level that they were never... That they're not even qualified to be in?

Betty: Yeah,

Nathan: I didn't know that was legal...

Betty: well it depends on what your definition of qualified is...

Nathan: Well 68%...

Betty: I was told it was because of a push from some parents, so it's not all of the parents in the class that pushed the change...

Bernice: this is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard, I mean that's not true, but it's a very ridiculous thing.

Researcher: Wait, but one thing that maybe would help with that is that they are in honors English right?

Betty: oh, ok yes. This may be a bit complicated. Should I just explain it?

(General muttering among participants on the subject of Eng. & Science) Ok, so for the Change Project you have to have the same Science and English class. So how it had worked is that if you didn't take honors English then you couldn't be in honors science or if you were not qualified for honors science then you couldn't be in honors English because it was an all or nothing kind of deal with the honors. So what had happened in the past was that if the students' math level wasn't high enough they couldn't take honors science because they didn't fill the math requirement. So transitive property, if their math level wasn't high enough

and they couldn't take honors science then they couldn't take honors English. And parents were like; that's so messed up. So they were going to try something new this year. We are going to try to have honors English. Never been done before. But, they didn't have a high enough math so they are going to be integrated science. Then the parents were like, what the hell if they are signed up for honors English why aren't they in honors science too...

Bernice: Because you are not good at everything.

Betty: Well, this is what was explained to me, so at the last minute because of the push from parents, the admin were just like, ok fine go ahead be in honors Biology.

The Fonz: What did the parents think at parent-teacher conferences?

Betty: Is that clarifying or probing because I want to answer it but.

Researcher: No, no, that's clarifying.

Betty: That's clarifying, ok; none of the parents were upset. None of them were accusatory towards me at all, like I thought they would be because they are honors parents, but they were all just like "Thank you so much for all the help you've been giving my child," like what else can they do. And they were all super polite, which I was not expecting. Like when this whole thing happened, I was scared like; I was really surprised actually. They were fine. They were concerned, but they were fine.

The group was noticeably upset by Betty's dilemma and the rest of the clarifying questions were about how the students move on from this point and what courses they will be eligible to take the following year. If the students are ineligible to take A.P Biology, the alternative is usually Chemistry which the students will not have the math prerequisites to enter. This will leave the students without a science class option for their sophomore year.

Although the protocol was set to move on to a silent time to write down probing questions, the clarifying questions continued:

Bernice: Does admin take responsibility for this?

Betty: Um, they're aware of it. I've sent them extremely documented emails, they know, I've probably talked to them four times about this so, they're pretty... they're very aware of it.

Nathan: What are they expecting to get out of it? To have a whole class fail?

Betty: No, most of them will pass, well they will get contracts. But, it's still...

Nathan: What are your class averages? I mean you said those are your test averages, what are your class scores?

Betty: Um, for this class, it's like 79%. But, other ones are... I can't remember off the top of my head but about 10% higher so about 87%, 88%, which is pretty good for an honors class, so yeah they are about 10% lower.

Nathan: (Simultaneously with Betty): So high 70's. That's not as bad as I thought it was going to be.

Betty: But, also, if you look at the number of A's in that class. In my other classes about 50% of the kids have A's. In this class, I think 2 kids have A's and, if you look at their scores, it is like a 90.1%.

Bernice: I'm sorry I have another question: You said you don't have time to see all of them after school, which I understand. Is it because... Do you have kids that want to come in to work that you are unable to spend time with?

Betty: Never. No, I meant hypothetically if all of them did want, then I wouldn't. But, that's not the case. I always have time.

The group finally moved on to the probing questions. The interesting finding about the probing questions was that each person chose a different angle to address the problem from the systemic level down to a particular instructional practice, such as extra time for tests. It is also important to note that Devil was absent from this dialogue session, and Betty expressed disappointment for the loss of his perspective and style of questioning. Therefore, as her mentor, I added probing questions that I thought would fit Devil's usual personal line of questioning. For example:

Bernice: How can you use this experience and (inaudible) to show admin that the kid needs to be placed appropriately?

Nina: When you are teaching or grading test what skills do you discover they are lacking?

Hippo: What would your goals for your kids in that class be if not for just preparing them for AP Bio?

Nathan: Would the students understand the content if it was presented in a different manner?

Researcher: I'm going to do a Devil question and then a researcher question, (laughter). So for the Devil question: Do you think it is your ethics or school policy that is keeping you trying to keep the classes not modified? And then, my question is: Do you think this class is adding or subtracting from the students' resilience?

The probing questions continued for several rounds. The repeating themes within the questions were about the future welfare and mindset of the students and whether Betty has the time to teach both the skills of how to be an honors student and the curriculum with or without modifications. Betty responded to the best of her knowledge but, the majority of probing questions were to satisfy the curiosity of the participants rather than focusing on her exact dilemma. Betty attempted to redirect the participants from a state of dismay to a state of constructive ideas several times. She tried to advocate for practical suggestions to equitably support and uplift her students, but the participants were distracted by the overall inequity.

When the group moved on to the open dialogue session, Bernice exemplified the sentiment of the group by stating:

Bernice: My initial impression is Holy Shit.

Nathan: I'll second that.

Bernice: Who made that decision and what?! That is so, I mean, you get this group of kids who is not entitled, who is, like the initial... Well they are just kicking the shit out of teachers is what the admin is doing. Like, that's awesome that you are giving me these kids that are so willing to learn but then giving them an impossible task and then punishing them for not completing it. That is the definition of torture and, as a teacher of course, any teacher that is a good teacher, is gonna bend over backwards to help these kids, but is that sending the wrong message? To admin and parents? Just like any kid can be an honors kid, just change the name of every class... Our teachers will work three times as hard to pull them up to where they are supposed to be... Do we have that kind of policy? It's just fucked up no matter what direction you try to look at it.

Given that initial impression, the group moved on to attempting to suggest ways to help Betty. Nina suggested that the paired English class or math classes could share some of the burden of skill building. Hippo tried to hone in on what aspect of the course the students struggled with the most. But, then the conversation returned to a deep concern about the fate of the students. The participants were concerned about their resilience, their ability to get into college, and their ability to retain information if they skip a year of science. The participants were getting very distressed and off topic. As the facilitator, I had to stop the conversation and return the group to Betty's original question, which was also written on the wall. The group dutifully returned to Betty's dilemma, but they did not offer any instructional strategies that would apply to her specific request for

accommodations she could make during class. Suggestions included tutoring outside of class hours, pairing the students with a student from one of the other class periods, and peer tutoring from sophomores who took the course last year. As time ran out, there were more questions generated than answers.

In her Dialogue Response, Betty began first by stating: "Ok, well I wrote down Holy Shit just because it was said a lot." Then she managed to extract a surprising number of concrete suggestions given the amount of time the group was off topic. She agreed to offer tutoring time outside of class hours for all her classes. She also realized that she had an informal tutoring group already available based on the students who eat lunch in her room. They are alumni of her honors Biology course and they enjoy helping other students so she decided to leverage that wealth of knowledge. She also agreed that explicitly teaching higher order thinking skills was a necessary component that she can either work to build into the English curriculum or set up as the alternate curriculum to be used whenever she has a substitute. Although the group pushed back on this idea, Betty stood her ground because she did not think she could give up any more curriculum days and provide sufficient content to prepare her students for A.P. Biology.

The protocol devolved into another 20 minutes of the participants sharing their dismay for the admin and their concern for the future of the students. It was agreed that Betty would not fail any of the students, instead she would give them any contract necessary to give them the opportunity to pass the course. That way none of the students would be deficient in credits to graduate. Although Betty felt a strong sense of

camaraderie, she did not receive any silver bullet solution. The rest of the participants left the meeting fired up with a loss of respect for the administration.

RQ2 Findings for Betty. Betty's dilemma is a good example of how a dialogue group can provide support and camaraderie, but it did not affect her praxis. Betty entered the situation well aware of her circumstances and a very strong set of personal beliefs. She was already taking action to make the administration aware of the issue and she was advocating for her students' future class schedule with the counselors. The component she repeatedly asked for from the dialogue group was accommodations she could provide to one class while maintaining the same curriculum and assessments for all her class periods. Although the dialogue group understood the task, they did not produce any viable suggestions for what Betty could do as an in-class accommodation.

The majority of the time was used to help the rest of the group wrap their heads around the dilemma. Even with re-direction from the facilitator, the group did not spend much time producing ideas for accommodations. This is partially because some of the group members did not agree with Betty's philosophy to maintain equality across all her classes, but she made her beliefs clear and resolute.

When asked about whether the dialogue session affected her praxis to affect change on her dilemma in the exit interview Betty stated:

Betty: I really only had one action so that was to encourage the students that were struggling in the class to meet with me and complete study guides, show me their corrected study guides, have me correct them, kind of have a conversation with

them. And sometimes it's also turned into a group activity just by nature because there was more than just one student that were struggling in the class.

Researcher: And would you say that you came to that action by way of the dialogue process, or is that something you kind of came up with on your own and you were sort of separate it from the group discussions?

Betty: I think the group discussion reinforced that that idea was not the worst idea ever, but it was something that I had already thought about. I just needed the extra verification, saying Saying ya that's an ok idea. Because a lot of the group discussion, which totally makes sense, was focusing on the fact that I was put in the dilemma in the first place.

Betty continued to advocate for her students and affect the final administrative decision to allow her students into Biotechnology a year early. It is a science elective that will earn them Chemistry credit without the math requirement. Betty was frustrated that the participants' needs to understand the ramifications of her dilemma superseded her desire to learn equitable teaching methods to improve the accessibility of her course content.

Nina's dilemma. Nina presented her dilemma as:

How would I scaffold essays to stimulate quality answers without directly discussing the answers I am expecting? And the reason why I don't want to directly discuss the answers because they aren't ... well, there are students who will just regurgitate it back and it doesn't seem like it's an accurate assessment of

their learning. One prompt is like “Show how Romeo and Juliet changed by discussing three stages of the hero’s journey that show the development throughout the play.” So I definitely went over the hero’s journey chart, and then in groups they applied the book to the hero’s journey. But, I didn’t explicitly tell them to discuss how the characters were changing as they were filling out charts, so that was my way of directly avoiding discussing it but still giving them a scaffold to see what the questions would be.

Nina’s dilemma was an excellent representation of a teacher in their second year of the induction program. She knew that the students were frustrated and under performing at a task, and she had tried a number of solutions over the course of her first year teaching. As a second year teacher, she was ready to focus on a particular aspect of her instructional practice she wanted to improve. She was also willing to admit that her own presentation of the material could be the source of the problem. This was a courageous dilemma to share with the group because it left her completely vulnerable to the group’s critique.

During the clarifying questions it became clear that she saw parallel concerns among her honors freshmen and her college prep juniors, as well as among their in-class and take-home essays. Many of these questions asked were about her grading structure and how she determined if a student missed the mark. This is where there was a significant difference between the dialogue group participants’ subject areas. As a participant mentor, I noticed that the science and history teachers were expecting a rubric

with defined parameters for what determines an A versus a B. As an English teacher, the grading was more subjective, based on whether the students could convey their understanding of the writing prompt. This led to an additional line of questioning:

Researcher: When the students miss the mark, do they tend to miss it because they don't understand the concepts, like symbolism, or because they don't connect it to the book, like maybe they didn't read the book, or the structure of the essay, like they don't know how to write an essay?

Nina: I think they're good with structure. I think that could be like a subpart of my dilemma, where I actually don't know if the poor writing is due to not reading because in that case they deserve a lower grade, or it makes sense that they can't write well on it. But, it could be like a combination where they didn't read it that well plus they don't know the concepts, I didn't teach it clearly, or I didn't scaffold it too well. So, as a result they can't find the appropriate quotes to support it or write a thesis statement that answers the question.

As a mentor, this raised a red flag for me because an essay is an assessment, and each assessment should have a clear goal of what it is assessing. Her lack of clarity about what aspect of student understanding she was assessing could be the cause of a lack of clarity in the student outcomes. It was also determined that the student essays felt like cookie cutter answers because they lacked the depth Nina was hoping for, and she was willing to admit that she did not know how to properly prepare the students for that level of depth.

The group continued to ask clarifying questions to get a feel for the span of the entire unit from the introduction of the novel to the final essay such as:

Betty: What's like the time period kind of between when you do one of the scaffolds to have discussion, and when they have to write the essay, and when the essay is due?

Nina: I think I've always had trouble with pacing. I'll start scaffolding like two weeks before I give them the essay, and then there will be a couple weeks where they have already started the book and I don't know what the prompt will be. Or, I, ya, like I don't have time to do the Socratic until closer to the essay and by then maybe they think they should have had more time to processes it.

Nina not only deprivatized her practice but willingly admitted that she was unsure of her choices. This left plenty of room for suggestions.

The probing questions section of the protocol is meant to provide reflective questions that are not just suggestions hidden in the form of a question. However, the participants struggled to phrase their probing questions as such. For example, Francesca asked:

So I was wondering, if you have a number of different essays, I assume you write a number of different essays during the year ... Do you scaffold essay writing skills to build up to what you want so you start with one skill at the beginning of the year and then you add on as time passes?

There were no other English teachers in the room, so this was an example of the rest of the subject area teachers asking about practices they have used to encourage depth in the students' writing within their subject area. The majority of the probing questions asked about how much Nina prepared her students by sharing her expectations via examples, rubrics, or scaffolding. Several suggestions, couched in questions, related to scaffolding to make her method of thinking explicit, by telling her students what she thinks about while preparing for and answering an essay prompt. The rest of the probing questions were related to whether Nina had a pre-determined correct answer in mind or how broad a range of ideas she was willing to accept.

Nina responded favorably to all the suggestions and wanted to try several of them. Her most pressing concern was time management. For example, she did not have time to write example essays to show students her level of expectations. As for the breadth of answers she would accept, Nina was open to any line of reasoning that a student could support with evidence from the text.

The group moved on to the open dialogue, and The Fonz immediately brought up the suggestion of backwards planning. Many around the table agreed. He explained:

Ultimately you need to know where you are going ... what kind of answers do you want to get, so you could scaffold them toward that without blatantly telling them "this is the answer I want." You need to know where you are going before you can plan a way to get there.

Backwards planning can also include showing the students sample work at the level of depth Nina is hoping to see in their writing. Bernice and Hippo chimed in to encourage the use of quality sample work before students prepare for the essay. They both made the point that this would increase the equity of her instruction because students who have not produced the level of depth she expects, can have a chance to see what they are trying to produce. Francesca also suggested that she does not need to write sample essays but, instead, should keep quality examples from year to year or across class periods and remove the students' names. Even as her essay prompts change, she can explain the elements that make the sample examples quality writing.

Devil, as per his style, suggested throwing out rubrics entirely. He thought that the students were disempowered by believing there was a right answer, and they were writing what they thought Nina wanted them to say, rather than letting their creativity drive their essay. Nathan agreed with Devil and added that Nina could include the expected depth into the prompt but encourage students to draw from their own experiences to elaborate on the prompt.

Francesca took that idea a step further and suggested that Nina could separate out the purpose of each writing assignment. First, there could be a simple assessment of whether the students read *Romeo and Juliette*. Second, the students could write about their own lives in relation to the Hero's Journey. This would increase the relevance for the students. This would allow Nina to teach the Hero's journey through the story of *Romeo and Juliette* while producing non-cookie cutter essays. The rest of the group

chimed in with all sorts of ideas, such as using Star Wars or Harry Potter for the Hero's Journey.

The recommendations portion of the protocol fell into two themes: efficient strategies for how to grade essays and alternative methods for how to prepare students for an in-class essay. Some suggestions included writing the five most common errors in the essays and only circling those types of errors on the students' papers. Then the students have to figure out which error they made. It was also agreed as a group that the students need scaffolding in the days (not weeks) before an essay because they do not retain enough detail across multiple days, given that they are also trying to retain information across six different classes.

By the time the dialogue session moved on to the Nina's Dialogue Response, the group had accumulated a huge number of suggestions. She was grateful for the suggestions and admitted that there were many ideas she had not tried. Nina ended by saying:

I'll try to apply some of these things. I don't think they'll take as long as I thought that they would. There are definitely things I knew I should do but that I was telling myself I didn't have time to do, or I would have to prioritize because I can't try all of them. Yeah, I think that's all I have... Thank you everyone.

RQ2: Findings for Nina. Nina began her Dilemma Discussion from a strong point of praxis because she already self reflected about her dilemma and entered the process aware that her actions could be both a cause and a solution to her dilemma. She

identified two barriers to her praxis: a lack of ideas for how to improve her instructional techniques and her own bias about the length of time it would take her to implement new strategies. The entire dialogue session was a virtual flood of ideas. Nina could not write the ideas fast enough; luckily she has the transcription for a reference. The portion of the recommendations component of the protocol about grading essays, although seemingly unrelated to her original dilemma, addressed Nina's concern for timing. As any new lesson planning must be portioned out of the same available hours as the assessments of previous assignments and the human need for work-life balance, any alleviation of effort in one area can afford more time to another.

Nina shared her reflection about her dilemma in her journal and it expressed that her goal to improve her praxis was not only an instructional goal but a deeply personal goal as well:

A version of my class more equitable for students is one in which scaffolding for essays allows students to practice the skills tested as precisely and enjoyably as possible. Even though students are not aware of teachers' behind-the-scenes "scaffolding," they unconsciously enjoy class more when they feel an alignment between the assessment and the lesson. What pains me most is hearing students say after writing an in-class essay is "It's not fair" or "We never went over that" and knowing deep down that it is true. I feel I have robbed them of enjoyment of the novel and the class - and I feel deeply guilty about it so would love for more

support in avoiding this issue of non-alignment of my lessons with the final assessment.

This journal entry expressed Nina's awareness that it is her responsibility to equitably align her lesson scaffolding with her assessment strategy. She is aware of its impact on her students and she has the desire to affect change. This is an example of how the dialogue group and the one-on-one mentorship component could work in tandem. The dialogue session gave Nina a long list of ideas and she seemed interested in implementing them. But, ideas are easier shared than implemented. Her mentor working with her to implement her chosen changes in her lesson structure could augment her efforts.

During the exit interview Nina shared her improved sense of empowerment to affect change in her instructional practice. She explained:

Nina: I think originally just not being able to think of how to improve their performance on essays made me feel like I was a victim. I just couldn't control what students I get and would have to accept that they couldn't make too many gains in essay writing and, after hearing the solutions offered by the dialogue group, my mind was more open to the possibilities. I was in control of those students' performances, although I know the learning is still in their hands too.

Researcher: Nice. And, if you discovered any actions that you wanted to take to solve your dilemma, could you share an example.

Nina: Sure, one solution that I think was really memorable was the idea that I should show the students sample essays earlier in the process. So, I used to show sample essays after I graded them and they had already written them, and just to let them know that the grades they got can be compared to this high scoring sample essay, and kind of just to curb, I guess, any questions about “why did I receive this low grade?” But, now I think placing the sample essay before they turn in a final draft makes sense because then they may actually have time to maybe learn from the model and get their grades up higher, and practice the skills they observed in the model essay immediately.

This quote clearly shows Nina’s praxis. She reflected on the inequity of showing the students her expectations after they couldn’t do anything about it. She also recognized that she was showing students the quality essays as a method to shield herself from students challenging her about their grade. This deepens the inequity because students affected by the opportunity gap were robbed of their agency to ask her individually about why they received a lower grade and how to improve. By taking action through her praxis, Nina flipped the lesson structure to make her expectations known to all her students. The new structure empowers the students the opportunity to ask for individual clarification, learn from the model, and affect change on their own writing before it is graded. For such a small change in lesson timing, the effects on student equity are significant.

RQ2: Intersections across dialogue sessions. The praxis of the novice teachers was affected by more than their own dilemma session. As participants in the other teachers' dilemma sessions, the novice teachers heard issues and solutions that have parallels to their own instructional practices. The novice teachers completed journal entries after each dialogue session, and they often referenced a gain in awareness about a student group, school structure, or instructional practice. In an effort to extract what the novice teachers learned from each other's dilemma sessions, during the exit interviews I asked: "If you discovered any actions that you wanted to take to help solve your dilemma, could you share an example?" I also asked, "If you discovered any actions you wanted to take that's on a completely unrelated aspect of your classroom, as you reflected on any of the dialogue sessions, could you share an example?"

The following findings section is broken into the common themes that arose from reviewing all the novice teachers' journals and exit interviews.

RQ2: Making skills instruction explicit. The finding with the greatest intensity and frequency, and referenced at length among all five novice teachers, was the desire to make skill instruction explicit. All of the teachers admitted to focusing in their classrooms on what content they were teaching, instead of teaching the skill required for the students to complete the task assigned. This shift in praxis augments instructional equity because it makes the skills to achieve success visible for those struggling students who may not have already acquired it. Hippo's explanation exemplifies the sentiment of all five novice teachers:

I feel that my next steps are teaching my students problem-solving skills. Having a process for them to go to when they encounter new problems would greatly help them not only in math but in life as well. And these skills are accessible to students at any skill level. They can then make connections between the old and new problems and hopefully devise a plan that they can carry out. I've found a great resource in a book called How to Solve It by George Polya, which goes into great detail on how to teach problem solving skills. I am currently trying to integrate explicit teaching of these skills into my lessons and when helping students individually.

Betty found that the students are asking for the same style of instruction and simultaneously solving her issue of how to teach both skills and all the content standards with insufficient time for both. She explained:

I think in order for my students to be more successful, showing them learning and study strategies would be useful. I actually recently gave my students a survey, and without me even providing this as an option, I had several students request that I provide lessons or tips for learning and study strategies. Some of the students suggested I make YouTube videos (as a joke because they found my YouTube channel), but I think I could maybe make instructional videos, like "How to read a textbook," "How to study efficiently", etc. and post them on the channel! This could especially be helpful for my 6th period class. I think this could be a good solution for me especially since Change Project takes up so much

of my “extra” time that I would normally have during class. These skills are, I believe, more important than memorizing random biological facts.

Although this was not one of the solutions suggested in her dilemma, she was aware that she was searching for alternative instructional options and was open to a suggestion that may otherwise have been passed over. As her mentor, I have experience making videos for a flipped classroom structure and I can guide her through this process, thereby-leveraging the strength of the dialogue structure and the mentorship component of the current induction program.

RQ2: Advocating for particular students. The improper placement of students was a concern across four of the five novice teachers. These teachers did not just express a concern but took responsibility to advocate for their students. Betty had the largest task of advocating for the placement of an entire class period of students which she succeeded in completing. Nathan identified the issue during his pre-interview explaining that he advocated for students with IEP’s to enter into his class when they have achieved the reading level necessary to pass the class instead of being placed by age. The Fonz identified an administrative glitch: “students who fail CC3, the lowest level math class that we have, they are being moved on to Algebra 1. The administration is just setting up the students to fail Algebra 1 and repeat it again and again.” Hippo’s concern was for the advanced students rather than the failing students. He explained:

Betty’s dilemma is similar to mine in that they stem from poor placement of students. Having a better placement process would definitely be helpful. For

example, I have 2 foreign students who have skills that are at an Algebra 2 level, but because of poor English, they could not understand the directions when they took the placement test. At the same time, I have students who are around a 5th or 6th grade level. Proper placement in a course plays a huge role in whether students are going to benefit or be wasting their time. If the admin truly cares about the students, they should really reevaluate how students are placed and at the same time be flexible about allowing students to change courses in the middle of the year. I am doing my best to differentiate, but I think it's unreasonable to expect a teacher to have to pull materials on other topics from more advanced or easier courses on a day-by-day basis.

The novice teachers believed that student advocacy was part of their praxis and professional responsibility. These are profound moments of equity for the students they impact because it will have a lasting impact on their transcripts and access to colleges.

RQ2: Collaborating with colleagues. Four of the five novice teachers expressed an increased interest in collaborating with colleagues by the end of the study. Two of the teachers only referenced teachers within their own department, but the other two included a broad range of staff members that could help them provide more equitable instruction. The Fonz referenced his PLC group, which is a new initiative on campus. Each novice teacher made a reference to the fact that they *intended* to seek out their colleagues and collaborate, but the study ended before these intentions could be verified. Continued collaboration could affect the novice teachers' praxis for their current dilemmas as well

as those in the future but that will be the prerogative of the novice teachers.

Summary of Findings

Each novice teacher began the study with a significant dilemma of equity and a shaky sense of personal efficacy to properly address their dilemma. While working in relative isolation, the novice teachers were attempting to meet their students' needs based on their prior experiences and tacit understanding of instructional differentiation. By the end of their dilemma sessions, each novice teacher had a more nuanced understanding of their dilemma and several ideas for how to equitably meet the needs of their diverse student populations. Although the novice teachers did not accept all suggestions, they did leave with a greater sense of personal efficacy through a greater sense of camaraderie and collaboration.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

During this study, the novice teachers and mentors, using the CFG consultancy dialogue protocol, discussed dilemmas regarding how to narrow the opportunity gap in their courses, given their diverse student population. This increased their communication capacity to discuss the opportunity gap and grapple with how to differentiate for their students in an equitable way.

Chapter IV revealed three main findings: (1) Novice teachers have significant issues of equity in their classes; (2) Novice teachers do not enter the field fully prepared to address issues of the opportunity gap through equitable instruction; and (3) The novice teachers completed their dilemma sessions with a more nuanced understanding of their instructional dilemma, strategies for how to address their dilemmas, and a greater sense of personal efficacy.

This chapter discusses first the importance of these findings in relationship to the existing literature, and then the implications of the findings for continuing research and practice.

The findings from this study provide potentially useful information for directors of teacher induction programs regarding the potential benefits of using a CFG dialogue protocol to bolster the current mentorship structure and considerations in empowering novice teachers to dialogue about issues of equity, and ideas about the facilitation of teacher praxis.

Interpretation of Findings for Research Question One

RQ1: How do novice teachers in a suburban school district with shifting demographic diversity make sense of racial, ethnic and socioeconomic inequities?

The findings produced by this study provided insight into how the novice teachers thoughts on student equity and their capacity to provide equitable instruction. The study then identified current barriers to the novice teachers' capacity for equitable instruction and facilitators provided by the dialogue sessions, to improve that capacity. The majority of the issues of equity identified by the novice teachers concerned socio-economic factors, the first barrier being access to resources and academic support. A second identified barrier was the novice teachers' capacity to identify students' needs and match such needs to an equitable method of instruction. The final barrier the novice teachers identified was the more systemic issue of student course placement in comparison to their ability. These are issues that teachers have identified as systemic problems for years, through trade journals, research articles, union contract bargaining and staff lounges. They are a consistent source of concern and by-products of limited public school budgets. These are issues that will not disappear any time soon and, therefore, they are exactly the issues that novice teachers need to build capacity to address at the micro-level of their own classroom.

The novice teachers were correct in their assessment of socio-economics as a significant contributing factor to student achievement. The novice teachers were all able to identify issues of inequitable access to resources, such as tutoring. Three out of the

five teachers described their attempts to tutor students during the advisory period or afterschool to provide free and equitable access to one-on-one tutoring. The novice teachers were also able to identify ways that they help students access necessary resources, such as how to print papers in the library. Access to resources was one component of socio-economic inequity that the novice teachers felt comfortable addressing.

One interesting suggestion by Nathan was to provide socio-economically disadvantaged students with an opportunity for exposure to historic and cultural experiences:

For WWII, I take them to the USS Hornet. Uh and have them actually touch the history, talk to... a lot of docents there are former crewmembers of the Hornet and that they actually get it from the proverbial horse's mouth. I think those type[s] of opportunities are really valuable and you start to bridge that gap... as you know they [are] difficult to find, they're difficult to implement, they're difficult to fund. And I think that would be our greatest obstacle.

Nathan brought up the key factor of funding for the school to provide equitable learning opportunities.

In higher income suburban school districts one might assume that all the students have been exposed to museums and cultural opportunities by their parents. This is where students in a lower socio-economic class may fall through the cracks. Teachers may choose not to do the work necessary to find and fund a field trip that most of the students

have already seen. Alternatively, teachers could close the cultural exposure opportunity gap by providing scholarships or low-cost field trips for students identified on the free or reduced lunch plan where the majority of the students have the funds to participate. As a teacher in the Springfield district, I have always asked parents to sponsor a socioeconomically disadvantaged student by paying double (their child plus the socioeconomically disadvantaged student) for a field trip. I have always received enough sponsorship to send all my students on any field trip I offer.

The more complex and invisible component of socio-economic inequity that the novice teachers struggled to address was student academic behavior. The novice teachers described student academic behaviors that mirror Calarco's (2014) description of the *logic of constraint* and the *logic of entitlement*, based on their respectively lower or higher socio-economic class. Without the theoretical background or training to recognize student behaviors as indicative of the social class within which they were raised, the novice teachers assumed the behaviors to be based on the students' motivation. This is an example where the novice teachers' lack of instructional capacity to identify the contributing factors affecting students' behavior can lead to misunderstanding and inequitable treatment. The Fonz explained this issue within the context of his own experience when he explained why he felt he lacked the capacity as a novice teacher to serve the students with the most need.

I understand that teachers have preferences for classes that they want to teach and when I was hired I was asked which topics I enjoyed and I told them truthfully

and, while they gave me classes that matched my interests, the classes are also filled with lower performing students. As a first year teacher, I don't think that this was a smart move as, while we have great ideas of what to do, we don't have the experience to know what to do, so sometimes we fall flat on our faces when we think it would go well. This would be fine with higher performing students as they have the grit to bear through with it and attempt to learn it themselves if they can't get it from the teacher. They also have the ability to question the teacher if they think the teacher has made a mistake. Lower level students may not have the ability to learn by themselves or be too lazy and, if there was a mistake, they may not catch it so it may become a problem later.

The Fonz added an unanticipated finding here that the *logic of entitlement* seen in more affluent students is not just advantageous when asking for instructional help, it can also give students' the confidence to question the teacher when they believe the teacher is wrong. Students who use *the logic of constraint* and do not question the teacher when they believe the teacher's answer is wrong could have a permanently incorrect understanding of the material. This is a disturbing finding because many teachers continue to use the curriculum built in their first few years for many years after.

None of the novice teachers felt confident in their ability to describe or create an equitable classroom environment. Although most of the novice teachers referred to prior training in the subject of equity, none of them referenced ideas that they learned in their credentialing programs when discussing how to meet students' needs. Their ideas were

anecdotal and based on their current tacit understanding of the topics. There was no clear connection between their current practices and their educational philosophy or training about equity. Only one of the participants directly addressed his prior credentialing program stating:

Also just in terms of like being prepared...for different ways to address equity issues, um I think there's definitely a lot more I could be learning. When I was going to my credential program, I feel like I didn't really get too many strategies on dealing with that stuff... There's definitely like more I could learn in that area.

Consequently, whatever understanding was built about equity and equality during the novice teachers' training or credentialing programs has been lost or heavily degraded over time.

These findings support the literature that without direct application of theory to practice, novice teachers are more likely to follow their personal beliefs rather than their teacher credentialing training (Haim, Strauss, & Ravid, 2004). Thus, the novice teachers admitted to teaching by subjective intuition and asking for guidance from subject area colleagues (Haim et al., 2004; Whitecotton & Alvarado, 2013). Therefore, Lave and Wenger's (1991) suggestion that job embedded learning can help novice teachers navigate the application of theory into practice remains relevant, if not imperative.

The novice teachers also identified that a significant barrier to providing equitable instruction was the issue of student placement. Students placed in courses far above their readiness level places the responsibility on the novice teachers to differentiate using a

wide range of curriculum. The novice teachers did not feel suitably trained or capable to provide the range of differentiation necessary to equitably meet the needs of their students. Differentiation and scaffolding were terms identified by the novice teachers as jargon terms used in education theory, with little guidance on how to implement them in real practice, either from their original credentialing program or the current induction program. Barring the capacity to properly differentiate for their wide range of student needs, some of the novice teachers chose to advocate for more proper placement based on their students' performance levels.

Interpretation of Findings for Research Question Two

RQ2: How does an equity-focused community of practice using a dialogue protocol affect novice teachers' praxis through their understanding of how to address issues of student equity in their instructional practice?

The study began with several implementation propositions outlined in Chapter One, namely that: the dialogue protocol would create a safe space of trust for teachers to articulate and discuss issues of equity and the opportunity gap within their instructional practice. Participants would be willing to receive feedback from fellow colleagues in the group, thereby reducing novice teacher isolation when reflecting on their practice. Then the novice teachers would be able to translate their dialogue sessions into action plans to improve their instructional practice.

By the end of the study, all of the propositions presented in Chapter One were supported. The novice teachers identified the dialogue process as a facilitator to their

shift in praxis that expanded their capacity to provide equitable instruction. The first facilitator identified was trust among multiple colleagues that expanded the participants' support and reduced their sense of isolation. The second facilitator was feedback from the probing questions, which challenged the novice teachers' personal biases, ethics, and decisions. The third facilitator was the connection between *espoused theory* and *theory in use* because the dialogue sessions created the bridge between the ideal instruction the novice teachers wanted for their students and the practical suggestions for how to make that happen (Burke et al., 2012). All three of these facilitators combined to increase novice teacher praxis and efficacy. Each facilitator is discussed in more detail in the subsections below.

The process of creating trust comes from trusting the process. Formation of trust is absolutely fundamental to a healthy dialogue group, and it is the first issue addressed in the structure of the CFG protocol (Grossman et al., 2001; Kersey, 2014; Key, 2006; T. L. Williams, 2012). Trust is the explicit focal point of the first dialogue session as designed by NSRF (2014). The participants engaged in several activities to draw out their hopes, fears, expectation and agreements (norms) about participation in the dialogue group. The lists created by the participants can be found in Appendix E. Building trust requires both time and deliberate attention to create group norms (Grossman et al., 2001; Kersey, 2014). To facilitate creating agreements (norms) for how the group wanted to interact with one another, the CFG protocol handbook includes a list of 40 possible choices. The dialogue group settled on the following list: assume good

intentions; be specific; enjoy creative friction; expect discomfort; have fun and/or a beer; be fully present; and protect confidentiality which was added as an absolute requirement. These agreements create a *shared repertoire* from which to discuss their intentions and to describe their *shared enterprise* (Wenger, 1998). The creation of norms along with the reflections on the process at the end of each protocol allowed the participants to become designers of the dialogue session and increased the likelihood of fidelity of implementation (Levine & Marcus, 2007). During the focus group reflection on the entire study, the participants agreed on the importance of the early structured trust building activities. Bernice elaborated:

I feel like the developing trust happened relatively early, and I think a lot of that had to do with your ... the first session where we talked about agreements, and we talked about our expectations, like our hopes and our fears and stuff like that. And I think that the development of trust had more to do with that process ... and the people involved, ... I think if that day had failed, then building trust would not have happened. So, I think it's a combination of your process as well as the people who are here.

One manner in which the participants earned trust was respecting and following the group agreements (Grossman et al., 2001; Kersey, 2014; Key, 2006; T. L. Williams, 2012). This included a step at the beginning of each protocol session when the participants stated an agreement they would commit to self-improvement or self-regulation. This step in the protocol formalized the process of re-affirming the meaning

of participation in the group (Grossman et al., 2001; Kersey, 2014; Key, 2006; T. L. Williams, 2012).

The Fonz offered an alternate explanation for the formation of trust: “I felt I was very trusting of everybody else just because I knew the participating teachers. So, that’s more than half of you, so it was easy to extend the trust to everybody else.” He was referencing to the fact that four of the novice teachers socialized outside of work already. Yet, The Fonz also draws the important distinction between socializing about instruction and participating in a community of practice:

The four of us, we go out to have meals together and usually the topic of conversation turns to problems we have with regular students or students in groups. And sometimes we just kind of bitch and moan about it. But, we never really come up with any problems to solve them. So this kind of an extension of what we are doing. It kind of completes the cycle. “Oh we have this problem, so, ok, how can we solve it.”

Betty offered the additional perspective about the connection between structure and trust:

I also think that something else that helped build trust was by getting to know each other. Was not just trusting each other, but also trusting the process because it was an extremely consistent process so we always knew exactly what to expect, but also trust that the process wasn’t that consistent that you would be cut off if

you weren't finished talking by the time the timer went off. But, having trust in the consistent method was also helpful to getting us where we needed to go.

Betty's observation that trusting the process helps the process of creating trust was heavily supported in the literature about dialogue, CoPs and the CFG protocol (Bohm, 1996; Burke et al., 2010; DeTurk, 2006; Dunne et al., 2000; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Hyde & Bineham, 1996; Kersey, 2014; Nave, 2000; Vella, 1994).

The high level of trust experienced by the group early on allowed the group to move quickly into the habits of a mature CFG group including using the protocol timing as guidelines (Burke et al., 2010). As the facilitator, I allowed several breaks from the protocol including extending the question periods (Burke et al., 2010; Little, 2002a). As Bernice explains: "but we still kept to this schedule right? So at least having a: This is what we do now, and This is what we do now, even if we go over or under a little bit on the times, having some place to start from is huge..." Bernice continued by discussing the connection between trust and safety: "Because you realize that everyone struggles and everyone has challenges, and that we are in a safe place where you can talk."

Several other participants made similar conclusions throughout the focus group session. Both the mentors and the novice teachers enjoyed feeling like they were not the only ones with similar instructional dilemmas. They described the *oasis* feeling, as described in the literature which allowed them to be vulnerable about their instructional practice (Dunne et al., 2000; Dunne & Honts, 1998). This camaraderie built on shared

struggles was mentioned as a factor that increased novice teacher efficacy because they felt empowered by the fact that they were not alone.

Devil added: “the hopes and the fears, I thought at the beginning that really opened us up to being honest and helped us to just start this whole process with honesty like: ‘this is what I am afraid of...meetings are usually boring’”. This statement draws attention to the importance of honesty to building trust which includes a level of vulnerability to criticism or judgment by making statements that are usually deemed unacceptable in a professional meeting. Devil also drew attention to the connection that listening to others deprivatize their practice increased the sense of trust and safety among the group that allows for others to deprivatize instructional decisions that a participant may not be proud of. Devil elaborated:

When you’re talking about the EL’s and when you’re talking about this and that. I don’t even look at all that data; I almost ignore all those things next to their names on the attendance thing. Something will happen and then I’ll look at it and go. Oh. Ok. Or you will get a notice. Because I go into the classroom believing that they are all equally capable of success or failure. I don’t want to see that stuff. I don’t trust myself, well actually I do, but I think it’s too easy to make assumptions... So I tend to, kind of, when I hear these EL things, I try to not read every little thing that’s like ... Obviously I know that this student or that student is probably EL. ... Yet you guys have kind of brought it back in my face. Maybe I need to pay attention. Maybe I need to differentiate things a little more than I do. Maybe I

need to take into consideration those other individuals and their learning processes.

This was an incredibly vulnerable moment to admit to as a mentor and not something he would share in a group that he did not trust. It is also evidence of the power of creating an honest environment where participants can deprivatize practices they are not proud of in an effort to commit to improvement (Grossman et al., 2001; Newman et al., 1966; Picower, 2011). This is counter to the current culture in education that leaves teachers feeling defensive about their practice (Ballock, 2007; Kersey, 2014). There was a tremendous identity risk by allowing himself to be vulnerable to critique and suggestions (Dunne & Honts, 1998; Grossman et al., 2001; Kersey, 2014; NSRF, 2014). Devil had the courage to admit to an instructional decision with significant student impact and now there is a group of colleagues who can respectfully hold him accountable to improvement.

Devil's statement also draws attention to the isolation experienced by mentor teachers. Without a community of practice, a mentor or any teacher in a given school can instruct students for years without comparing their instructional practice to that of their colleagues. Devil's comment was an unpredictable and unexpected outcome which is a key component of dialogue because the participants negotiate trust and meaning as it unfolds (DeTurk, 2006).

Probing questions reveal bias and encourage self-reflection. The Probing Questions section of the CFG protocol was designed to help guide participants toward

productive self-reflection, as is the final module of the current Springfield induction program. Yet, the mentors found the Probing Questions to be a highly effective alternative to the current system because they had to think about how to elicit ideas from the novice teachers rather than just giving them ideas. The mentors explained:

Francesca: I think one of the things was asking questions not making statements. That's hard. That's a very Socratic way of doing things. Instead of telling people answers, you have to get there through asking questions, which I think of as higher level thinking skills for lack of a better phrase.

Devil: On an overall statement about that, I think the structure of Clarifying and Probing added a different dynamic, instead of just sitting here and filling in the BTSA [induction] box and all that... You made us focus in a different way and that kind of framed the way that I think of my colleagues in terms of what I would ask of them. I found that helpful.

The Probing Questions provided a framing that could guide the novice teachers to reflect on an aspect of their practice previously invisible to them. It also allowed the participants to challenge one another's biases or contradictions in a non-threatening manner that was still clear and direct (Bohm, 1996). This included challenging what a participant previously viewed as non-negotiable or even invisible (Bohm, 1996). For example, Nina's dilemma was about getting her students to improve their responses to her in-class essay prompts. Devil and Betty used their probing questions to examine Nina's underlying assumptions and instructional choices:

Devil: Why is it necessary to have expected answers? Could you give yourself some freedom and have the students explore the idea or have them explore the concept without having some expectation of them?

Betty: Do you have your expected answers to the essays in mind when you're creating this scaffolding to help them, so they can reach those expected answers?

And if not, why not?

The Probing Questions were also a way to re-frame the novice teachers' statements into questions that draw attention to an underlying bias. For example Betty asked The Fonz: "do you think your method of you checking in with all the students is the most efficient use of everybody's class time?" This drew attention to time as a factor of equity and challenged The Fonz's hidden bias about using himself as the only means of content dissemination.

The protocol structure does not require the presenter to answer the probing questions but, instead, gives the presenter time to reflect on the questions and respond with any relevant information the group may need to further focus the Open Dialogue portion of the session. The presenter is given all of the probing questions on post-it notes to use for self-reflection at a later time. This allows the participants to ask probing questions that would otherwise be considered threatening but remain constructive because the participant is not expected to have an immediate answer. By not requiring a response, the probing questions can broaden the topic through a variety of perspectives

and possible angles for reflection without creating oppositional sides (Bohm, 1996; Hyde & Bineham, 1996).

Espoused theory into praxis. All five of the novice teachers identified a shift in awareness about the difference between teaching content and teaching the skills necessary to access the content. This clarified the novice teachers' espoused theory about instructional strategies to explicitly instruct students to develop the academic skills to access the content. Participation in the dialogue group helped the novice teachers move from espoused theory to praxis by providing suggestions and guidance for how to implement their new ideas for equitable instruction. Each of the novice teachers produced a similar plan of praxis: they each reflected on where there was a gap in skills for their underachieving students; they took responsibility to teach those skills; and they attempted to change their instructional practice to provide equitable strategies to help all students access those skills. The novice teachers were free to implement whatever practical suggestions they deemed useful for addressing their dilemma (Burke et al., 2012). This included teachers coming to opposite conclusions of how to proceed after hearing the same cluster of suggestions. For example:

Hippo: Now that you mention that, I realize that recently I've been doing the same thing. Like thinking more about like... rather than dumbing things down for students, giving them the hard stuff right away... sometimes its good for them to do that, and then help them. In some ways it may help them grow further than if

you were to work your way up there...I didn't realize that I was like...well now I'm aware that you mentioned it. That's pretty cool.

Researcher: Ya.

Devil: This is good. They learned.

[Laughter.]

Nathan: I was taking kind of the result of my presentation to the opposite where I have to then reevaluate: is the language worth it.

This is an example that consensus among participants did not always occur, but it was not the direct goal of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1984; Bohm, 1996). For example, not all of the participants agreed with Betty's egalitarian choice to avoid modifying her curriculum for her under-prepared class. Through the protocol structure, the other participants were able to give her probing questions to help her reflect on the ethics of that choice. Using dialogue as a process of making thoughts explicit by way of articulating one's own assumptions, in a group without hierarchy or judgment, Betty was able to reflect on her decisions and consciously decide how to proceed (Bohm, 1996). The novice teachers self-reported that they were encouraged by their attempts, but none of them claimed to have mastered the ability to provide equitable instruction for all their students.

Connections to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (see Appendix E) begins by breaking apart the influential factors that affect the novice teachers' instructional decisions into internal and external factors. All five of the novice teachers' dilemmas were presented as issues of

external concern, especially focusing on curricular demands. They recognized some students were under performing on a given topic or skill and they sought ideas for how to modify their instruction while meeting curricular demands, an external factor identified in the conceptual framework. The novice teachers all expressed a sense of pressure to fulfill their responsibility to expose all of their students to a sufficient level of quantity and quality of curriculum. One novice teacher conceptualized the curriculum as a fixed and non-negotiable factor. The other teachers were not as explicit, but judging by the frequency and intensity of their comments about the need to fulfill their curricular demands, it was an influential contributing factor to their decision-making.

The other external factor identified in the conceptual framework that weighed heavily on the novice teachers' instructional decisions was student behaviors. All the novice teachers shared dilemmas about how students performed on an assessment, but their descriptions of the dilemma all included an element of how the students acted toward the teachers or responded to the curriculum. The novice teachers expressed significant concern for how the students responded to their instruction. The students' opinions of the instruction and their subsequent behaviors were discussed by the novice teachers far more than the opinions of the administration, parents, school culture, diversity, or their mentors, the other external factors identified in the conceptual framework. School culture was, in fact, never mentioned which may be a function of the fact that three of the novice teachers graduated from Appleton High School and therefore the culture is invisible because it is accepted as the norm.

The external factor which had a significant impact on the novice teachers, but was not considered in the study's original conceptual framework, was course alignment. Students are tracked in each subject area by grade level and the completion of course requirements through pre-requisite classes. There is very little room in Appleton High School's six-period schedule to provide students opportunities to take courses that do not fulfill graduation requirements. Therefore, the novice teachers felt significant pressure to make sure their students would be prepared to succeed at the next course level because any divergence from the current system of tracking could threaten the students' ability to graduate or gain entrance into the public university system.

The internal factors identified by the conceptual framework were all identified as influencing the novice teachers' instructional decisions. Prior teaching experience and tacit knowledge were prominent in novice teachers' descriptions of what they had tried while pre-service training and subject area knowledge were treated as fixed influences in the past. The novice teachers were focused on their own responsibility to solve their dilemmas. Although they mentioned discussing their dilemmas with their mentors, the novice teachers believed *they should* know how to solve their instructional dilemmas. They also admitted that they did not actually know how to do so. There was a sense of betrayal by their pre-service training because they were trained to theoretically meet the needs of their students without the practical ideas for *how* to do so. During her pre-interview, Nina explained:

I guess I just struggle with like differentiating instruction. It's like a buzzword in teacher prep programs but they never really taught us how to do it or how, yeah, how to at least, so the students, so they didn't feel like I was tracking them in the class and separating the lower level from the higher level students.

Nina's tone during this portion of the interview carried a level of frustration indicative of the majority of the novice teachers when they mentioned the lack of practical training in their credentialing programs. In the absence of training to bridge the opportunity gap for their students, the novice teachers focused on building trusting relationships with their students, relying on their prior experiences and tacit knowledge for how to do so.

One significant internal factor that was not listed in the conceptual framework was personal ethics. Betty's dilemma exemplified the power of a teachers' ethics to affect the learning experience for students as well as assessing which students can advance to the next course level. Betty's instructional decisions were intimately connected to her ethical choices of what she considered fair for all her students. Hippo's ethical decision to advocate for his misplaced EL students will have a long-term impact on their access to upper division math classes. The Fonz's decision to exert more instructional effort towards the students who expressed more interest in learning the math content is also a decision of personal ethics, regardless of whether it is the equitable choice.

Dialogue protocol's effects on awareness and articulation. The conceptual framework identifies the external and internal factors contributing to novice teachers' instructional decisions and begs the question of whether and how the addition of the dialogue protocol had a separate and identifiable affect. The effects of the dialogue group were identified based on the theory that dialogue is a social interaction that allows for a possible disturbance in the novice teacher's current pattern of internal and external factors, and draws out unconscious drivers into conscious dialogue (Bohm, 1996; DeTurk, 2006; Penlington, 2006). To differentiate between effects caused by influences from the dialogue sessions versus the natural progression of instructional improvements caused by trial and error over time, the study followed DeTurk's (2006) suggested indicators of a shift in praxis through dialogue. The indicators are: the motivation to see another perspective; awareness of further complexity to reality; and an examination of how the circumstances of another group [students] informs how that situation affects one's own reality.

The CFG consultancy dialogue group had opportunities to comment and guide the novice teachers to new perspectives on how to prioritize that which influenced their instructional decision-making. Awareness was the aspect of novice teacher praxis most significantly influenced by the consultancy dialogue protocol. The participants had opportunities within the structure of the protocol to help the novice teachers identify which external factors could be influenced or changed. They also had the chance to remind the novice teachers of factors they were already aware of but had not taken

advantage of, such as the school culture of collaboration among teachers. Hippo's dilemma was a good example of a novice teacher attempting to work in isolation who was reminded of the many allies to whom he could reach out. Nina was reminded that other subject area teachers, such as history teachers, also could be a resource:

I think I'm more comfortable going to more people for help and I think I've realized like I can get a lot of good solutions from people from other departments because I would always turn to the English Department for advice and I have opened my mind to the possibility that I can probably turn to any colleague because a lot of the problems are universal or just getting an outside perspective actually helps...

Devil played a significant role in helping the novice teachers identify what personal ethics or tacit understanding was driving their instructional decision-making. As described by Penlington (2007), Devil was drawing attention to the novice teachers' *subjective substratum*, the range of "beliefs, emotions, personal theories, identity, and personal practical knowledge" that affect their instructional decisions (p. 1305). As his self-chosen pseudonym would indicate, Devil asked difficult personal questions. For example, during The Fonz's dilemma, Devil asked him: "Have you always had self-esteem issues? Or feelings of grandeur, the Superman Complex, like you could really accomplish all of this stuff?" Although the question may seem harsh, it had the intended effect of drawing attention to the fact that The Fonz was making the decision to try to personally instruct every student every day and that was not the only choice he could

make. Devil's form of questioning evolved into an expected and welcomed part of the dialogue process. As noted in Chapter Four, when he was absent from Betty's dilemma session, she expressed enough disappointment by the loss of his perspective that I, as her mentor, attempted to ask *Devil style* questions. During the focus group Betty addressed that moment in her dilemma protocol:

When I was presenting my dilemma it was when researcher was pretending to be Devil. [Laughter.] I think it was like, "why did it bother me so much. Why did I care? Was it because of my own ethics or is it because what I think school policy should be" So that I was like, Oh, I'm not sure because they are so intertwined.

Betty was able to identify her ethical bias once she was made aware of its presence. During the focus group, Devil revealed that he was trained as a counselor. As researcher, I was not aware of this prior training. His prior training added a deliberate line of questioning to help novice teachers reflect on elements of their decision-making that had previously remained invisible.

Study Limitations

The study's limitations began during the initial participant recruitment. There were eight novice teachers eligible to participate in the study. One of the teachers was new to the school as of that year and did not want to add any more new elements to his list of responsibilities. The other two novice teachers who did not participate in the study were prevented from participating due to the timing conflict with coaching. This is a significant limitation because it draws attention to the significance of scheduling. In a

district without collaboration time built into the instructional day, any teacher who is responsible for student activities after school, such as sports, drama, band, or clubs, is automatically excluded from a program based on after school availability. This is also a limitation for those teachers who are attempting to further their own education and attend classes in the afternoons and evenings.

The ability to reproduce similar group dynamics over time and at multiple locations would be limited by the number of novice teachers at any given school site and their prior experiences with each other, as well as with the school as a whole. Three of the novice teachers in the study graduated from Appleton High School. Four of the novice teachers socialize with each other in their free time. Two of the mentor teachers taught three of the novice teachers when they were students. Based on these existing relationships, the level of trust enjoyed by the study's entire participating dialogue group would be extremely hard to replicate in an environment without such deep prior relationships. On the other hand, it should be expected that novice teachers and mentors in a single school will have a number of cross-cutting relationships with varying connections.

The negative limitation of such a cohesive group of participants is the lack of diversity of perspective. All of the participants were either White or Asian. Therefore, they may have remained unintentionally unaware of additional issues of equity that they did not perceive due to their ethnic positionality as members of the dominant racial and ethnic groups on campus. The novice teachers were all under 35 years old and all but one

of the teachers identified as growing up middle class. DeTurk (2006) stated that “The more diverse the group, for example, the more likely participants were to have their worldviews expanded, rather than confirmed” (p.47). This was confirmed during the final focus group when the participants were asked if they thought their views were expanded or reinforced and the majority said they were reinforced.

This could be considered an example of a *pseudocommunity* because the conversations remained agreeable and there was a level of congeniality throughout all the dialogue sessions (Grossman et al., 2001). Yet, it remains unclear as to whether the conversations remained congenial to avoid conflict because all participants assumed good intentions, or because the homogeneity of the group provided few dissenting opinions. The dialogue structure did encourage reflection through the probing questions and the deprivitization of practice. Devil for example provided several challenges to the novice teachers’ instructional decisions and personal ethics. But, members may have remained blind to biases that the group did not challenge. Penlington (2006) warned that even the most deliberative self-reflection can result in decisions that are blind to important considerations because of personal blind spots, biases, and incentives that are well hidden from conscious awareness. This can also be said for dialogue groups with hidden blind spots.

Another possible reason consistent with the literature, explaining participants’ aversion to discussing uncomfortable topics was a lack of sufficient time (Picower, 2011). All the dialogue sessions occurred over one semester which was not sufficient

time to address topics as polarizing as race. Instead the *normalized* belief among the participants that students' race and ethnicity were not significant contributing factors to their dilemmas went unchallenged.

Conversely, the teachers were willing to challenge statements that seemed inequitable based on their own prior experiences. For example, several members of the dialogue group challenged the Fonz's idea that loud students do not fear being seen as struggling:

The Fonz: Struggling kids. I don't think struggling kids are afraid, they're the most ... they're the most loud.

Nathan: [interjected] That doesn't mean they're not afraid. As a former struggling kid. And usually you're louder to deflect the fact that you don't know anything...

The Fonz: But, they're not ... they're not...But, they are asking questions and they're seeking out help. They're not loud for the sake of being loud, to like deflect, they are seeking help.

Researcher: I think the question may have been are they asking you as opposed to asking some other person because they are scared of ...

Hippo: [interjected] They don't want other people to know that they're like not being smart or whatever

The Fonz: Oh...

Nathan: [interjected] because you're a safe place to get information.

The Fonz: Um. I guess it's a possibility. I haven't considered it.

Nathan: Because I have one of those students now and I think it's... He's ELL and he doesn't want to look like he doesn't know things in front of the other kids, so he's very loud about it. So you could be seeing a similar thing.

The Fonz: It is a possibility. But, then of the students I have in mind, they've kind of made it obvious to the class that they're having difficulties. Ya, they have made it obvious...

Devil: I think ... I think you get both extremes. You hardly get anyone in between. They're either really loud because they're afraid to admit that they don't know it. Or, they're loud because they really want to know it. And they, just being loud is the only way they can do it without really saying "Hey, can you help me?"

This is one of several examples of the dialogue group coming together to clarify an idea and advocate for a student population. These interactions did create a limited degree of tension, but the overarching trust that all suggestions were made from good intentions prevailed, and the mood in the room remained positive. Therefore, the dialogue group may have missed opportunities to discuss factors contributing to instructional inequities, which were blind spots for the participants, but the participants were willing to challenge each other on issues which they felt they had enough prior experience to address.

A limitation to the findings about how the dialogue group can augment the current induction structure was the lack of training for the mentors about how to follow-up with their mentees after their dialogue sessions. The mentors all participated in training for

how to support their novice teacher through the induction action research project. The novice teachers used their dilemmas as their action research projects. Therefore, follow-ups with the novice teachers were assumed, but exact expectations for the quality and frequency of the follow-up was not explicitly discussed or monitored. This was partially due to the fact that the researcher left on maternity-leave after the completion of the dialogue sessions, only to return for the exit interviews. The researcher's absence on campus left the mentors to provide the novice teachers with the level of support they deemed acceptable. Although this provided a realistic view of the level of mentor support provided to the novice teachers under the current induction system, it was limited by a lack of explicit training or expectations for mentors on how to specifically address the recommendations presented by the dialogue group.

A significant limitation identified by the participants was time. Access to time was identified in the literature as a critical factor for any CoP (Lieberman & Miller, 2011). The amount of time necessary to build relationships, learn the protocol, understand the implications of instructional equity and the opportunity gap, and conduct the dilemmas was significant. The participants wanted more time to discuss issues of equity and mentor dilemmas before beginning novice teacher dilemmas. Although not a significant use of time, there were moments during the dialogue sessions when participants failed to clearly articulate their ideas and the group took time for clarification (Supovitz, 2002). One method to alleviate time constraints for implementation would be

to begin implementation earlier in the same year or begin implementation during the first year of the induction program, running through the entire second year of induction.

Implications

This study brings to light several implications for leaders in education to be aware of when attempting to implement novice teacher support within the broader responsibilities of their district LCAP. The first implication rationalizes the expenditures of time, money, and district resources necessary to run an equity based induction program. Mainly, novice teachers do not arrive at their position entirely prepared to address the needs of their diverse student population. In addition to the internal and external factors identified in the Conceptual Framework, the study identified that novice teachers begin teaching with varying degrees of unexamined biases, instructional efficacy, and clear memory of prior training. Therefore, novice teachers need significant guidance and support to differentiate their curriculum and provide equitable instruction for all their students.

The second implication is that, even in high performing suburban schools, novice teachers have significant dilemmas of equity in their classes. Given that many novice teachers do not represent the demographics of their student population, they may also need help identifying such issues of equity in their classrooms. Therefore, they need guidance to understand their options, responsibilities, and resources to improve their praxis.

The third implication is that novice teachers' instructional capacity to provide equitable instruction can be augmented by properly implementing a CFG consultancy protocol into the current structure of teacher induction. All three of the implications identified are discussed below.

Novice teachers are not fully prepared. As noted in Chapter Four, the novice teachers began their second year of teaching at Appleton High School with a self-reported average or below understanding of the opportunity gap and instructional equity. The novice teachers did not feel sufficiently prepared by their credentialing program to equitably address the needs of their diverse student populations. One common comment throughout both the pre- and exit- interviews with the novice teachers was that they understand that they should theoretically be meeting the needs of their students, but they do not understand how to practically make it work. Their instructional repertoire of strategies is only partially complete. The last formal layer of support available to these teachers is their induction program. Therefore, there is a significant need to bolster district induction programs to address novice teachers' gaps in understanding of the opportunity gap and how to address student inequities through instructional decisions.

One key area of need was awareness about the different ways that students are socialized to interact in an educational environment. As mentioned earlier, Calarco's (2014) theory of working class families socializing their children to interact with the education system, using the *logic of constraint*, can affect how the novice teachers interpret those students' motivation. Yet, the perception of student motivation based on

the students' choice to ask for help may be affected by the implicit biases of the novice teachers based on their own prior educational experiences (Calarco, 2014). This has significant equity implications for novice teachers who may judge a student's ability or interest in learning based on their level of self-advocacy. The *logic of constraint* may also be found as a cultural norm for various races and ethnicities. Therefore, novice teachers need explicit instruction within their induction program to make them aware of the various socio-economic, racial, ethnic, and cultural norms prevalent in the area that can affect student behaviors and interactions with the novice teachers.

These findings further imply that an induction program should include opportunities for novice teachers to explore their own implicit perspective and biases to draw out inconsistencies of thought or unsubstantiated beliefs (Penlington, 2006). The current induction system includes a series of documents to encourage self-reflection. However, novice teachers' internal dialogues may be fooled by half-formulated explanations (Penlington, 2006). Although the mentors are available in the current system to help with reflection, there is not sufficient structure to their roles. For example, Francesca explained:

Francesca: I like the [CFG dialogue] structure too, in that it gave us something directly to talk about. Because I know last year, Nathan and I would go and it's like "here's your binder did you get it?"

Nathan: and I would go yeah, I got it at the last meeting after sitting around for 45 minutes.

[Other participants murmuring in agreement]

Francesca: Then we would wait for a particular time when we felt that we could leave. We talked about stuff, but I feel that this is more productive, in terms of having been actually forced to lay out problems, something to talk about directly instead of ... the binder actually doesn't get you to the problem.

Francesca was describing the advantage of incorporating a dialogue structure into the induction program. As previously discussed in the literature, by creating a space that encourages explanation of personal perspective, dialogue groups facilitate participants to better understand the motivations driving their decisions (DeTurk, 2006; Geren, 2001; Isaacs, 1993; Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Penlington, 2006). Dialogue among colleagues requires a more complete explanation or the recognition of inconsistencies in an explanation (DeTurk, 2006; Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Penlington, 2006).

Significant dilemmas of equity exist. During the dialogue sessions, each novice teacher presented a legitimate issue of instructional equity. Whether there was a clear solution to their dilemmas or not, each teacher identified an element of their instruction that could benefit from improvements in equitable praxis. The dilemmas included questions of how to make content accessible to EL learners, students receiving special education services, and students with unidentified contributing factors to their gap in achievement. Several dilemmas included questions of how the novice teachers could advocate for their students. After completing their credentialing program and one full year of induction, all the novice teachers' dilemmas identified an aspect of the

opportunity gap that they still did not know how to bridge, even after speaking with their mentors.

Another compounding concern identified by the study was that both the novice teachers and their mentors disproportionally represent the dominant demographic groups in the school. One possible barrier to equitable instruction is the lack of minority voice. If the novice teachers and their mentors are from the same ethnic and socio-economic background, both parties may remain unaware of inequities faced by other minority groups. Therefore, the current system of induction needs additional support to provide the novice teachers with sufficient guidance to address the issues of equity arising in their classes.

CFG dialogue bolsters induction. Ingersol and Strong (2011) made the argument that the current induction system helps with retention and the novice teachers' instructional repertoires, but it does not significantly improve instructional equity. A distinctive advantage of the CFG dialogue protocol infused into the current induction system is the increase in novice teacher efficacy for equitable praxis.

The literature describes teacher efficacy as the ability of teachers to use their confidence and instructional capacity to address an issue in education (Picower, 2011). It further states that efficacy can be built from factors such as personal agency; allies; social capital; resources; voice; confidence; and strategy (Picower, 2011). Over the course of the study, all of these factors were identified as positively impacted by the CFG dialogue group. For example, to improve novice teacher confidence, they were supported by an

entire group of colleagues rather than a single mentor, significantly reducing isolation (Burke et al., 2010; Dunne et al., 2000; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014; Nave, 2000). The teachers also identified ways that they could build their efficacy to affect student equity through reaching out to the broader school community for collaboration or to advocate for their students. By the end of the study all of the novice teachers knew of colleagues they could rely on to help them improve student equity besides their mentor.

They also mentioned in all five exit interviews that their sense of efficacy improved as they transferred their self-perceptions from victims of circumstance to active participants of a solution. Bohm (1996) posited that articulating a situation through language can move people from a position of feeling victimized to being a participant in its constant re-creation. Therefore, another indicator used to identify if the dialogue group was the factor that affected the novice teachers' praxis was a shift in efficacy from a victim of the situation to a participant in the solution. For example, Nina explained:

Right, I think originally just not being able to think of how to improve their performance on essays made me feel like I was a victim. I just couldn't control what students I get and would have to accept that they couldn't make too many gains in essay writing. After hearing the solutions offered by the dialogue group, my mind was more open to the possibilities. I was in control of those students' performances, although I know the learning is still in their hands too.

In an answer to another exit interview question Nina continued:

Asking the students for solutions to the problems was an idea that I learned from other people's dilemmas. So, for mine, I could just go back to mine and ask "what do you need to improve your essay scores?" I haven't done that yet, but I have done reflections of just like different parts of the course in general. Student voices are always more helpful than most teachers think that they will be.

Nina draws attention to the praxis of using student voice to guide her reflection and therefore her instructional practice. She makes the important distinction that student voice can be leveraged for her efficacy rather than a threat to her authority. By the end of the study, Nina was able to use student feedback to guide her lesson planning and to gauge if her shifts in praxis had noticeable effects on her students' sense of efficacy for in-class essays.

The use of student voice also addresses the concern that novice teachers and mentors may remain blind to inequities faced by students from demographic groups the teachers do not represent. Although a dialogue group may be more likely than one-on-one mentorship to include a diversity of ethnicities and socio-economic perspectives, there is no guarantee. Using the probing questions section of the dialogue protocol to ask novice teachers about how they will use student voice to guide and evaluate their instruction can increase the likelihood that a greater diversity of perspectives may be considered.

A powerful addition that the CFG protocol can bring to an induction program is the explicit guidance about *how* to collaborate with colleagues (Kelley, 2012). The CFG

protocol facilitated collaboration through highly structured use of time, content, and roles for the participants (Curry, 2008; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Kersey, 2014). Having roles and a timed protocol allowed participants to focus on the content of what people were saying because they were not worried about talk time and knowing when to chime in (Bohm, 1996; Dunne & Honts, 1998). After the novice teachers participated in enough of the dialogue sessions to establish strong bonds of trust, they were able to use the protocol format to discuss issues of equity because they were freed from the fear of not knowing how to talk about issues of equity (Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Picower, 2011). This is an important finding in terms of social justice because the dialogue group cannot help issues of equity that novice teachers are unwilling or afraid to divulge.

The formation of trust among participants and for the protocol led to participants deprivatizing their practice and sharing specific equitable instructional strategies (DeTurk, 2006; Dunne & Honts, 1998). Deprivatizing their practice in a social setting made participants aware of their own ethics and biases and conscious of how they make instructional decisions. The novice teachers' personal efficacy continued to improve through this process of personal awareness leading to self-determination. These findings support the literature, which suggests that the interpersonal nature of dialogue encourages participants to see each other's perspectives while building instructional efficacy (DeTurk, 2006; Freire, 2000; Picower, 2011).

The growing self-determination among the participants also turned inward to determine the optimal protocol design. The protocol has a built in design for progress

monitoring. This provided opportunities for the group to take on a sense of shared ownership because they created time for each group member to discuss the functioning of the protocol and share their perceptions of and suggestions for the group's development (Ballock, 2007). This included creating norms within the protocol such as using a round robin structure for asking clarifying and probing questions to make sure that each participant was able to speak before some participants had additional questions. The group also agreed to use a loose round robin structure during the open dialogue so that all participants could speak while adding additional comments when relevant.

Recommendations for Action

Given the number of reform initiatives that form like waves and crash upon the hard rocks of implementation barriers, teachers have gained the ability to ride out most initiatives without ever changing their instructional practice (Elmore, 2004; Grossman et al., 2001). Therefore, this study does not recommend yet another reform initiative. Rather, this study recommends infusing dialogue practices into an established initiative that has become a component of the California credentialing process: induction. The recommended next step should be the infusion of dialogue groups into an induction program at a district level. In California, since districts serve as the main source of funding for teacher induction, a single district would be the logical next implementation level. A district-wide implementation would relieve several current barriers to the CFG process found in this study such as a lack of structured time to run the dialogue groups. If time for the dialogue protocols were built into a district initiative, schools would be

required to provide the novice teachers with sufficient support to attend the meetings. For example, the coaches who were not able to participate in this research study could participate if collaboration hours were built into early release school days.

District implementation also could alleviate some of the issues with mentors identified in the study. As explained in Chapter One, there has been a recent increase in novice teachers filling positions formerly held by veteran teachers (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). This can leave districts with more novice teachers than mentors to serve them. A lack of high quality mentors has been identified as a concern for district induction programs (CCTC, 2015a; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The dialogue structure makes a novice teacher's dilemma a concern for the group instead of relying on the time and competence of one mentor. Nathan elaborated:

Now, I don't just have to go to Susan with all my problems. I can go to you or you. I would never have stepped into Devil's class, it's like a. he teaches math, b. he was my teacher, he was on a level above me that I wouldn't even approach. This has fostered that kind of relationship and, of course, ...

Researcher: it gave you more than just your provider to seek help from.

The added level of community means that more mentors and fellow novice teachers can augment the quality of support of a mentor. Especially given that high capacity teachers with strong social relations are often targeted for multiple responsibilities on campus. The added support of other mentors can avoid a novice teacher's needs falling through the cracks if their mentor is spread too thin (Little,

2002a). District implementation could also expose additional implementation issues that were not identified by the study of a single dialogue group.

The first stage of district implementation of the CFG protocols should be district wide training for the mentors to effectively facilitate their own dialogue groups (Ingersol & Strong, 2011). By experiencing the protocols as struggling participants, induction mentors can anticipate pitfalls and discuss strategies for integrating the CFG protocols into their unique school contexts (Kersey, 2014). Kersey (2014) made it clear that it is imperative for district leaders to invest in proper training of the facilitators if the initiative is to succeed.

Mentor training for equity should include both CFG training and training in aspects of social justice pertinent to surrounding community. Induction directors need to be aware of the greater community dynamics to be able to properly identify social justice topics that should be included in mentor training such as religious tolerance, gender identity awareness, and student mental health. Mentors should be prepared to anticipate issues of equity their novice teachers' will face and have strategies to address such issues. The CCTC (2015a) has renewed its expectation that: "Mentoring should be the primary focus of the Induction program with an emphasis on meeting the new teacher's immediate needs and supporting long term teacher growth through ongoing reflection on and analysis of teaching practice" (p.6). As suburban communities continue to diversify, *ongoing reflection* by the novice teachers should be guided by mentors versed in social justice with the interests of individual students and the greater community in mind.

The advantage to running a CFG dialogue protocol within an induction structure for several years is that mentors can become highly competent CFG facilitators, eventually creating enough CFG leaders to train future mentors in-house and reduce the overhead costs of training. Finally, the larger the number of trained and qualified mentor/facilitators present in the area, the greater the social capital and likelihood that the mentors can help each other address issues of deprivitization, equity, or group dynamics that arise (Kersey, 2014).

As explained earlier in the literature review, any educational initiative is only as good as its initial implementation (Levine & Marcus, 2007). Throughout the study, issues of implementation arose and much of the time during the final focus group was spent discussing specific facilitators and barriers to a successful district wide implementation. This section is dedicated to those very specific details.

The three elements that were identified as threats to trust and group cohesion were the size, location, and voluntary nature of the group. It was agreed that between 8-10 people was the best size, which is supported by the CFG guidelines (NSRF, 2014). This group size allows for a few people to be absent at any dialogue session and still have a successful session while remaining small enough that everyone can feel heard during the time allotments of the protocol.

As for location, all members of the dialogue group should be from the same school whenever possible. This will increase cohesion and prevent privacy threats that could surface if teachers at one school divulge too much of what was said by a teacher at

another school. Loyalty and therefore trust increases when participants are from the same school. This also alleviates issues of timing because all the members can agree on a meeting location that is convenient to all members. It was agreed that meeting at a pizza place off campus was preferred but not required. It created a more relaxed atmosphere because food was included and no outsider would be able to randomly drop in on the group. The group agreed that the meetings could be held on campus for district implementation. However, the meeting places would have to be private because outsider colleagues or administrators would likely threaten to the confidentiality necessary for deprivitization.

The idea of adding involuntary participants was a complete non-starter. Everyone agreed that the threatening process of deprivitization could be authentically accomplished only in a voluntary group. Involuntary members would be too exposing and add a negative element to the group dynamics. The participants' sentiments support the literature, which has shown that mandatory membership and forced attendance degrades group dynamics and can lead to failure (Grossman et al., 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Little, 2002).

An action item that can significantly increase novice teacher accountability to their dialogue group is to incorporate a time for the novice teachers to report back to the dialogue group after sufficient time to implement their praxis. The current structure of induction assessment includes the novice teacher describing instructional decisions in response to a series of guiding questions annually. These questions are merely an object

to speak towards. The teachers are only beholden to the level of self reflection required to pass inspection by their mentor and the head of the induction program (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005). Incorporating time within the dialogue protocol for the novice teachers to share their attempts at praxis would broaden their sense of accountability to the whole group. As The Fonz describes: “you’re going to tell everybody that within X amount of time that they have to come back and give us an update. Then I do have to tell the group something that I’ve tried.” This could then lead to an iterative process where novice teachers could report on various attempts over time as they hone their instructional capacity.

During the dialogue sessions, some participants will have a heightened awareness of issues of equity or personal bias while others may remain unaware (DeTurk, 2006; Hodgkinson & Hodgkinson, n.d.; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Hodgkinson & Hodgkinson (n.d.) suggested that participants be willing to expose discriminatory ideas. But, to challenge a colleague about their discriminatory ideas or an unexamined bias requires courage. During the dialogue sessions there may be no prescriptive formula for personal acts of courage (Levine & Marcus, 2007), but roles can be created to de-personalize challenging questions and give participants the courage to create and navigate *fault lines* (Grossman et al., 2001). For example, an unexpected finding during the study was the heavily personal line of questioning provided by Devil.

Devil was willing to ask participants difficult personal questions to reveal the underlying personal ethics and motivations that were driving their actions. His style of

questioning became an anticipated part of the dialogue structure and a welcomed challenge. The group saw his line of questioning as being both deeply personal and non-confrontational to their person because they saw his questions as an important component of the process. Devil provided an important perspective and his line of questioning continued in his absence. Devil is an example that individual personalities can have a profound impact on group dynamics in terms of exposing inequity, discrimination or disproportionate power dynamics. In the absence of a person with the courage to ask the difficult collegial questions that break the congenial atmosphere, roles can be created, such as the Devil's advocate or bias challenger. Yet, it is important to note that Devil had training as a counselor and, therefore, understood how to frame challenging questions without destroying trust. Shifting the role of who plays the Devil's advocate for each dialogue session could prevent an individual from abusing the power of the role and simultaneously help reticent participants gain courage through experience in the challenging role. The overall group should agree upon any use of the Devil's advocate role in advance.

The final recommendation for implementation into the induction structure is to adapt the protocol structure to meet the developmental needs of the novice teachers. This would include dialogue sessions discussing more general issues of equity and teacher instructional capacity in the first year and individual dilemmas in the second year. When asked if they would want to try the dialogue structure in their first year, the participants responded:

Devil: So, if we have, and we started sooner, then we could alternate every other week with a PT and an SP and that way we could get a little more, get a little of the old school so we can improve and a little of the new school so we can improve...

Nathan: Probably second year, and I maybe this is a unique experience for me. Last year was a whirlwind, I mean for me to come up with a problem, you know ... to pick a problem ... from my entire universe... I don't know if I could have focused on just one specific ...everything is essentially a problem ...like I don't know how to handle this.

Francesca: But, you feel you would rather come to this as a first year than go to a faculty meeting?

Several Participants: "ya"

Bernice: I feel like it wouldn't be as intimidating if it's just support providers telling their problems.

Nathan: ... And then you can say like "Oh. I'm a first year teacher and I'm chasing my tail all day and yet here are these seasoned teachers and they still have problems."

Hippo: I think it should be first year because it's always nice to have a place where you can talk about what's going on and to hear other people talk about too, and you realize that you are like in the same position that they are.

Nathan: Like Cheers ...

Bernice: We can even play the theme song as they walk in you know...

The participants were in favor of participating but did not want to be in the spotlight for their own issue of equity.

First year induction participants could dialogue about common dilemmas experienced by many novice teachers, such as how to deal with disruptive students or how to differentiate an assignment for a wide range of reading levels. The novice teachers could also read an article at the beginning of a session to create a common language and theoretical framework for discussing issues of social justice such as how to create an atmosphere of gender and religious tolerance in a classroom. The literature supports this idea because in dialogue, broadening the perspectives of the participants can occur via understanding another's experience, as well as through presenting scholarly empirical data (Bohm, 1996; Hyde & Bineham, 1996; Nagda & Gurin, 2007). An example that relates to the kinds of diversity Appleton USD is experiencing now might involve including an article about heteronormativity or about Islamophobia. Then the novice teachers could be given a scenario that presents an ethical dilemma. The dialogue group could then use a protocol structure to dialogue about the participants' reasoning behind their chosen strategy for how to manage the dilemma. Making one's own practical reasoning public can lead to participants understanding where their personal biases may be affecting instructional practice (Penlington, 2006). This may help novice teachers recognize that many seemingly objective decisions have elements of subjective choice without the threat of being singled out for an individual dilemma.

Recommendations for Further Study

A limitation of the literature on CFG dialogue groups to date is a lack of description of the aftermath of participation in the dialogue groups. The self-reported shifts in perspective across the participants in all the studies are not followed up with detailed evidence of how the participants implemented their intended actions into practice, or how those changes mattered to students' outcomes. The advantage to pairing the CFG dialogue structure together with induction is that induction already contains a structured way to collect student outcome data. Therefore the current induction structure can be leveraged to record student outcomes data for an entire district induction program. This would provide the necessary information to properly assess the significance of CFG dialogue groups' impact on student success.

There is a need for future research to be conducted about the longitudinal impact of a dialogue structure with a defined end. There is no need for endless sustainability for a dialogue group; the importance is knowing when to end it. People may work harder during the dialogue protocols and dedicate the time more effectively if there is an end in sight. Future research could assess the optimal length of efficient and effective dialogue groups as their dynamic matures over time. This research could assess whether dialogue groups should parallel the current induction system, or perhaps extend the effect of the induction system by providing an optional third year of support. There have been several studies that concluded in favor of a third year of induction, citing that the third year is when most teachers have the efficacy to begin to implement equitable instructional

strategies (Ingersol & Strong, 2011). Extending a voluntary dialogue group through a third year could be a highly efficient method to leverage expenditures that have already been made, in favor of higher returns on expected outcomes.

One common statement across my theory based articles and research studies on dialogue is that there is a need for further research-based articles on methods to measure the effect of teacher dialogue on student learning outcomes (Nagda & Gurin, 2007; Schein, 1993; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008) The effectiveness and efficiency of a dialogue group with a defined end date should be based on both teacher reporting and student outcomes based on the original identified issue of instructional praxis (Lieberman & Miller, 2011, p.182; Newman et al., 1996). Novice teachers already collect student outcome data for their action research projects during the induction program. With little adjustment, this student outcome data could be recorded for a much broader study comparing a district with dialogue groups infused into the induction program and a comparable district which does not.

Mentorship is the component of induction that most directly affects the outcomes of a dialogue protocol structure. How a mentor follows up after a dialogue session could have lasting effects on a mentee's sense of self-efficacy. For example, during the focus group review of the group's hopes and fears from the first session, Nina discussed the pressure created by the dialogue group providing so many instructional suggestions:

I think that's inevitable, but I thought that "overwhelmed by feedback" could still be a factor like, now I have all of this so what do I do with all of it. And how to

feel like if I don't do it all I am a bad teacher. So how to deal with that feeling and prioritize what to do to implement them.

Nina brings up the point that novice teachers may take feedback with grace during the meeting but return to their practice crushed by the suggestions that were meant to be helpful. This is an important opportunity for mentor teachers to check in with their mentee and help the mentee translate the feedback into self-efficacy instead of self-deprecation.

The dialogue protocol is designed to accept human experiences and feelings as valid information for the group. Even though the dialogue protocol is designed to make defensiveness non-personal through structures that allow the participants to voice an opinion without directing it at a fellow participant, it is important to recognize that defensiveness does happen (Bohm, 1996). Novice teachers may need guidance for how to translate such an uncomfortable emotion into a constructive form of efficacy.

Nina: I felt like I got a little defensive, I thought for sure when it was my turn I would not get defensive because I know when I am on the other side I definitely have good intentions and I assume the best about the presenter. But, I found myself wanting to say oh well I do, do that! So it's weird to be on the other side.

Although mentors are briefly trained to support their novice teachers through the current induction system, the deprivitization of the dialogue process presents new challenges for mentors to properly support their novice teachers. Explicitly training mentors for how to help novice teachers prioritize recommendations, respond to

feedback, and manage the emotional stress of face threats could have a significant impact on novice teacher outcomes. A study to research how to properly train mentors for the infusion of group dialogue sessions into an induction program could provide insights into the needs of the mentors to help facilitate novice teacher efficacy. This study would also be applicable to any district implementing communities of practice along with induction because after a CoP decides on an action, the novice teachers are expected to return to their classrooms and implement the action plan agreed upon.

Reflections on the Research Process

As a participant, mentor, and colleague of the dialogue group, I had an intimate position from which to conduct this research study. My positionality provided me insider status during the study. I have collaborated with all of the mentors through educational endeavors, such as running an international travel and leadership club with Francesca and performing in the faculty talent show with Devil and Bernice. I had a year of building trust as Betty's mentor and often informally helping the other novice teachers through their first year of induction. These opportunities afforded me the ability to establish my reputation for honesty and follow-through.

This was a comfortable position from which to ask for a significant time commitment from each of the participants. I also had a long friendship with the owner of the pizza shop that provided us a private room off campus for free. Therefore, the onset of the study was built on the premise that our endeavor would be a success. I believe this is a key factor because I think people try harder to make things work when they believe

the outcome will be successful. I think the participants also made a significant effort to adjust their schedules to attend all the meetings on time because they trusted that the other participants would do the same, and because that was when the pizza was hot.

As a long-term participant in the district's induction program, I have been witness to novice teacher frustrations with the process for years. Their concerns were often based on several themes: the paperwork was a waste of time; their mentors did not give them sufficient support; and the activities were irrelevant to the issues of their instructional practice. Therefore, I initiated this study as a deliberate means to alleviate the novice teachers' concerns while helping them to improve their praxis and provide an equitable learning experience for all their students.

I have a heavy bias in favor of dialogue as a means of praxis because I have seen more genuine reflection arise out of conversations with mentees over dinner than during any of my sessions with my mentees where we filled out the assigned paperwork. I also have a bias in favor of dialogue because I believe that ideas that organically arise from conversation have a greater chance of implementation than ideas presented in a structured curriculum where the novice teachers feel forced to participate. I attempted to remove my obvious bias from the study's findings by not using any of my own perspective as confirmatory evidence even though I was a mentor and participant.

To avoid the participants adjusting their answers out of a sense of loyalty to me, I encouraged them to provide honest answers. I mentioned several times during the dialogue sessions and the exit interviews that positive and negative feedback is all

relevant feedback and contributes to my study. I praised the participants for their observations at the end of each interview regardless of whether their answers confirmed or refuted a premise of the study. The only bias that I made no attempt to hide during the final focus group session was my own enjoyment of the process. I truly enjoyed each dialogue session and I am grateful for the strong bonds forged with my colleagues during the study. I look forward to collaborating with my participants in the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, novice teachers are challenged to provide equitable instruction for students with some of the greatest needs. The current system of credentialing and induction provides support, but that support needs to be augmented with contextually specific opportunities for novice teachers to dialogue about their struggles. All novice teachers are faced with instructional dilemmas and issues of equity. It is the responsibility and opportunity for educational leaders to provide these novice teachers a safe space and format to articulate their dilemmas among a peer group that can challenge their hidden biases and bolster their instructional efficacy. Given the opportunity to receive honest feedback, constructive instructional strategies, and an individual mentor to help with implementation, the responsibility turns to the novice teachers to create the kind of instructional praxis needed to close the opportunity gap. Hopefully, with an increased understanding of social justice and their own goals, novice teachers will gain through the structured dialogue process the self-efficacy necessary to undertake the

challenge of teaching the next generation of students. I will close with a quote from one of the novice teachers. Nina stated after the very first dilemma:

The conversations have shifted my thinking about what teacher collaboration and support can actually be. I have always felt that mandatory PD and even PLCs provide superficial and inconsistent feedback on my teaching practices and objectives. I love how the study's structure allows us to first understand fully the circumstances of another teacher's dilemma before probing into solutions; then discuss the merits of each solution. Normally, feedback is given when colleagues do not fully understand the circumstances, which I think easily leads to hurt feelings, defensiveness, and ill-fitted solutions. This thorough, systematic way of helping ourselves by helping each other gives more meaning to Professional Development.

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Appendices

Appendix A: The CFG Structure Behind the Protocol

Education Center's (www.nsrffharmony.org) *The Consultancy Protocol* was developed by Gene Thompson-Grove as part of the Coalition of Essential Schools' National Learning Faculty Program, and further adapted and revised as part of work of National School Reform Faculty.

A Consultancy is a structured process for helping an individual or a team think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma. Outside perspective is critical to this protocol working effectively; therefore, some of the participants in the group must be people who do not share the presenter's specific dilemma at that time. When putting together a Consultancy group, be sure to include people with differing perspectives. Framing Consultancy Dilemmas and Consultancy Questions a dilemma is a puzzle, an issue that raises questions, an idea that seems to have conceptual gaps, something about process or product that you just can't figure out. Sometimes it will include samples of student or adult work that illustrate the dilemma, but often it is a dilemma that crosses over many parts of the educational process.

1. Think about your dilemma. Dilemmas deal with issues with which you are struggling or that you are unsure about. Some criteria for a dilemma might include:
 - Is it something that is bothering you enough that your thoughts regularly return to the dilemma?
 - Is it an issue/dilemma that is not already on its way to being resolved?
 - Is it an issue/ dilemma that does not depend on getting other people to change (in other words, can you affect the dilemma by changing your practice)?
 - Is it something that is important to you, and is it something you are actually willing to work on?
2. Do some reflective writing about your dilemma. Some questions that might help are:
 - Why is this a dilemma for you? Why is this dilemma important to you?
 - If you could take a snapshot of this dilemma, what would you/we see?
 - What have you done already to try to remedy or manage the dilemma?
 - What have been the results of those attempts?
 - Who do you hope changes? Who do you hope will take action to resolve this dilemma? If your answer is not you, you need to change your focus. You will want to present a dilemma that is about your practice, actions, behaviors, beliefs, and assumptions, and not someone else's.

- What do you assume to be true about this dilemma, and how have these assumptions influenced your thinking about the dilemma?
- What is your focus question? A focus question summarizes your dilemma and helps focus the feedback (see the next step).

3. Frame a focus question for your Consultancy group: Put your dilemma into question format.

- Try to pose a question around the dilemma that seems to you to get to the heart of the matter.
- Remember that the question you pose will guide the Consultancy group in their discussion of the dilemma.

4. Critique your focus question.

- Is this question important to my practice?
- Is this question important to student learning?
- Is this question important to others in my profession? Some Generic Examples of Dilemmas
- The teaching staff seems to love the idea of involving the students in meaningful learning that connects the students to real issues and an audience beyond school, but nothing seems to be happening in reality.

Question: What can I do to capitalize on teachers' interest and to help them translate theory into practice?

- The community is participating in visioning work, but the work doesn't seem to relate to the actual life of the school — it is just too utopian. Question: How do I mesh dreams and reality?
- No matter how hard I try to be inclusive and ask for everyone's ideas, about half of the people don't want to do anything new — they think things were just fine before. Question: How do I work with the people who don't want to change without alienating them?

Preparing to Present a Dilemma: in a Consultancy Protocol, come to the session with a description of a dilemma related to your practice. Write your dilemma with as much contextual description as you feel you need for understanding. One page is generally sufficient; even a half page is often enough. If you prefer not to write it out, you can make notes for yourself and do an oral presentation, but please do some preparation ahead of time. End your description with a specific question. Frame your question thoughtfully. What do you REALLY want to know? What is your real dilemma? This question will help your Consultancy group focus its feedback. Questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no” generally provide less feedback for the person with the dilemma, so avoid those kinds of questions.

Dilemmas deal with issues with which you are struggling — something that is problematic or has not been as effective as you would like it to be — anything related to your work. Consultancies give presenters an opportunity to tap the expertise in a group, and if past experiences offer any indication, you will be able to rely on the people in your Consultancy group to provide respectful, thoughtful, experienced-based responses to your dilemma. A couple of caveats — we have found that Consultancies don’t go well when people bring dilemmas that they are well on the way to figuring out themselves, or when they bring a dilemma that involves only getting other people to change. To get the most out of this experience, bring something that is still puzzling you about your practice. It is riskier to do, but we guarantee that you will learn more.

Appendix B: The Critical Friends Consultancy Protocol

A Consultancy is a structured process for helping an individual or a team think more expansively about a particular, concrete dilemma. Time: Approximately 50 minutes.

Roles:

Presenter (whose work is being discussed by the group);

Facilitator (who sometimes participates, depending on the size of the group).

1. The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which s/he is struggling, and frames a question for the Consultancy group to consider. The framing of this question, as well as the quality of the presenter's reflection on the dilemma being discussed, are key features of this protocol. If the presenter has brought student work, educator work, or other "artifacts," there is a pause here to silently examine the work/ documents. The focus of the group's conversation is on the dilemma. (5-10 minutes)

2. The Consultancy group asks clarifying questions of the presenter — that is, questions that have brief, factual answers. (5 minutes)

3. The group asks probing questions of the presenter. These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter clarify and expand his/her thinking about the dilemma presented to the Consultancy group. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question s/he framed or to do some analysis of the dilemma presented. The presenter may respond to the group's questions, but there is no discussion by the Consultancy group of the presenter's responses. At the end of the ten minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to re-state his/her question for the group. (10 minutes)

4. The group talks with each other about the dilemma presented. (15 minutes) Possible questions to frame the discussion: What did we hear? What didn't we hear that they think might be relevant? What assumptions seem to be operating? What questions does the dilemma raise for us? What do we think about the dilemma? What might we do or try if faced with a similar dilemma? What have we done in similar situations?

Consultancy Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group® and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School Reform Faculty website at www.nsrffharmony.org. Members of the group sometimes suggest actions the presenter might consider taking. Most often, however, they work to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively. The presenter doesn't speak during this discussion, but instead listens and takes notes. The presenter reflects on what s/he heard and on what s/he is now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for him or her during any part of the Consultancy. (5 minutes)

6. The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group's observation of the Consultancy process. (5 minutes)

Appendix C: Chronology of Participant Activities

- 1) Reading through the recruitment documents (Early September)
- 2) Agreeing and signing the participation documentation (by September 29th)
- 3) Participating in 7 treatments that last for approximately 2 hours (once a week from October-December)
- 4) Creating 5 journal entries with an approximate time factor of 15 minutes total or per entry – prompts will be given at the end of each session. (October-December)
- 5) Teaching content to be video recorded for approximately one 55-minute class period or less. (November-January)
- 6) Viewing and analyzing the video footage for approximately 1 hour & Explaining how the video footage provides evidence of a shift in his or her practice for approximately 1 hour (November-January)
- 7) Participating in an exit interview for approximately 90 minutes (November-January)

Appendix D: Conceptual Framework Graphic

Appendix E: CFG Trust-Building Activities

Micro lab Protocol: Participants were given two minutes to think on each question and 90 seconds for each person to respond. The groups were broken into groups of three or four participants. The questions were:

What would a collaborative learning community look like?

How can a person giving or receiving feedback make the process a positive experience?

Hopes and Fears Protocol: Participants had two minutes to think and write about their fears and then another two minutes to think and write about their hopes for participating in the dialogue group. Then they shared out.

Participant Answers:

Fears

- judgment
- can't think/ choose a dilemma
- bullshit due to lack of "try"
- hurt feelings due to bluntness
- time issues- condensed timeline
- subject specific solutions??
- fear of fear
- fear of the gripe...
- overwhelmed by feedback
- how much time this will take
- absenteeism

Hopes

- share good news
- participate & everyone digs in
- builds community
- you are not alone (reduces isolation)
- relevant
- Create community "Where everybody knows your name"
- enthusiasm/new ideas
- learn to be a better teacher & teaching strategies
- Better solutions to teacher problems
- classroom management solutions
- Brave conversations about equity

Agreements Protocol – In pairs, the participants looked over the NSRF suggested norms sheet to decide on four norms that they thought were the most important for our group. Then participants were asked to cut their list down to three. Then each group shared out to make the final list (which represents several cross overs).

Agreements

- Participate
- Assume good intentions
- Be specific
- Enjoy Creative Friction
- Expect Discomfort
- Have Fun (beer)
- Be fully present
- Protect confidentiality – (set as an absolute requirement and everyone agreed)

Appendix F: Enrollment Data

PERCENTAGE DATA ON STUDENT ENROLLMENT FOR SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT AND SPRINGFIELD'S PRINCIPAL HIGH SCHOOLS									
SSD	Students	White [1]	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Filipino	Pacif. Isl. [4]	Am. Ind. [5]	2 or more races
									Races
2000-2001	31,078	39.4	35.3	4.1	14.1	5.0	1.2	[2]	[3]
2010-2011	32,607	19.2	51.1	4.3	14.8	5.8	[2]	[2]	[2]
2013-2014	33,887	15.3	55.4	3.2	15.9	5.6	[2]	[2]	3.4
Appleton HS									
2000-2001	1752	48.8	23.7	3.4	13.5	6.6	3.2	[2]	[3]
2010-2011	2,086	21.4	55.0	3.2	12.9	4.8	[2]	[2]	1.1
2013-2014	2,179	18.2	59.7	1.9	12.1	5.8	[2]	[2]	1.1
Borican HS									
2000-2001	1,449	38.4	29.5	5.7	16.2	6.8	3.0	[2]	[3]
2010-2011	2,010	21.4	45.9	7.2	11.9	10.9	[2]	[2]	1.4
2013-2014	1,960	17.9	51.1	5.8	11.7	11.0	[2]	[2]	1.3
CLK HS									
2000-2001	1,425	38.5	25.8	4.7	21.7	4.3	4.6	[2]	[3]
2010-2011	1,376	28.9	22.7	6.5	30.4	7.5	1.5	[2]	1.2
2013-2014	1,410	24.3	23.4	5.5	34.3	8.3	1.3	[2]	2.2
Dorrison SJ HS									
2000-2001	2,169	38.7	55.6	[2]	3.1	1.4	[2]	[2]	[3]
2010-2011	2,198	12.4	82.8	[2]	2.0	1.3	[2]	[2]	1.3
2013-2014	2167	7.3	87.2	[2]	2.4	1.4	[2]	[2]	[2]
Ellington HS									
2000-2001	1,924	57.5	20.0	4.4	12.9	3.7	[2]	[2]	[3]
2010-2011	1,984	33.7	27.9	6.9	20.0	7.4	[2]	[2]	2.9
2013-2014	1,835	29.2	30.0	6.4	22.5	7.9	[2]	[2]	2.9

California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System *District and school enrollment by ethnicity*, (2014)

[1] White not Hispanic; [2] less than 1%; [3] data not available; [4] Pacific Islanders;

[5] American Indian/Alaskan Native

It is important to note that Filipino students are reported separately from the Asian students in the CDE EDU data but Filipinos are a part of the Asian population count in most U.S. Census data

Appendix G: Pre-Interview Questions

- 1) Please give yourself a score of 1 to 5, 5 being the most understanding of the opportunity gap, not to be confused with the achievement Gap, and why you place yourself there.
- 2) Please give me any examples that come to mind of any instructional practices that you think can reduce the opportunity gap.
- 3) What do you think is the difference between equity and equality and could you give me an example of that in your classroom? Let's start with equity.
- 4) On a scale of one through five how capable do you feel currently at addressing issues of equity in the classroom?
- 5) What are challenges you have faced in creating an equitable environment?
- 6) Is there anything that has prevented you from providing the equitable experience for all your students?

Appendix H: Post/Exit Interview Questions

1) On a scale of one to ten, one being a total victim of circumstance and ten being the active participant in the solution, where do you think you started and where do you think you ended on your dilemma?

Follow up: And is there anything in particular about why you think you have improved?

2) If you discovered any actions that you wanted to take to help solve your dilemma, could you share an example?

3) If you discovered any actions you wanted to take, on a completely unrelated aspect of your classroom, as you reflected on any of the dialogue sessions, could you share an example?

4) What did you learn, if anything about the power dynamics of the relationships among students and teachers, teachers and administrators, any of those combinations?

5) How did it feel to move out of your comfort zone of isolated personal reflection to changing to this model that requires you to share your thinking with a peer group?

6) On a scale of one to five, one being the least and five being the most, how capable do you feel to address the needs of your diverse learners, and has it shifted over the course of the study?

Follow Up: Do you have any examples?

7) Did you feel any sense of hostility at any point during the dialogue sessions?

8) Did you feel silenced or invalidated at any point?

9) Having participated in this dialogue group for four months, where will you go from here as far as addressing student equity?

10) As a classroom teacher, what do you see as your responsibility for addressing equity at this school?

11) And, would you say that any of your answers to that has shifted over the course of the study?

Required Induction Questions Included in Exit Interview:

- 1) What have you learned about yourself as a teacher?
- 2) What have you learned about your students?
- 3) Describe a piece of evidence that best illustrates a shift you have made in your teaching.
- 4) What will you investigate or focus on in the next year?