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The transformative potential of boundary spanners: a narrative inquiry into preservice teacher education and professional development in an NCLB-impacted context

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The Transformative Potential of Boundary Spanners: A Narrative Inquiry Into Preservice Teacher Education and Professional Development in an NCLB-Impacted Context

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Abstract: This narrative inquiry uses pedagogic discourse theory and organization theory to frame pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development initiatives in a school district facing tensions related to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Implications for similar future initiatives are considered.
Keywords: narrative inquiry; pre-service teacher education; in-service teacher education; elementary education.

El potencial transformador de ampliadores de fronteras: una investigación narrativa sobre formación docente y desarrollo profesional en el contexto influenciado por la ley NCLB.
Resumen: Esta investigación narrativa utiliza la teoría del discurso pedagógico y teoría de la organización para comprender la formación docente de pregrado y en servicio de las iniciativas de desarrollo profesional en un distrito escolar influenciado por las tensiones

relacionadas con la ley NCLB de 2001. Se consideran las implicaciones para futuras iniciativas similares.
Palabras clave: investigación narrativa; formación docente de pregrado; ormación docente en servicio; educación primaria

O potencial transformador das chaves de fronteira: a investigação narrativa sobre a formação de professores e desenvolvimento profissional no contexto influenciado por NCLB.
Resumo: Esta pesquisa usa a teoria narrativa do discurso pedagógico e a teoria da organização para compreender a formação docente a nível de graduação e em serviço das iniciativas de desenvolvimento profissional em um distrito escolar influenciados por tensões relacionadas com NCLB 2001. O trabalho considera as implicações para iniciativas semelhantes no futuro.
Palavras-chave: pesquisa narrativa; formação docente; formação docente em serviço; educação básica.

Introduction[1]

The literature on teacher education in the United States historically has noted tensions between teacher education programs and the realities faced by teachers in K-12 schools. Many have noted the theory-practice gap that exists in teacher preparation programs, the disconnect between coursework and field experience, and the often conflicting views held by teacher education faculty and partnering school districts as to what constitutes good teaching and skilled practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Zeichner, 2010). These tensions have been exacerbated by districts' and schools' overarching concern with test scores in response to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (Brown, 2010; NCLB, 2002).

While the intent of NCLB has been to close the achievement gap, a presumably unintended consequence has been to increase the mismatch between teacher education and the public schools attended by arguably some of the nation's most disadvantaged students—children from impoverished communities where English is not the primary language.

In such a context, this narrative stories the tension between our work as teacher educators and the real pressures and messages that teachers with whom we work receive about what and how to teach based on prescriptions made in response to NCLB. As we reflect on our work with teachers in the context of NCLB, we consider our choices, challenges, apparent successes, and ways to improve similar future efforts. We close by examining potential positive changes in the landscape of schools and teacher education, as external forces other than NCLB come into view.

Literature Review

Framing the Inquiry as Pedagogic Discourse

In Brian Barrett's (2009) article entitled No Child Left Behind and the Assault on Teachers' Professional Practices and Identities, he uses Basil Bernstein's (2000) conceptualization of pedagogic discourse to frame NCLB within the historical context of US education reform. With NCLB, the US for the first time has implemented a performance model of education reform, which emphasizes standards, accountability, and marketization—through, for example, charters and other schools of choice, such as magnet schools. While in earlier reform efforts in the US, teachers and other actors in the pedagogic recontextualizing field (PRF) had an appreciable degree of autonomy, the new performance model of reform, that is NCLB, significantly constrains the PRF, taking away the status and agency of those within it. Instead the state and its agents, acting in the official recontextualizing field (ORF), make all key decisions, including what to teach (standards-based curriculum), how to teach it (teacher-centered, sometimes scripted pedagogies), and how much time to spend teaching it (pacing guides). In earlier reform efforts, e.g., in response to *A Nation at Risk* (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) teachers, operating in the PRF, made more of those key decisions. Not only have teachers lost much of their agency under the NCLB/performance model, their compliance with prescribed curriculum, methods, and pace are subject to monitoring by ORF agents, for example, during walk-throughs by site or district administrators (Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008).

Framing the Inquiry as Boundary Spanning

The concept of an organization structure that exists in an environment (Aldrich & Herker, 1977) can be informative when considering how districts and schools respond to the tensions that accompany NCLB. At one extreme, referred to as the natural selection model, dominant environmental forces constrain organizational behavior; at the other—the strategic choice or resource dependence model, organizational administrators play an active role in shaping outcomes. A middle range exists between those two extremes.

Interpreted through the lens of organization structure, schools, districts, and offices of education at the county and state levels are organizations, and particularly in "low-performing" settings, NCLB is currently a prominent feature of the environment. So-called low performing districts and schools often seem to fit the natural selection model, in that dominant NCLB-related forces constrain their behavior as organizations. On the other end of the continuum, higher performing schools and districts often act with greater levels of autonomy, more in keeping with the strategic choice model.

Continuing within the concept of organization structure, a boundary simply allows for a distinction to be drawn between one organization and another. Within a given organization, there are boundary roles that link the organizational structure to environmental elements. One of the functions of those in boundary roles is to process information that comes to the organization from the environment (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). Researchers studying school-university partnerships (Stevens, 1999) and professional development schools (Many, Fisher, Ogletree, & Taylor, 2012) have explored the concept of boundary spanning, often characterizing school and university personnel who engage in such work as being in boundary spanning roles, in that they operate to an extent in both the school and university organizations. District- and site-level administrators are in boundary roles, and some may choose to act as boundary spanners. Whether in the context of NCLB and/or that of school-university partnership, teachers also can span boundaries.

Environmental Constraints: NCLB-related Tensions in Teachers' Practice

Other researchers also have noted tensions in teachers' practice that stem from NCLB-related phenomena. For example, faced with the extreme pressure of sanctions if their pupils do not perform well enough on standardized tests to meet NCLB-mandated Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria, teachers report emphasizing material that they believe will be tested and teaching to the test, including teaching test-taking skills and modeling the format in which test items will appear. Both the teach-to-the-test phenomenon and a more skills-based curriculum are more prevalent in schools and districts attended by students of color and those from low-income backgrounds (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Indeed, the schooling scenario under NCLB starkly exemplifies what Haberman (2003) for many years has referred to as the pedagogy of poverty and what Anyon (1981) found over 30 years ago in working-class schools. Linked with the teaching-to-the-test phenomenon is the tendency to narrow the curriculum, which results in English language arts and math displacing instructional time that in the past featured science, social studies, art, music, and so forth (Au, 2007). A presumably unintended consequence of NCLB's high-stakes accountability system is the practice at the district and site level of encouraging teachers to focus their instructional efforts on students that test just below proficient rather than on those who are far below basic (Desimone, 2013). The perverse rationale for that practice is that, because the percent of a school's students testing at proficient determines whether or not it has met its accountability goal, helping students who already are close to the achievement target is the most efficient path to raising the percent proficient, even at the expense of those in greater need of help.

Perhaps in part due to this phenomenon National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from students who have been educated in the age of NCLB do not show any significant progress toward narrowing the achievement gap (Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012). Rather than eliminating the achievement gap and inequities in learning opportunities for low-income and cultural and linguistic minority students, as evidenced by the practices noted above, inequitable learning outcomes and opportunities too often are perpetuated or exacerbated by responses to NCLB-related tensions. Moreover, a decline in instructional quality during the age of NCLB has been noted (Valli & Buese, 2007).

Pockets of Resistance

In spite of or perhaps in response to the tension and curtailed teacher autonomy that have pervaded schools in the context of NCLB, some practitioners have chosen a path of resistance. Unlike the instructional programs that teachers often are mandated to implement under NCLB, their resistance has not been a one-size-fits-all manifestation. While some teachers have adhered closely to their school's prescribed curriculum, others' fidelity of implementation has varied, and some have entirely abandoned it. Interestingly, in each of those three approaches—to comply, chart a middle course through accommodation, or fully resist—teachers have based their decisions on their perception of students' learning needs (Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2008). Other researchers have found that teachers' professional principles are the roots of their resistance to district-mandated instructional policies (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006).

Our Inquiry

Methods

We explore those issues through a continuing narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) related to our pre-service and in-service teacher educator experiences with a district in Program Improvement, according to NCLB (2002) criteria. Our inquiry focuses on two main questions:

1. What are the key choices, challenges, and apparent successes, if any, that occur in our pre-service teacher preparation and in-service professional development efforts with a particular school district?
2. What can we learn from our experience in those two areas that might lead to greater mutual benefit in our future pre-service and in-service efforts?

By focusing our narrative inquiry on those two questions, we engage in one of the things that we teach our candidates in the teacher preparation program, namely, how to conduct a cycle of inquiry, consisting of planning, action, assessment, reflection, and subsequent planning (Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999).

Data Collection

Data sources are comprised of our field records (for example, field notes, including notes from informal interviews; teacher candidate and student work samples; supervisors' observation notes; notes from informal interviews; and the like), which we have collected through participant observation. Teachers who participated in the professional development initiative under study completed surveys including both Likert-scale and open-ended items, with a subsample completing follow-up structured interviews. Of the 32 participating teachers, 17 completed both the initial and follow-up surveys, a response rate of about 53 percent.

Data Analysis

We have categorized and coded open-ended survey responses and established inter-rater reliability at 90 percent. We have categorized and coded all other data and shared our impressions of them with other inquiry participants, to learn from their perspectives on our initial interpretations, which we will continue to refine throughout this ongoing inquiry (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Limitations

We caution against attempting to generalize from our experiences as narrated below; we did not conduct our efforts intending to arrive at generalizable or scalable outcomes. Our stories include anecdotal data from idiosyncratic events. We recognize the limitations of our sample, both in terms of size and potential bias, both from our simultaneous roles as researchers and instructors/supervisors/professional developers, which disequilibrated our relationship with the participants, and because it is more likely that teachers who used the strategies from our PD workshops would respond to our follow-up surveys than those who did not. Given those limitations, we make no attempt to generalize our findings or assume that our sample of respondents reflects the views of the total population of participants. Nevertheless, we imagine that readers who are engaged in work like ours in a similar context may find aspects of our experiences that inform theirs.

Teacher Education Program Context

This inquiry explores our work as teacher educators at one of the San Francisco Bay area's California State University campuses, which we refer to as CSU. The CSU service area contains many school districts with demographic profiles that include students that NCLB has intended to help, for example, those from economically impoverished households and/or homes in which English is not the primary language (NCLB, 2002). Given that the CSU vision and mission include enhancing educational quality for culturally diverse students, such as those outside of the socioeconomic and linguistic mainstream, the CSU multiple subject credential program (MSCP) seeks to place teacher candidates in schools with diverse student bodies. Because CSU also values equity and access to quality education, the MSCP ensures that candidates spend at least one of their two practicum semesters in a Title I school. Moreover, CSU is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which requires that candidates work with diverse

student populations (NCATE, 2013). Others have noted the importance in fieldwork of having candidates work with English language learners (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

Many of the Title I schools in the CSU service area are at risk of NCLB-related sanctions because of low test scores. In response to that pressure, as noted above, it is not atypical for districts to adopt prescribed, standards-aligned curricula and implement strict pacing guides, which are intended to systematically move teachers and their students through the required curriculum before testing (Barrett, 2009). Indeed, those practices were put in place by many of the districts in the CSU service area. One of those districts, which we will refer to pseudonymously as the District, has a working relationship with the MSCP that pre-dates NCLB. Since the passage of NCLB, the District has continued to partner with CSU and engage specifically with the MSCP and its faculty on teacher preparation and professional development initiatives. In relating this narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), we reflect on the progression of those initiatives over the last several years, considering choices, challenges, successes, key components, and next steps, while acknowledging the enveloping tension related to NCLB.

District Context

If one drives on the freeway or surface streets in almost any direction away from the downtown area of the city in which CSU is located, one encounters strip malls with multilingual signage, detached homes, and some apartment buildings lining flat, wide streets. Such is the setting of the District, which serves K-8 students. Considered large (1501+ ADA) as an elementary district (Weston, 2010), it includes charter, magnet, and neighborhood schools of various sizes and grade configurations—elementary, middle, and K-8. In the 2011-2012 academic year, Latino students accounted for about 60 percent of the District's enrollment, 30 percent of which was Asian, with the remaining 10 percent consisting of students identified as Filipino, African American, White, or some other ethnicity. Over three-fourths of the District's students qualified for free or reduced-price meals, and over half were designated as English Learners (ELs). In English language arts, almost four-fifths of the District's students tested at or above proficient on the statewide, standardized test, and a comparable proportion tested at that level in math. However, because the African American, Filipino, Latino, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, and Students with Disabilities subgroups did not meet NCLB-related adequate yearly progress (AYP) criteria in English language arts or math—that is, only the Asian and White subgroups did—the District did not meet its AYP criteria and is in Program Improvement (PI) (California Department of Education, 2013).

In response to the pressure to meet NCLB AYP targets, the District has made some choices that also have been made in other similar districts. For example, the District has adopted a prescribed, standards-aligned literacy curriculum and implements strict pacing guides for English language arts and math. Teacher-centered pedagogies predominate, and the District's identification of "power standards," which have been identified based on the number of released test items related to a given standard, further serves to narrow the curriculum and enable the phenomenon of teaching to the test (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Pressure to raise test scores has spawned the practice at the district and, to varying degrees, site levels of encouraging teachers to focus instructional efforts on students just below the proficient level, even if it means paying less attention to struggling students.

Choosing to Accommodate: Compromising on Curriculum and Pedagogy

As a result of the District's curricular and pedagogical responses to NCLB-related tensions, the MSCP faced a choice somewhere between the extremes of (1) curricular recalcitrance, that is, refusing to address the mismatch between the respective institutions' enacted visions of teaching and

learning and (2) adjusting the MSCP curriculum to focus on preparing candidates solely to use pacing guides and prescribed curriculum materials. While certain MSCP faculty maintained the stance of not partnering with institutions that were not willing to engage in workshop teaching in literacy (Calkins, 1994; Forseth, 2002) or take the time needed to teach for deep conceptual understanding in math, others—ourselves included—chose to pursue a course of compromise. While not endorsing the District's curricular and pedagogical choices, we tried to accommodate the NCLB-impacted realities of partner teachers, who serve as mentors to MSCP teacher candidates and/or have participated in our professional development initiative.

In the following sections we share stories of our teacher preparation and professional development efforts with the District, focusing on challenges and apparent successes. Related to those pre-service and in-service initiatives, we consider the approaches that the partners have taken, at times succumbing to, mitigating, or resisting the tensions associated with the NCLB-impacted context in which our work is situated.

Example 1: Pre-service Teacher Preparation

Challenges

The teacher candidate's field placement is perhaps the context in which the tension between the NCLB-influenced District's schools and the CSU multiple subject credential program (MSCP) is most acute. From the candidates' earliest experiences in their placement classrooms, they frequently comment to CSU instructors and field supervisors that their mentor teachers often do not teach in the ways that the candidates have been learning about in their methods courses in the MSCP. For example, in their language arts methods class, candidates learn to conduct read-alouds with children's books and facilitate reading and writing workshops. On the other hand, in candidates' placement classrooms, they typically observe their mentor teaching reading with decodable books and relying heavily on worksheets that focus on isolated aspects of language. Candidates are asked to use those same curriculum materials for their practice teaching. The level of tension and mismatch that a given candidate experiences tends to vary directly with her or his mentor's fidelity of implementation of the District's pacing guide and prescribed curriculum.

Apparent Successes

Candidates who are placed with a mentor who is a more recent graduate (within the last 5-7 years) of the MSCP perceive less of a mismatch between their field experience and what they learn in their methods courses. Because these mentors have experienced a very similar MSCP curriculum, they have a vision of teaching and learning that tends to closely resemble that of their candidates. Moreover, the mentors who are recent MSCP graduates already have a relationship with some of the field supervisors. That relational knowing (Gallego, Hollingsworth, & Whitenack, 2001) facilitates more open communication among the mentor, the candidate, and the supervisor, which can enhance the learning of all three.

For example, one of the narrators of this inquiry recently served as the supervisor of a candidate who was placed in the Gr. 1 classroom of a mentor who several years earlier had been a student in the supervisor's course on meeting the needs of English learners. While this mentor adheres to the District's prescribed curriculum, she also regularly engages her students in Writer's Workshop (Calkins, 1994). One of the candidate's lessons that the supervisor observed was on the short i. As the core of the lesson, the candidate used the prescribed ELA curriculum, which featured a decodable, contrived poem about a penguin and an igloo. During their post-observation conference, the supervisor, the candidate, and the mentor talked about how the students might have been more engaged by a read-aloud of *The Itsy, Bitsy Spider* (Trapani, 1993), a children's book with a coherent, familiar narrative and in which the short i sound occurs repeatedly and naturally. The

candidate taught a follow-up lesson using *The Itsy, Bitsy Spider*, which the supervisor also used for a demonstration lesson in a course on English learners, bringing an example from the field into the university classroom. Finally, in a subsequent semester, the mentor, by then working with another candidate, suggested using a read-aloud of a children's book as the foundation for the candidate's lesson on oa words that make the long o sound. The candidate searched the local public library and selected *Scapegoat* (Hale, 2011), a grade-appropriate children's book that highlights the targeted oa words. Reflecting on the lesson for an assignment in the supervisor's practicum course, the candidate wrote:

> I believe that using a real text (vs. a decodable book) was the key to the success of
> this lesson. The students enjoyed reading *Scapegoat*. The humor, plot, characters, and
> rhyme pulled students in. The vocabulary was appropriate for the academic level of
> the class and for the many ELLs. (Excerpt from a teacher candidate's paper, in
> which she reflects on a lesson that she has taught in her Gr. 1 placement classroom.)

In sum, the candidate, the mentor, and the university instructor/supervisor all enhanced their respective practice through their shared experience in the mentor's field placement classroom.

Similar to the above vignette, another mentor in the District is also a CSU graduate who engages her Gr. 2 students in Writer's Workshop. Her principal, with whom one of the narrators has worked on another professional development initiative between the District and CSU, wants all of the school's teachers to have professional development in Writer's Workshop so that they can implement it throughout the school next year. That is another case of a teacher, if not transgressing (hooks, 1994), resisting the District's NCLB-influenced norms of teacher-centered instruction using a prescribed curriculum, by choosing to use a more authentic, student-centered approach. It also highlights the role of a supportive principal, one who is willing to allow a teacher to make pedagogical explorations outside of the institutionally established boundaries (Barth, 1990).

Through the Lenses of Pedagogic Discourse and Boundary Spanning

We now consider aspects of the above vignettes that apparently contributed to boundary spanning activities that strengthened the agency of those acting in the pedagogical reconceptualizing field. Because the mentor graduated from the MSCP, she understood what the candidates were learning in their program and was able to help them mediate the tension in the mismatch between the curriculum of the MSCP and the NCLB-influenced reality of the District. Although the mentor complied in using the district-adopted curriculum, her Gr. 1 students also regularly participated in Writer's Workshop. Although that is not a school or district-wide practice, the mentor's principal supported her efforts, and the District at least indirectly acknowledged them by recently recognizing the mentor as its Teacher of the Year. Both the principal's support and the District's recognition constitute boundary spanning by administrators that strengthened the agency of the teacher, who was acting in the pedagogical reconceptualizing field.

Example 2: In-service Professional Development

Challenges

In spite of what often appeared to be a mismatch between CSU courses and the District's curriculum and instruction, the District's administration asked us to provide professional development (PD) in mathematics with an emphasis on developing English learners' content-specific academic language. Supported by a small, private grant—the District had no PD funds after the 2008 economic crisis—we began to collaborate with District personnel to plan the PD. NCLB-related tensions and our modest budget quickly surfaced as factors that shaped what could be accomplished. District leaders expressed concern that if teachers missed class to participate in PD prior to spring testing, their students would not receive the necessary instruction on all of the topics

covered on the standardized tests. As a consequence, we scheduled the PD for late in the school year, after testing, effectively eliminating the possibility that the PD would impact student learning before testing, and precluding our ability to align the content with topics teachers were currently teaching. Our budget allowed for one single full-day workshop for teachers in each of three grade-level bands, Grades 3-4, 5-6, and 7-8 respectively. There was no budget for follow-up lesson planning, classroom observations, or coaching. While abundant research attests to the importance of sustained PD (at least 30 hours) with structured follow-up (Guskey & Yoon, 2009), this project lacked both of those elements. We again faced a choice: Engage with the District to provide much-needed PD, or retreat, recognizing that a one-day workshop had little chance of making a discernable impact on student learning.

We chose to proceed, embracing an uncomfortable compromise, yet believing that all parties would learn. For each grade-level band, we choose one key topic: fractions for Grades 3-4, rational numbers (fractions, decimals and percents) for Grades 5-6, and linear functions for Grades 7-8. To help teachers balance the competing demands of content coverage versus conceptual understanding, we modeled two kinds of lessons. The first, called "lead-in lessons" because they served to introduce specific pages in the district-adopted textbook, provided brief, highly engaging lessons using manipulatives. The second, called "referent lessons," were longer, problem-solving lessons and designed to explore foundational concepts to the topic under study.

To develop students' academic language related to mathematics, we selected language strategies (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2010; Vogt & Echevarría, 2008) that could be linked easily to mathematics content and embedded in the direct-instruction lesson format mandated by the district. The strategies included (1) related content and language objectives, (2) teaching vocabulary in context, (3) pair shares, and (4) structured sentence frames. Those pedagogical strategies focused on helping teachers model and explicitly teach language structures and provided students with opportunities to develop and practice using academic content language.

Apparent Successes and Additional Challenges

Although the design of our professional development (PD) was suboptimal, as explained above, there were some apparent successes. Teachers who participated in our PD workshops reported using the presented strategies and lessons in their own classrooms. Moreover, participating teachers expressed confidence in using the strategies and in the potential of the strategies to benefit student learning. Teachers' survey responses further indicated that they felt that embedding language development into mathematics instruction would enhance student learning. As one teacher noted, "It's one of the few ways I'm able to successfully integrate math and language. It's a scaffold for me and them."

However, as the year progressed, additional challenges related to NCLB emerged. Teachers struggled to implement the strategies and keep up with their pacing guides. As one teacher reflected, "Although the strategies presented were outstanding, I feel if I utilized every strategy, I would fall behind the pacing guide." That tension to maintain the curricular schedule increased with grade level, leading one middle school teacher to remark in exasperation, "The pacing guide went out the window when the kids arrived not knowing how to subtract."

Teachers' responses also revealed that the more closely aligned our demonstration lessons were with teachers' prescribed curriculum, the more likely they were to use the lesson, reflecting Hill's (2007) conclusion that professional development should be linked to schools' instructional goals and curriculum. In response to prompts on their ability to use the strategies and stay on schedule with their pacing guides, teachers expressed frustration with the required speed of instruction. However, they reacted differently. A few ignored the pacing guide; many attempted to compromise with it, exercising their judgment as to whether a concept required more time; and

some kept pace with it by moving through the curriculum in spite of evidence that their students did not understand. The teacher respondents who implemented strategies and lessons from the workshops reflected a continuum from compliance, accommodation or compromise, to principled resistance (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006) as they attempted to integrate the workshop strategies into the schedule dictated by their pacing guide.

Besides the apparent successes and additional challenges reported in the responses from PD-participating teachers, upon reflection, we note other benefits related to the PD initiative. Preparing for the workshops forced us to face the same NCLB-related tension that our candidates and their mentors face in the field. We, too, struggled to design conceptually strong lessons using a textbook that was overly focused on procedural computation and a pacing guide that did not allow enough time to delve deeply into any topic. This experience informs our practice with pre-service candidates, in essence helping us span boundaries between the university and the schools. Another benefit of the PD is that many of the participating teachers now mentor our candidates. Their ability as mentors to integrate mathematics content and language development better enables them to model for candidates attempting to use those same integrated strategies (Waxman, Tellez, & Walberg, 2006). Finally, the long-standing relationship between the District and CSU was strengthened. By deepening our working relationship with the District, we are in a better position to work together on future initiatives that might benefit students, teachers, and teacher candidates.

Through the Lenses of Pedagogic Discourse and Boundary Spanning

We now consider how the actions of boundary spanners in the above PD example may have impacted the agency of those acting in the pedagogical reconceptualizing field. By scheduling the PD workshops for late in the school year, the PD planners—namely, a small cadre of district administrators and ourselves—hampered the ability of participating teachers to provide more conceptually oriented, student-centered math instruction throughout the year. While that scheduling did not weaken the agency of the teachers in the pedagogical reconceptualizing field, it failed to take advantage of an opportunity to strengthen teachers' agency. To the extent that teachers used the more conceptually oriented, student-centered strategies from the PD, those same PD planners also served to strengthen teachers' agency in the pedagogical reconceptualizing field. Moreover, the fact that some of the teachers also serve as mentors to CSU candidates amplifies their agency.

Necessary Conditions To Enhance Mutual Benefits

We now reflect on the key choices, challenges, and apparent successes of our preservice teacher preparation and in-service professional development initiatives with the District to consider our second inquiry question: how to make our future joint efforts more mutually beneficial, even amidst the potentially continuing tension of NCLB. At the preservice level, we need to further close the gap between teaching strategies learned in methods classes and those commonly used in placement classes. In the first example, university supervisor/instructors worked together with mentor teachers to develop ways to use the prescribed curriculum as a resource, not the sole source, and augmenting with more student-centered strategies, such as reading and writing workshops. That kind of collaboration will occur best in the context of a formalized, funded partnership initiative between CSU and the District. Such a partnership initiative also will strengthen any professional development initiatives that CSU and the District undertake. Future initiatives need to reflect agreement between CSU and the District that the professional development should be sustained and include classroom follow-up (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

Discussion and Implications

We locate the above-storied District and CSU agents' actions related to NCLB manifestations on a compliance-accommodation-resistance continuum. For example, the use of conceptually oriented or student-centered pedagogies, such as Writer's Workshop, resists the NCLB-related pressure to use teacher-centered pedagogies and prescribed curriculum. Both CSU teacher educators and District teachers practiced those forms of resistance. Accommodation occurred when prescribed curriculum was adapted and used in instruction that was more conceptually oriented and student-centered. Perhaps the starkest example of compliance was the scheduling of the PD to occur after the standardized testing window had closed.

When looked at through the lens of Bernstein's (2000) notion of pedagogic discourse, District and CSU agents' actions to accommodate and, especially, resist NCLB-related manifestations, such as the curriculum pacing guides and decodable texts, place decisions about key contested components of the performance model of pedagogic discourse back into the pedagogic recontextualizing field—the realm of teachers, teacher educators, and administrators supportive of their work. In particular, District and CSU agents that spanned traditional boundaries between teacher education and classroom instruction—the supervisors, mentor teacher, and PD participants from both institutions—took actions that resisted NCLB-related manifestations. At least in our continuing inquiry, boundary spanners have increased the decision-making power of those in the pedagogic recontextualizing field.

While boundary spanners in our experience and others' (e.g., Barrett, 2009) have reclaimed some curricular and pedagogical autonomy from the state and its agents in the official recontextualizing field, work remains in order to change the performance-model discourse about assessment and accountability. Until further notice, standardized test results remain, at least in the performance-model discourse, the potent currency in valuing students' learning. To alter that discourse, for actors in the pedagogic recontextualizing field to reclaim decisions related to assessment and accountability, we teacher educators, teachers, and supportive administrators—"the guards of the system," to borrow from Zinn (1980/1999, p. 649)—need to develop alternative ways of assessing student success and persuasively disseminating results to stakeholders and policymakers.

The advent of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2012) could help to facilitate such changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment; and in so doing, increase the potential power of boundary spanners. The CCSS demand a more integrated approach to instruction by explicitly addressing literacy across subject areas. The mathematical practices outlined in the standards will require students to more deeply engage in the discipline, with a focus on a connected and coherent understanding of mathematical ideas. It seems likely that assessment related to the CCSS, once released, similarly will necessitate a less compartmentalized, deeper curriculum and less teacher-centered pedagogy at the classroom level. In teacher education programs, the CCSS could motivate greater use of approaches that integrate language and literacy development in all subject areas. All of the above could ameliorate some of the NCLB-related tensions that have overshadowed educational efforts, particularly in schools that serve low-income students and English learners.

Increased collaboration between teacher education programs and the schools and districts in their respective service areas also could enhance the role of boundary spanners and further ameliorate NCLB-related tensions, and momentum seems to be gathering for an increase in such partnership activities. For example, a number of teacher education programs are implementing the co-teaching model (Nevin, Thousand, and Villa, 2009). Additionally, influential reports and researchers have called for making teacher education more clinically based (CAEP, 2013; NCATE, 2010; Zeichner, 2010). Co-teaching, clinically based teacher education, and related efforts could

allow teacher education to build upon past and ongoing partnership models, such as professional development schools (Teitel, 2003). Such efforts would follow Linda Darling-Hammond's (2006) contention that "the enterprise of teacher education must venture out further and further from the university and engage ever more closely with schools in a mutual transformation agenda, with all of the struggle and messiness that implies" (p. 3). We close this chapter of our narrative inquiry noting hopefully those potential shifts in teacher education and K-12 realities that could alleviate some of the tensions brought on by NCLB and better enable us to pursue such a mutual transformation agenda, with the goal of enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for all members of partnership learning communities—providers and pupils—particularly students with the greatest needs.

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