

# Generative Principles for Professional Learning for Equity-Oriented Urban English Teachers

Allison Skerrett, Amber Warrington, and Thea Williamson

This article investigates the experiences of three early-career secondary English urban teachers who sought to strengthen their perspectives and practices of social justice teaching through professional development. Data include teacher interviews across their first three years of teaching, artifacts across three participants representing their professional development experiences and teaching and learning in their classrooms, and interviews of three informants who participated in professional development with two of the teacher participants. We then conducted a thematic analysis. We found six generative features of professional development/professional learning that promoted these urban teachers' development as equity-oriented English teachers. This paper contributes to the knowledge base on professional development/professional learning in urban contexts in that it is the first to foreground urban teachers' needs for professional development that promotes their equity-oriented educational stances and practices and that illuminates how productive principles for professional learning can facilitate meeting those needs.

## Generative Principles of Professional Learning for Equity-Oriented Urban English Teachers

**T**his article focuses on three graduates of an urban English teacher education program who, at the time of this publication, are in their fourth year of teaching in urban schools. These three teachers grew up in different regions of the southern United States and identified with different racial, social class, cultural, and linguistic groups. Yet Jasmine, Octavia, and Andrew (all names are pseudonyms) shared core values about the purpose of education, specifically literacy education as a tool for social change. Before, during, and beyond their urban teacher preparation program, these teachers strengthened their understandings, commitments, and practices related to teaching literacy for social justice. Their definitions and practices of teaching for social justice reflected Cochran-Smith's (2010) ideas: striving

for social and educational equity, recognizing the importance of differences among and within social groups, and struggling through the tensions that make teaching for social justice difficult.

Because of the wide variety of teaching stances and practices that might be considered social justice teaching (Bender-Slack, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2010), we provide here a few examples of the three teachers' emerging practices of teaching for social justice. Jasmine drew upon the burgeoning Black Lives Matter social movement to have critical conversations about race with her ninth graders; Andrew designed social action plans with his middle school students; and Octavia and her students critiqued and deconstructed the state-mandated high-stakes standardized test. Given their focus on social justice, all three teachers hoped they would find, during professional life, learning opportunities that would further develop their stances and practices as social justice-oriented teachers.

In this article we draw on these three teachers' experiences of professional development/professional learning opportunities to explore the following research questions: (1) What professional development/professional learning experiences did three urban secondary English teachers report as significant to their learning about literacy education and social justice? (2) What are some generative features of professional learning that supported these teachers' goals and practices of teaching for social justice? We intentionally use both the terms *professional development* and *professional learning* to emphasize that the former carries a problematic history of what is "done" to teachers to develop their practice in ways predetermined for them by those in positions of power, while the latter is associated with forms of teacher learning in which teachers can experience greater agency, collegiality, and collaboration in learning in and about their practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Wood & Lieberman, 2000; Zoch, 2015). As we will argue in this article, we do not believe there exists an ultimate binary between professional development, such as opportunities offered by districts and schools, and professional learning opportunities outside these school-sanctioned engagements that teachers themselves create or pursue. We believe that professional development from schools and districts, depending on how they are designed, their content, organization, and forms of engagement offered to teachers, can also be generative sites for teacher learning.

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## **Review of the Literature**

Inservice teachers' typical experiences of professional development in urban contexts entail school- and district-level mandated engagement with preselected curriculum programs and instructional approaches, coupled with standardized test data assessment, that direct teachers' foci toward increasing students' performance on standardized tests (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Craig, 2012; Stillman, 2011; Williamson, 2017; Zoch, 2015). These types of professional development consist of transmission of information, such as district-created literacy curricula (Craig, 2012; Williamson, 2017), scripted literacy programs (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006), and reading strategies for test preparation (Zoch, 2015). The design and content of district-level professional development typically flow into the organization and emphasis of professional development in local schools, departments, and professional learning communities (PLCs). These professional development designs typically do not recognize or draw on teachers' professional knowledge, including teachers' knowledge of their students. They are not framed around teachers' questions about practice; nor do these professional development designs provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate on innovating curriculum and instruction that will improve their teaching and students' learning (Craig, 2012; Stillman, 2011; Zoch, 2015). We believe a banking model of education (Freire, 1970/2003) undergirds these forms of professional development for inservice teachers.

Furthermore, the focus of professional development in urban schools is rarely on teachers' development of social justice perspectives and innovation of educational practices that promote students' development of a robust range of literacy proficiencies, including the ability to apply critical perspectives to their lives and the world (James-Wilson & Hancock, 2011; Skerrett, 2010, 2011; Skerrett & Williamson, 2015). Thus, teachers concerned with being and becoming social justice oriented teachers have had to negotiate with required professional development that was absent of these perspectives, or create their own pathways to the forms of professional growth they desired. Collaborations with peer colleagues have been shown to facilitate teachers' abilities to subvert standardized curriculum and transform it into more culturally responsive and socially just educational experiences for students (Fecho, Graham, & Hudson-Ross, 2005; Simon, 2015; Skerrett & Williamson, 2015). Teachers have leveraged their professional knowledge and engaged in critical professional practice (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Williamson, 2017) and principled resistance (Stillman, 2011; Williamson, 2017) to negotiate district- and state-mandated curricula to make them more responsive to students' cultural and linguistic repertoires.

A body of work explores teacher learning in professional communities that contrasts the typical nature of professional development provided to teachers by their districts and schools. This set of studies further helps us understand our and our participants' distinctions between professional development and professional learning that we identified in our introduction. Foundational and ongoing research has explored how to develop, improve, and sustain productive forms of teacher learning within professional learning communities in schools. This corpus of work has noted the particular difficulties of doing so in urban schools given the pressures of high-stakes accountability systems and endemic deficit perspectives on students and their communities that frequently permeate urban schools (e.g., Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Horn & Little, 2010; James-Wilson & Hancock, 2011). These studies have identified similar generative features of professional learning communities that promote teachers' learning: teachers' ownership, empowerment, and agency in relation to their joint work; professional and relational connectedness and trust (e.g., Grossman et al., 2001); development and alignment of constructive core values and goals (e.g., James-Wilson & Hancock, 2011); and a focus on teacher learning and improvement (e.g., Horn & Little, 2010). Yet most of this work, with the exception of James-Wilson and Hancock (2011), has not conceptualized teacher professional learning in explicit terms of social justice.

Beyond the development of professional learning communities in schools, the literature on inservice teachers' learning illustrates a trend of teachers moving beyond their schools to explore formal learning communities to grow their thinking and practice with other like-minded colleagues (Attard, 2012; Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Simon, 2015; Warrington, Graeber, White, & Saxton, in press; Zoch, 2015). In these learning communities, teachers develop their own learning goals and engage in inquiry based on problems within their classroom practices. This kind of teacher learning reflects what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) called "knowledge-of-practice," reminiscent of a problem-posing education (Freire, 1970/2003), in which teachers investigate their own practices and use knowledge and theory produced by others to interpret their classroom experiences. When teachers take up "inquiry as stance" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), teachers problematize their knowledge and practice, critique social and political school structures, and work for change.

For example, the National Writing Project (NWP) has been a longstanding professional learning site that represents a productive form of teacher learning in which teachers come together to develop both as writers and teachers of writing. Unlike transmission-style professional development,

professional communities such as the NWP (Wood & Liebermann, 2000) and online platforms such as PorTRAIT (Fecho et al., 2005) strive to facilitate teachers' professional inquiry and agency. In the inquiry group described by Zoch (2015), teachers from the same school not only read and discussed research studies and professional books together in meetings, but they also observed one another's teaching. On a larger scale, teachers in an online community made physical visits to one another's schools and classrooms across multiple states to consider different perspectives on their classroom practices (Fecho et al., 2005). Chandler-Olcott and Nieroda (2016) reported on the ways in which teachers' co-planning and co-teaching helped them make adjustments to writing curriculum, particularly to build on students' language diversity. In aggregate, research provides insights into the nature of professional development and professional learning communities teachers typically experience within their school districts and schools as well as their experiences in alternative professional learning spaces beyond their districts and schools. The literature also indicates that urban teachers most frequently receive a disempowering form of professional development from their school districts and schools. This situation sometimes leads urban teachers to seek out or create more agentive learning communities for themselves to develop equity-oriented mindsets and educational practices for their students. As such, analyzing urban teachers' learning experiences across varied professional development spaces may be particularly fruitful in helping to crystallize the features of learning and learning spaces under which teachers best thrive, including acquiring particular forms of knowledge. This is our goal with this analysis.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

We draw on Wenger's (1998) framework of communities of practice to assist us in identifying and theorizing the features and conditions of a variety of professional development or professional learning opportunities our teacher participants experienced that, to varying degrees, promoted or constrained their development as equity-oriented teachers. We draw on Collins's (2010) theorization of community as sociopolitical terrain to explore teachers' opportunities to learn, through professional development experiences, that teacher learning was itself an issue of social justice and educational equity for teachers and their students. Communities of practice, in Wenger's (1998) framework, are groups of people engaged in a "sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise" (p. 45) and who share a common repertoire—routines, rituals, tools, language, symbols, stories, histories, and other resources—for engag-

ing in their work. Engaged in practice, members develop, negotiate, and share meaning; create and merge identities; and, depending on the forms of participation, experience deep learning in and about their practice that can improve the community and its practices and transform members' identities. We see linkages between Wenger's (1998) articulation of the features of a community of practice and the productive learning it can facilitate and the research we reviewed on productive professional learning communities (Chandler-Olcott & Nieroda, 2016; Zoch, 2015). Drawing on Wenger's (1998) framework and the extant literature, we further deduce that in urban schools and districts, an essential part of the work of communities of practice are members' negotiation of, and work toward, developing shared productive ideologies and educational practices related to social justice for urban students (James-Wilson & Hancock, 2011; Skerrett & Williamson, 2015; Warrington et al., in press).

Wenger's (1998) articulation of communities of practice raises questions about forms of professional development that we described earlier as a banking model (Freire, 1970/2003) of inservice education. In these models teachers are mandated to come together to engage with problems of practice, materials, resources, and solutions already identified for them by others. The goal is teachers' acceptance of, rather than negotiation with, and exchange of, ideas. And building a strong shared identity of a particular group of educators fails to rise to the level of a significant professional development goal (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Craig, 2012; Stillman, 2011; Warrington et al., in press; Zoch 2015).

Wenger's (1998) useful concept of constellations of communities of practice is important for understanding the significance of belonging, shared identity, and learning about matters of practice that teachers self-identify as necessary to their ongoing development. A number of studies we reviewed described models of teacher professional learning communities that are stretched across local and national contexts, sometimes assisted by digital means, and centered on a particular area of practice (e.g., Fecho et al., 2005; Wood & Liebermann, 2000). Such communities have been central for teachers who ascribe to particular educational ideologies and practices that may not be prioritized within their schools. These constellations of communities of practice assist these educators in maintaining community and learning related to those beliefs and practices, fostering their agency in advocating for these practices within their schools as well as implementing (sometimes in subversive ways) such educational ideas and approaches with their students (Skerrett & Williamson, 2015; Stillman, 2011; Warrington et al., in press).

Wenger (1998) alludes to the agency of communities of practice, noting, “communities of practice are not contained entities. They develop in larger contexts—historical, social, cultural, institutional—with specific resources and constraints” although they always maintain agency in the nature of “their response to their conditions, and therefore, their enterprise” (p. 80). Because urban education has long been framed as a historical, social, cultural, and *political* enterprise (Milner, 2012), we see it fitting to give theoretical emphasis to the sociopolitical nature of professional development and professional learning opportunities for teachers in urban schools whose agendas are advancing social and educational justice with their students.

Indeed, Collins (2010) argued that community must be understood beyond “naturalized and normalized views [that] situate community as geographically specific . . . and inherently apolitical identities” (p. 9). For Collins, the construct of community “constitutes both a principle of actual social organization and an idea that people use to make sense of and shape their everyday lived realities” (p. 8), a conceptualization that facilitates understanding of the “changing-same nature of social inequalities” (p. 10) endemic in stratified societies. The studies we reviewed point to the social organizational element that, in part, constitutes professional development or professional learning opportunities—school districts, schools, academic departments, and larger constellations of communities of practice (e.g., Zoch, 2015).

Elaborating on the second constituting principle of community—that of ideas—through a lens of power, Collins (2010) explained that power relations in communities are organized around core ideas that combine “taken-for-granted, commonsense, everyday knowledge . . . and technical, formal knowledge” (p. 8) of elite groups. Furthermore, those core ideas, because they reflect the social and political inequalities under which they are created, circulate as “ambiguous, contradictory, and messy” constructs that can be variously employed to support different political objectives (p. 8). In relation to this study, the knowledge offered to teachers in typical professional development forums can be understood as the formal knowledge those in positions of power determine should be official educational knowledge for teachers and students. Some professional development can espouse that core ideas such as educational achievement for all and social justice are their overarching goals, but these objectives may operate as patinas for concepts that are difficult to unpack and articulate and hold multiple, tenuous meanings to different communities (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Thus core ideas can be used to justify a range of educational approaches, some of which members of a community may disagree with. Hence, political protestations can occur when marginalized members of a community come

to recognize that these core ideas limit or discredit the knowledge of those outside positions of power (such as teachers and their students). We understand through Collins's (2010) discussion, then, how urban teachers with social justice educational agendas can experience professional development as a social justice enterprise that they must actively engage to learn more deeply about, advocate for, and enact in practice their definitions of social and educational equity with students (Warrington et al., in press). Accordingly, we align with Collins's (2010) proposal that the malleable and vague nature of core ideas render them a powerful political tool that marginalized members of a community can use to work toward greater justice. This agency and transformative action by oppressed members or subgroups of a larger community is activated not only by their skillful manipulation of core ideas but by strong emotions of belonging to and caring for one's community, notable features of productive professional communities (Grossman et al., 2001; Horn & Little, 2010). Collins (2010) concurs: "[A] sense of belonging" to one's community can "catalyze strong deep feelings that . . . prime [people] for political analysis" and "move people to action" (pp. 11–12). Yet Collins is not blind to the contradictions that can exist in communities that claim allegiance to core ideas such as social justice and the disparate ways that their members' practices reflect and diverge from those core ideas across particular moments, situations, and time.

## **Methods**

This article draws from a longitudinal qualitative inquiry that employs interviews, observations, and collection and review of documents and artifacts (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013) to understand how preservice teachers in a two-year, urban-focused master's plus teacher certification program experience their preparation for teaching English in urban schools and develop as urban teachers into their first five years of professional teaching. The current analysis focuses on three focal participants, Jasmine, Octavia, and Andrew, from the six-member cohort that began their program in fall 2012 and began professional teaching in fall 2014. All six preservice teachers gave informed written consent to participate in the study, and these three focal participants from the original cohort continue to be active in the study.

## **Participants and Contexts**

We describe each focal participant and her or his current teaching context as well as the researchers/teacher educators and the context of the university teacher preparation program.

### *Jasmine*

Jasmine identifies as a Black woman from a working-class family who immigrated to a large urban city in the southeast United States. Her first language is Haitian Creole. Jasmine brought to the teacher preparation program critical and social justice perspectives on English education from her life experiences and from her African American Studies college background. Before joining the master's plus certification program, Jasmine had co-developed and co-taught an after-school educational enrichment program for adolescents in the same urban high school she had attended. After graduating from the teacher preparation program, Jasmine moved to an urban metropolis 90 minutes southwest of the city in which the university that houses the teacher education program is located. There, she began teaching ninth-grade English language arts at Coolidge High School in a large, urban district. The school's student population is 61 percent Latinx, 17 percent Black, 15 percent White, and the remaining students Asian, Native American, or multiracial, with 65 percent of the student body qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. English Language Learners accounted for 7 percent of the student population. At the time of this writing, Jasmine is working in a literacy instruction leadership role in a different urban school district about four hours north of the university.

### *Octavia*

Octavia identifies as a White woman from a middle-class background. She grew up in the southern region of the United States and received a master's degree in English from a private university in the Southwest. She brought to the teacher education program experience as a university composition instructor. After receiving her second master's degree and teacher certification from the urban teacher education program, Octavia took a position as an English language arts teacher at Colina High School, where she continues to teach. Colina High is located in a community about a 20-minute drive east of the university. Colina High School's student population is 80 percent Latinx, 12 percent Black, 6 percent White, and the remaining students Asian, Native American, or multiracial, with 85 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Of its entire student population, 11 percent were identified as English Language Learners.

### *Andrew*

Andrew identifies as a White male from an upper-middle-class background. He grew up in a racially diverse city on the southeast coast but attended primarily White private schools including for his undergraduate degree.

Throughout high school and college, Andrew tutored urban students and worked alongside residents in urban community improvement projects. After graduating from the teacher education program, Andrew moved to an urban city in the southern United States. He taught English language arts for one year at Independence Charter School (ICS), a public independent charter school, where, according to the school's website, "85% of . . . students speak, or have at least one parent who speaks, a variety of 19 languages." Andrew then moved to Walker Middle School, a public school in the same city, for his second year of teaching and continues to teach there. Its student population is 51 percent White, 44 percent Black, 3 percent Latinx, and the remaining students Asian, Native American, or multiracial, with 42 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Less than 1 percent of students are identified as English Language Learners.

### *Researchers*

At the time the research was conducted, all three authors worked at the same large public university in the southwest United States in which the urban teacher preparation program is housed. The university is located in an urban metropolis and serves a student population that is approximately half White, 18 percent Latinx, 15 percent Asian, 4 percent Black, and less than 1 percent American Indian and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, with the remainder population of international students adding to cultural and linguistic diversity. Allison identifies as a Black woman of Caribbean heritage. She is a faculty member at the university and teaches within the urban education program in which the study participants were prepared. Allison is also a former secondary English urban teacher, and her research focuses on English education in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. Amber identifies as a White woman and is a former high school English language arts teacher and current faculty member in English education at a university in the western United States. She attended the university as a doctoral student and served as a teaching assistant with Allison in two classes in which the focal participants were students. Octavia also participated in Amber's doctoral dissertation study. Thea identifies as a White woman and is a former English language arts teacher and after-school program administrator, both in urban contexts. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the university and knows the participants primarily through research activity on this project.

### **Data and Analysis**

During the participants' two-year teacher education program, we collected data that include semi-structured interviews from each semester during the

preservice program, observations of preservice teachers across university classes and field settings, and teaching and learning artifacts produced and used by them during university courses and fieldwork. Since the time that Jasmine, Octavia, and Andrew graduated from the program, we have collected four semi-structured interviews each across their first three years of teaching as well as artifacts of teaching and learning in their classrooms. Across these data that we have been collecting and analyzing over the past five years, we had already identified the increasing amount of teacher talk about the challenges of implementing equity-oriented curriculum and instructional practices as preservice and inservice teachers in urban schools. We also knew from our data that our participants wished for, and sought out, professional learning spaces within and outside their schools to develop and strengthen their practices of social justice oriented teaching. Indeed, we conducted the fourth interview to specifically draw out the teachers' experiences of professional development and professional learning that addressed their goals of improving their equity-oriented English education practices. For the purposes of this article, we also selected from the already existing data pool of artifacts those that represented the teachers' districts', schools', and self-selected professional development experiences. We further requested that the teachers provide us with additional artifacts that represented professional development experiences they had described in the fourth interview. Artifacts informing this analysis include 11 from Jasmine, 14 from Octavia, and 32 from Andrew.

An NWP consultant who worked with Jasmine in a professional development workshop served as a source of additional information about that professional development experience via email. Two of Andrew's former colleagues, whom we refer to as Emma and Gary, were also interviewed via email. Their written emailed responses as well as other email correspondence between them and Allison during fall 2016 assisted us in triangulating Andrew's interview data concerning his professional development experiences at ICS, the public charter middle school. Finally, we draw from relevant data collected by Amber for her dissertation study that included Octavia as a participant. These data include transcribed audio recordings of teacher inquiry group meetings as well as artifacts used and created by that group.

### *Analysis*

We conducted a thematic analysis (Miles et al., 2013) of our data related to Jasmine, Octavia, and Andrew. Across six months, we conducted our analysis collaboratively as well as independently. Our process involved group analysis meetings at early, mid, and final stages of analysis and working independently

in between these collaborative sessions. Some of our collaborative meetings occurred in person while others took place via Skype or Google Hangout. Collaborative sessions typically involved identifying and discussing big ideas across the data set, deciding on lines of analysis to follow, and discussing pertinent literature and theoretical frameworks. When we conducted independent analysis, we decided on portions of data we would each analyze and the particular focus of each round of analysis. We would then meet to share and jointly refine our analysis. The onset of our analysis for this article began with each of us taking responsibility for the five-year corpus of data of one of the three focal participants to reduce that data set to portions directly related to professional development; professional learning; and social justice ideas related to curriculum, teaching, learning, and educational practices and structures at the teachers' urban schools and districts.

Our initial analysis of the reduced data set focused on the types of professional development (PD) in which the teachers engaged. We identified the types as (1) district, (2) school, (3) department level, and (4) self-selected PD opportunities. We then engaged in rounds of open coding across teachers' interviews and artifacts, at times in unison and at other times independently, and then jointly created a data chart that represented our initial codes. These codes were as follows: (1) type of PD, (2) provider of PD, (3) topic or intended goal of PD, (4) participant roles and positioning, (5) nature of teachers' engagement, and (6) perspectives on social justice inherent within the PD. This chart served as an analytic tool, assisting us in noticing recurring themes. Looking across the data on the chart, we identified two prominent themes: (1) productive features of the teachers' professional development or professional learning experiences and (2) tensions emerging for the teachers within and across these varied experiences.

One mid-stage data analysis meeting involved discussing our deepening understandings of the data and considering potentially relevant theoretical frameworks. At that meeting, we decided to employ Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice as a lens to view participants' roles and engagement in professional development/professional learning opportunities. We also selected Collins's (2010) theory to help us explore the politics and tensions our participants experienced within and across various professional development/professional learning engagements. We returned to working independently, conducting an additional layer of analysis in which we applied these theories to already analyzed data. We reconvened for group meetings (that occurred either face-to-face or virtually) to discuss what new insights we were gleaned from the data as we analyzed them through these thematic lenses. These discussions of within and cross-case insights led us

to identify six productive features of generative professional learning (listed at the onset of the findings section).

Each of us then returned to independent analysis of selected data to engage in more focused coding to continue refining and searching for empirical evidence that either strengthened or weakened the significance and strength of those six principles. Coming back together as a group, we then applied these six principles to particular cases of professional development/professional learning our participants reported, and discussed our observations of whether and how these principles encapsulated the specifics of the circumstances the participants were describing. This collaborative process supported refining our thinking, revision, and re-articulation of the language of the principles. These final phases of data analysis also involved returning to our theoretical concepts (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2010; Collins, 2010; Wenger, 1998) and extant research (e.g., Craig, 2012; Zoch, 2015) that assisted our noticing and confirmation of the productive features of professional development/professional learning that emerged from our analysis. Upon reaching consensus that we had reached a point of saturation with analysis, we discussed how we would structure and organize our findings in writing for publication. We chose to select salient cases from each of the teachers' professional development/professional learning experiences to illustrate the presence and absence of those six principles and attendant outcomes.

### *Limitations*

Our analysis and findings carry the constraints of all qualitative research dealing with small numbers of participants in bounded and unique social contexts (Miles et al., 2013). As the initial research design did not allow us access to the teachers' school districts and classrooms, our data were limited to the participants' interview data and the artifacts they provided us. Although we triangulated participants' self-reports with artifacts from their schools, districts, and professional development offerings and interviewed informants of their cases, we acknowledge we are unable to represent the multiple perspectives involved in these professional development experiences. By examining data over a three-year period of inservice teaching, however, we can claim deep understandings of participants' accounts of the professional development opportunities in which they engaged across time, and how their commitments to and practices of social justice oriented teaching and learning were and were not reflected in these professional development/learning opportunities.

## Findings

We identified six principles of generative professional development/professional learning experiences through our analysis. Although these principles of professional learning would be useful across all contexts, our analysis foregrounds the notion that urban teachers' needs from professional development are often related to addressing social justice concerns. As we pointed out in our review of the literature, few professional development opportunities focus explicitly on promoting teachers', including urban teachers', equity-oriented educational practices (James-Wilson & Hancock, 2011). Hence, our findings emphasize how these productive dimensions of professional development/professional learning can be responsive to urban teachers' professional learning needs related to educational equity. A generative experience involved professional development/professional learning opportunities

1. that focused on specific aspects of curriculum, teaching, and learning that teachers themselves identified as areas in which they needed and wanted to grow.
2. in which the content offered was recognized by teachers as grounded in evidence-based research and experts' practice, and facilitated by professionals who were themselves recognized by teachers as experts in that content area.
3. in which teachers' professional knowledge and expertise were valued with interchangeable roles for teachers as both learners and teachers.
4. that were sustained over time in which teachers deepened their knowledge and skills in an area, but also developed increasingly complex questions and ambitious goals for their learning in an area of professional practice.
5. that were intimate, allowing for building personal and professional relationships with the colleagues teachers worked with most closely at their schools. Teachers viewed these intimate relationships as creating conditions for collaboration and shared learning around curriculum and teaching despite differences in teachers' educational ideologies and practices.
6. that were supported by political agents with institutional power such as school districts, principals, and literacy coaches. This

institutional support enhanced teachers' senses of political power and protection, legitimacy, and agency. In some cases this institutional support provided material resources to teachers to pursue the learning they most desired, which was how to enact a social justice focused educational agenda.

We present three sections of findings that, in turn, share a narrative from each participant that displays different principles of generative professional development/professional learning experiences that were impactful for the teachers' growth as social justice educators. We speak of teacher development in the collective sense as all three teachers strengthened their equity-oriented practices from experiencing all of the principles described in this analysis across distinctive learning spaces. Although many of the principles of generative professional development/professional learning are invoked across each participant's narrative (in terms of the strength of their presences or absences), in presenting our findings we emphasize particular principles that are especially salient in each teacher's case. However, we also point briefly to the presence of other principles at work in each case to illustrate the interrelated nature of these principles.

It is also important to offer a methodological reminder as we enter our findings that our data pool on each participant contains data on professional development drawn across multiple years of interviews and collection of artifacts. The experiences of Jasmine and Octavia that we selected for presentation and analysis occurred over a two-year period (2014–16); hence, multiple data sources spanning two years are employed in discussing their narratives. In comparison, the professional development experience of Andrew we selected for presentation occurred during his first year of teaching and was detailed by Andrew in one interview, and supplemented with email correspondence between Allison and two of his former teacher-colleagues who experienced professional development alongside Andrew. Thus while our overall data pool for each participant is symmetrical in scope and duration, the findings presented below, because they focus on a particular experience of each participant that varies in nature and duration, do not reflect the methodological symmetry of our data collection process.

### **Jasmine: Principles 1 and 6**

Jasmine's involvement in professional learning around writing instruction emphasizes how institutionally recognized learning opportunities can provide equity-oriented teachers with opportunities to pursue learning that

improves their educational practices with students. The paradoxes inherent in the degrees of institutional support for the type of professional learning Jasmine desired also emphasize how professional development contains inescapable tensions when the populations of concern are historically marginalized groups (Cochran-Smith, 2010; Collins, 2010).

### *Principle 1: Teacher-Identified Areas of Growth*

In August 2015, the summer after her first year at Coolidge High School, and in August 2016, as she began her third year of teaching, Jasmine attended full-day workshops hosted by her local site of the NWP that were part of a districtwide initiative. During her teacher education program, Jasmine, like our other teacher participants, had learned about readers and writers workshop as an appreciative-based instructional approach that could advance educational equity for urban students (R. Bomer, 2011). For many urban students, reading and writing instruction has been reduced to preparation for standardized tests (Craig, 2012). Instructional approaches such as readers and writers workshop can be liberating in that teachers provide students with choice from an array of texts that reflect students' lived experiences and privilege students' self-selected topics in writing instruction amid strong instructional supports for developing students' reading and writing identities and competencies.

During the first year of NWP workshops in 2015, attending teachers learned about the writing workshop structure, including minilessons (R. Bomer, 2011) and teacher-student conferences (K. Bomer, 2010). The following year, in August 2016, the local NWP site again held full-day workshops for ELA teachers in Jasmine's district to follow up on and troubleshoot teachers' implementation of writing workshop in their classrooms. Jasmine attended two of these full-day workshops, one titled Troubleshooting Writing Workshop and one titled Troubleshooting Writing Conferences, led by the same NWP consultant who had led the workshops the previous August.

Jasmine saw the NWP workshops as a place where she could find support for the kinds of teaching she had learned about and come to value in her teacher education program, particularly teaching reading and writing workshop. The NWP consultant and Jasmine had received their graduate degrees from the same university program; therefore, they had read common texts and studied with the same faculty members in that program, and they shared some philosophies related to the teaching of reading and writing. Jasmine thus recognized the professional development provider as one with research and practice-based expertise in the kind of learning she wanted

to advance in her practice, illustrating the phenomenon of the presence of several of the principles in a given professional development/professional learning situation, in this case, the addition of Principles 1 and 2.

Rather than delivering content to the teachers, the NWP consultant provided teachers with time and material resources so that teachers could investigate issues and challenges related to writing workshop they had experienced in their teaching and had chosen to pursue as lines of inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Jasmine affirmed the teacher-led nature of these “troubleshooting” days:

The teachers talked about the issues they had in doing the writing workshops, and they talked about ways to mend those issues basically. Like if it didn’t work for you last year, here’s a forum to figure out how it might work. And then it was the same thing with the conferring session, just talking about how to make conferences better and easier. (Interview, 10/1/16)

To learn more about this professional development, we contacted the NWP consultant, who served as a source of information on Jasmine’s case. The consultant confirmed Jasmine’s experiences, explaining, “I designed both days to be very much about meeting the teachers’ needs as they walked in the door. Lots of small group work, lots of conferring” (Email correspondence, 11/7/16). The NWP consultant opened the Troubleshooting Writing Workshop day by asking teachers to write down on chart paper what worked well and what did not work well in their writing conferences with students. She built the opening activity and discussion around teachers’ concerns and successes, and in doing so created a space for professional learning that positioned teachers as learners but also experts on their own classroom practices and on needed areas of learning and growth, reflecting the added presence of Principles 1 and 5. After this initial conversation, the consultant provided time for teachers to read practitioner texts and talk about ideas they could take into their writing conferences with students. The consultant concluded the first half of the day by positioning teachers as holding new knowledge, asking them to “write into some ideas for your classroom.”

On the Troubleshooting Writing Workshop Day, the consultant described bringing books on topics such as conferring, reading-writing connections, writing workshop, genre study, multilingual writing, writers’ notebooks, and college-ready writing; the teachers spent two hours informing their self-study by reading self-selected texts. At the end of this time, the consultant asked teachers to commit to one new practice or strategy to implement in their classrooms. Thus the workshop days created opportunities for ELA teachers across the district to talk with one another about writing workshop. Jasmine’s experience with the local NWP site reflects learning

communities wherein teachers from different school communities come together as reconfigured constellations of teacher communities to examine their knowledge-of-practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Wenger, 1998), in this case the teaching of writing, and determine their own learning agendas rather than follow mandates from administrators (e.g., Attard, 2012; Freire, 1970/2005).

### *Principle 6: Institutional Support for Professional Learning*

The five full-day workshops offered by the NWP site in August 2016 were supported by Jasmine's school district. English teachers, many of whom were unfamiliar with that instructional approach, were encouraged to attend. With the district legitimizing writing workshop, as exemplified by its partnership with the NWP site, Jasmine felt greater agency at her school to offer alternatives to core ideas (Collins, 2010) around writing instruction and share new and different instructional practices with her colleagues. Speaking of her first year teaching at Coolidge, Jasmine reported, "Whenever I brought up writing workshop or reading workshop in the previous year, it was like, I was kind of looked at like, 'Why would we want to do that?'" (Interview, 6/8/16). Jasmine noticed that the teachers at her school followed the district curriculum, which did not include workshop approaches to teaching reading and writing. Thus,

When [the district] actually put it as an option for us to go, I was like, oh ok, well maybe this is what we're moving towards the next school year, and I was happy about that . . . that gave me more confidence to do that in my classroom, like the writing workshop, to implement that. (Interview, 6/8/16)

Illuminating the idea of degrees of presence and absence of generative principles of professional development, despite the seeming curricular alignment between the local NWP site and Jasmine's district, this institutional support did not secure the school-level curricular changes Jasmine had hoped would occur as a result of the partnership. Jasmine voiced her disappointment, saying, "Last summer, [the district] required that we go to at least like a few sessions of the NWP, and I had the idea that we would be doing writing workshop in the classroom, you know. They had us go to the NWP sessions, but we really didn't do that" (Interview, 10/1/16). Jasmine and her colleagues experienced tensions around implementing writing workshop in their classrooms, as they had to negotiate other curricular mandates, including standardized test preparation and scripted lesson plans focused on guided reading strategies. Even with the legitimacy the district/NWP partnership gave to writing workshop practices, Jasmine found it difficult

to push against the district's core ideas (Collins, 2010) related to curriculum that emphasized standardized test preparation. The district offered optional professional development focused on writing workshop, yet also required teachers to attend professional development that more closely resembled those focused on district-created literacy curricula (Craig, 2012) and reading strategies for test preparation (Zoch, 2015). While the district's support gave legitimacy to teachers' professional development around writing workshop, that support did not necessarily enhance teachers' agency in their daily negotiations with test-driven district curricula and alternative approaches to curriculum and instruction, such as the readers and writers workshop approach, that Jasmine knew promoted social justice for her urban students by fostering their engagement and growth in literacy.

### Octavia: Principles 3 and 4

Octavia's framing of engagement in research studies as a form of professional learning is important in that it expands understandings of "what counts" as professional learning for teachers. Though teachers are the primary participants in studies of professional development and professional learning, such studies have not been designed or theorized to consider the professional growth teacher participants may experience in their roles as participants in educational research (Craig, 2012; Grossman et al., 2001; Stillman, 2011). We focus here on Octavia's participation in educational research that occurred through her participation in Amber's doctoral dissertation study.

#### *Principle 3: Teachers' Professional Knowledge and Expertise Are Valued with Interchangeable Roles for Teachers and Learners*

Amber's dissertation research involved a teacher inquiry group focused on writing assessment. The writing assessment inquiry group was interested in designing an approach to writing assessment that they called "appreciative" (K. Bomer, 2010; R. Bomer, 2011), meaning that the teachers valued and built on what students were doing well in their writing, rather than focusing on errors or deficits within the writing. The group assembled in spring 2014 and formally concluded in summer 2015. It included three English teachers and was facilitated by Amber. Octavia joined the inquiry group in her last semester in the urban teacher education program to bridge her transition from preservice to inservice teaching. She had identified writing assessment as an area in which she wanted to continue to grow as a beginning teacher, already familiar with K. Bomer's (2010) and R. Bomer's (2011) descriptions of teachers taking an appreciative stance toward students and their literacies

from her teacher preparation program. Octavia wanted to continue thinking with fellow teachers, both novice and more experienced colleagues, about “how [that stance] works in practice” (Inquiry meeting, 4/14/14).

While Amber, an advanced doctoral student, held more knowledge and expertise in theory and research on writing assessment, in line with Principle 3, she intentionally created conditions for fluid roles of expert-learner, serving primarily as a guide and provider of professional resources, such as readings, for the group to jointly consider. Hence, all participants, including Octavia, entered the project as full and legitimate members of the community of practice (Skerrett & Williamson, 2015; Wenger, 1998). As they engaged in collaborative professional learning around a topic of shared interest (Principle 1), they became problem-posers and investigators (Freire, 1970/2003) of their practice. Furthermore, the inquiry group became a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) as the members engaged in a “sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise” (p. 45) and built a repertoire of shared texts, tools, and resources for negotiating ideologies and discourses around appreciative writing assessment and developing an agreed-on framework for writing assessment. The resultant framework was one that represented the group’s shared appreciative perspective on student writing but was permeable enough to enter the different teachers’ classrooms to be further negotiated and transformed to meet the uniqueness of teaching and learning preferences, needs, and constraints in each space.

At the same time the teachers were putting this assessment to work in their classroom practices, they all took on roles and identities of knowledge producers. The project culminated with a presentation by all participants (three teachers and Amber) at the 2015 National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention during Octavia’s second year of teaching. Furthermore, two years beyond the formal conclusion of the inquiry group, the team co-authored a manuscript forthcoming in *English Journal*, bringing the teachers’ experiences and professional learning to a wider audience (Warrington et al., in press). By collaborating with Amber, in her researcher role, and other teachers, Octavia experienced a meaningful professional learning experience that positioned her as both a learner and an expert—a teacher who could generate and share knowledge for and with a wider professional audience of English teachers.

#### ***Principle 4: Sustained over Time with Increasingly Complex Knowledge, Questions, and Goals about and for Practice***

During the initial spring 2014 inquiry meetings, Octavia shared that she wanted to learn more about grading student writing: “I learned how to

grade from that editing sheet [in a first year composition program]. All I knew how to do was look for comma splices.” As the meetings continued and Octavia engaged in dialogue with group members and collaborative study of practitioner texts and research articles, Octavia’s questions about assessment became more complex. During a fall 2014 meeting, now a full-time professional teacher, Octavia asked of the group’s assessment design, “How do we build this democratically?” At the next meeting, she wondered aloud, “How do you teach self-assessment . . . in a way that is empowering to students?” Along with her colleagues in the inquiry group, and beyond the inquiry group, Octavia engaged in intensive examination of the function and ideological implications of grading and assessing student writing, thereby challenging the core ideas (Collins, 2010) around grading and assessment

**As Octavia implemented the group’s assessment design in her classroom, she found that her focus was on ceding control to her students over their learning process. Thus over time, Octavia’s concerns shifted from her grading practices to the ultimate goal of facilitating student empowerment.**

present in schools: “Not just within the classroom but within the larger structure of school and grades . . . what do grades mean, and who decides what’s good and what’s not good?” (Interview 6/6/16).

As Octavia implemented the group’s assessment design in her classroom, she found that her focus was on

ceding control to her students over their learning process. Thus over time, Octavia’s concerns shifted from her grading practices to the ultimate goal of facilitating student empowerment. The formal meetings of the inquiry group ended after Octavia’s first year of teaching; however, the work that they did together continued to influence Octavia’s teaching, evidence of sustaining development. After participating in the inquiry group for a year and a half, Octavia said:

As a first-year teacher, [the inquiry group] helped ground me in what I knew best practice is. You know, ’cause I think coming out of my grad program, like I had all these ideas about like all these thing I’m gonna do, and then when it got to be the real world, it’s like, where do I find the space? So I think that it really helped me like focus my energies and passions where I could to try to make it work. (Inquiry meeting, 6/11/15)

By the end of her second year of teaching, Octavia described the process of shifting her assessment practices as fundamentally transforming her teaching practices:

I’ve come away with a huge amount of knowledge, because this is kind of how I structure all of my units of study now . . . I mean teaching for

equity and social justice, that's the point of democratic assessment, equity.  
(Interview, 6/6/16)

Accordingly, over time, Octavia deepened her knowledge and skills around writing assessment while also developing a more complex understanding of, questions about, and ambitious goals for her writing assessment practices, including how they related to social justice. Urban students continuously experience high-stakes assessments done *to* them and their writing (Williamson, 2017; Zoch, 2015). Thus, having opportunities to reflect on and articulate their own growth and goals as writers became a socially just form of English education for Octavia and her urban students.

### **Andrew: Principles 2 and 5**

We conclude with a sobering case drawn from our participant Andrew's experiences that emphasizes how teachers can experience professional development as a form of educational oppression (Freire, 1970/2005). This case represents deep and multiple absences, rather than presences, of the generative principles of professional development/professional learning we discovered through our analysis. We focus on two significant absences in this case: when the professional development content, and the providers of professional development, are not recognized by teachers as holding research-based expertise (Principle 2); and when professional development/professional learning opportunities deny teachers opportunities to build personal and professional community that can foster collaboration and improvement of practice (Principle 5). Andrew's case is further instructive because it demonstrates the agency and activism of teachers who insist on a socially just form of education for themselves and their students. Data for this case are drawn from Andrew's interview on May 24, 2016, and email correspondence between Allison and two of Andrew's former teacher-colleagues, Emma and Gary, during fall 2016 who experienced professional development alongside Andrew. Given that all quotations are easily connected to the pertinent participant, data sources and time stamps are not used throughout the discussion below.

Andrew's first teaching position was at ICS, which served students who, from Andrew's description, were "98% hyper-low income . . . 60% probably undocumented [with] 15, 16 different languages present. . . . It was like a refugee community essentially." According to Andrew, the teaching staff was "very much young teachers" prepared in a non-university-based, fast-track preparation program, demographics that were reflected in and confirmed by his two colleagues we interviewed.

### *Principle 2. Non-evidence-Based Educational Knowledge and Lack of Professional Expertise*

Andrew described professional development at ICS as “very prescribed . . . supervised learning . . . trying to bring people along in the way that they felt was necessary for their sort of collective mission.” He described professional development content at ICS as “very test-driven [and] sort of guided practice” into the instructional approaches that the school had decided would best support student performance on standardized tests, a typical content of professional development for urban teachers (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Craig, 2012; Zoch, 2015). Andrew’s language of “their . . . collective mission” suggests how communities are organized according to core ideas that are ambiguous enough to suggest the inclusion of multiple stakeholders’ perspectives (Collins, 2010), in this case, a high-quality education for marginalized groups. Yet, from Andrew’s viewpoint, ICS’s mission had little to do with social justice.

The only thing that was ever acknowledged was sort of get our kids to college; that’ll change their lives . . . but there was no sense of social action. So I looked at it as like they’re not teaching the student, they’re teaching numbers [test scores, graduation and college matriculation rates]. So . . . there was a fundamental divide [between Andrew’s and the school’s ideologies] the first day I showed up.

Gary, Andrew’s colleague, remarked that he too understood the school administration’s perspectives “were to ‘fix’ the deficiencies they were seeing across the building.”

Drawing on his learning from his teacher education program, Andrew critiqued this delivery form of professional development as “whatever Paulo Freire used to call it—the banking model.” Emma, another of Andrew’s former colleagues, described the nature, content, and positioning of teachers in these professional development sessions that indeed reflected this banking approach. Emma discussed how teachers were positioned (both intellectually as well as in bodily form) as passive student-recipients of the knowledge of the elite groups (Collins, 2010; Freire, 1970/2005) of their school community, in this case, the academic deans, that they as teachers were then to deposit into their own students:

The deans would present a strategy, give a powerpoint presentation on it. We would fill in guided notes [and] watch video clips. . . . The deans would then model the strategy on us, and treat us as if we were students—essentially would correct our posture and use “teacher voice.” We would then be put into groups or group ourselves and practice with peers. We

gave “glows” and “grows” to each other. . . . [T]he energy in the room could turn extremely negative when the deans were modeling—it often felt condescending or demeaning to be told to sit up and push your chair in after working all day.

Gary, Andrew’s other colleague, likewise commented, “The PD felt degrading. The message was ‘teaching is a science, we know that science, so do what we say and say what we do.’”

Pointing to the absence of Principle 2 of generative features of professional development/professional learning, Andrew raised concerns that the knowledge presented to teachers was “not researched based . . . you were never presented with outside research.” Andrew explained that professional development content at ICS was developed and delivered by “two academic deans of the school [whose] role was also to supervise within classroom observations that the things they wanted happening were happening.” Gary confirmed that “the school’s academic dean, co-founder and acting principal, and a literature seminar coach” provided all professional development, with Emma adding, “I have no recollection of any other people coming in to support our PD sessions.” Andrew, whose teacher education program grounded him in the importance of high-quality educational research and the practice of experts, found little legitimacy in the educational knowledge and expertise of the deans and thus had difficulty embracing the knowledge they offered.

### *Principle 5: Absence of, and Advocacy for, Building Professional Learning Communities with Teacher-Colleagues*

Wenger (1998) articulated that members of professional communities always retain some agency in terms of their response to their conditions. Andrew, too, realized that “within any professional development . . . I think you still are in control of what you sort of invite into your working theory in the classroom.” The conditions of professional development at ICS described above began priming teachers for social and political action (Collins, 2010). Andrew described internal conflict that caused him to alternate between silence in these meetings and at other times “push back in ways that I thought could be helpful.” Emma also described early signs of teacher resistance to these dehumanizing forms of professional development, including teachers’ mimicry of student behaviors, to communicate their frustration to the deans.

**Andrew described internal conflict that caused him to alternate between silence in these meetings and at other times “push back in ways that I thought could be helpful.” Emma also described early signs of teacher resistance to these dehumanizing forms of professional development.**

Teacher resistance took on more serious forms of intellectual engagement outside of the professional development sessions. Andrew began using his official role of power at the school coupled with his professional knowledge base for teaching to initiate an alternative form of professional learning that likewise included alternative core ideas about literacy education for marginalized groups. “I especially . . . got a group of young teachers, because I was grade level chair, and we talked openly and privately about other bigger ideas.” Andrew “shared texts [from his teacher education program] with all my teachers. . . . I sort of was the one to say ‘hey like there’s a different way . . . you might wanna find the light.’” Hence emerged some presence of Principle 5 (and 6) of generative professional development as Andrew capitalized on the institutional power he had been granted as grade level chair to initiate a new form of professional learning community among his colleagues.

Andrew’s activism can thus be understood as a political movement (Collins, 2010) where, in his words, “counter-communities” of teachers “popped up” who had become conscious (Freire, 1970/2005) of the limited professional knowledge offered by their schools and demanded greater educational justice for themselves and their students. Andrew described how after “sit[ting] together . . . in these professional developments . . . we would speak alone without sort of the supervisors and we would say, ‘hmm, like I see how they want us doing it, I don’t agree with that.’ We’d have a pretty fruitful dialogue.” This fruitful dialogue represents the beginnings of collaborations with peer colleagues that can encourage teachers to transform standardized curriculum into more culturally relevant, social justice oriented curriculum (Simon, 2015; Stillman, 2011; Williamson, 2017).

Beyond debriefing after professional developments, these counter-communities used

every little moment when you’re like kind of free, we’d talk about certain things. . . . It was in cars, it was in the parking lot, it was at bars [on] Friday night, it was with a big text message thread, it was, you know, whenever people felt like talking.

This stands as another example of how Andrew and his colleagues innovated with Principle 5: they created intimate spaces that allowed for building personal and professional relationships to talk more deeply about the teaching and learning issues that were of concern to them.

Andrew reported the result of teachers crafting their own professional learning community outside the oppressive structures of school-mandated professional development:

The new teachers sort of revolted. They sort of rebelled a little because I think they had access—through me and other people—to some bigger ideas and I think they thought what they were doing [in their classrooms] wasn't the way that they wanted to teach.

Andrew further recounted an unprecedented political outcome in which teachers expressed such dissatisfaction with the model of professional development foisted on them that “all of the first year teachers [from the fast-track preparation program] were allowed out of their contract . . . with most of them going into traditional public schools.” Andrew's former colleague, Emma, herself one of those first-year teachers, confirmed Andrew's report. She stated that the organization “intervened with how negative the environment was . . . and offered to let us out of our . . . obligations at the school,” adding, “I opted to leave the school, despite loving the students and community [because] I knew that teaching in that environment for another year would burn me out of the profession.” Emma also referenced official written correspondence she received from the organization “honor[ing] their promise to let us out of the contract.”

Andrew connected the nature of professional development at ICS to this teacher exodus:

[T]hey [school administration] didn't allow you to develop in a way that you wanted to. They wanted you to develop to be purposeful to . . . their system. And I had just come out of all this literacy for social change stuff [in teacher education] so I sort of was like, “you know, they're not even letting us [teachers] be free. How can our students be free?” And I think people really ascribed to that and eventually there was kind of a mass walkout.

Emma reiterated Andrew's analysis. “This style of professional development is detrimental to teachers both professionally [and] their personal well-being. This is especially clear to me now that I am in a coaching/PD relationship . . . based in collaboration.”

## **Implications**

The findings of our study hold implications for both preservice and inservice English teacher education as well as English education research.

### **Implications for Preservice English Education**

Preparing English teachers to teach in urban schools is a thoroughly sociopolitical endeavor. Our findings indicate that teacher educators must teach in ways that enable preservice teachers to grasp this perspective and to develop

strategies and tools that equip them to advocate for the forms of learning both they and their students need. In our English urban teacher education program, we work toward building those understandings and skills in a number of ways. For example, a major component of preservice teachers' English methods courses center on collaborative inquiry into the tensions that often arise when preservice teachers request to enact instructional approaches learned in teacher education that conflict with the practices of their host cooperating teachers (CTs) and English departments. Course instructors and field supervisors support preservice teachers in initiating conversations with their CTs as a means of better understanding the CTs' thinking about their own practices within often standardized and highly monitored official curricular structures. In these conversations, preservice teachers also have opportunities to explain more fully the instructional practices and underlying perspectives about teaching English in urban settings that they are ready to try. Preservice teachers are consistently urged to ask of their CTs, "Can you help me understand why," "I wonder if I could try," or "I'd really like to share with you about this approach I'm learning in coursework."

Formalizing and centralizing these practices in preservice teacher education sets an important foundation for inservice teaching. The new teachers will arrive to their posts primed to initiate truly dialogic curricular conversations with their colleagues and foster learning communities that engage with the issues of practice that are relevant to them, their colleagues, and their students. We further suggest that English teacher educators make more explicit to preservice teachers the links between the capacities of inquiry, critical conversations, and collaboration they are building during their preservice years and the knowledge and skills they will need to activate as inservice teachers who will be receiving professional development.

**Novice teachers like the participants in our study must be able to articulate and effuse professional confidence in the educational practices they know to be sound for students' literacy development.**

### Implications for Inservice Teacher Education

Novice teachers like the participants in our study must be able to articulate and effuse professional confidence in the educational practices they know to be sound for students' literacy development. They must also feel agentive and equipped to identify the features of professional development that do or do not support their development of these educational practices and be able to suggest and initiate alternative designs for their professional learning. We believe the six generative principles of professional learning identified in our

study can serve as one guiding tool for use by inservice teachers and those who design their professional learning. We further believe these principles can inform a variety of organized structures for teacher learning. Inservice teachers, like those in our study, engage in professional development within multiple structures—those offered by school districts, English departments, or school-level PLCs—and a diverse range of professional development providers culled from within and beyond these units.

In this study, our participants, and thus we the authors, contrasted professional development as something determined for and done to teachers with professional learning in which teachers took on roles as problem posers, co-teachers and co-learners, co-investigators, and designers of solutions to self-identified problems of practice. While this contrast between professional development and professional learning is useful for illuminating the concerns with what much of professional development looks like for teachers today, as we initially stated, our intent is not to create a hierarchy in which professional development offered by districts and schools is deemed more oppressive and less learning-oriented than professional learning opportunities outside these structures that teachers themselves create or pursue. We found evidence of generative professional development principles at work across the multiple sites of professional development provision our teachers experienced, which indicates the possibilities of fruitful learning across varied professional learning contexts.

## Implications for English Education Research

This study was designed and continues to take a long and in-depth view of English teachers' development spanning preservice education and well into their inservice years. Long-term studies of this kind are important for understanding how teachers' learning needs remain steady, shift, and become more complex as they grow into their identities as English teachers. Walking alongside them in their journeys of being and becoming English teachers (Christenbury & Lindblom, 2016) allows us to be not only researchers but also ongoing mentors of and learners from our graduates. As research participants, including through their involvement in the professional inquiry groups that are connected to our college of education, all of our candidates point to the professional learning they accrue from these forms of participation. Thus we realize the reciprocal nature of such research.

We also note the connection between research and practice in that being able to identify how and what teachers desire and need to learn over time ultimately strengthens designs of teacher education programs. One

highly relevant example is that in our urban English education program of coursework, we have included a course titled Literacy and Social Change as a requirement. In this course, preservice teachers examine theories of social change along with multiple examples of urban practitioners' efforts to tackle social and educational injustices within their schools and the surrounding communities with their students. Preservice teachers themselves are taught and guided through a variety of ways to work toward social justice—for instance, through conducting equity audits of schools and organizations that serve urban youths, designing and implementing community social change projects with youths, and planning for teacher research in their own classrooms. The endemic inequities present in urban schools and communities demand designs of social justice oriented English education, the findings of which can be used to improve both preservice and inservice English teacher education.

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**Allison Skerrett** is an associate professor of English education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at The University of Texas at Austin. She has been a member of NCTE since 2007. Allison can be reached at [askerrett@utexas.edu](mailto:askerrett@utexas.edu).



**Amber Warrington** is an assistant professor of English education in the department of English at Boise State University. She has been a member of NCTE since 2006.



**Thea Williamson** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at The University of Texas at Austin. She has been a member of NCTE since 2012.