

Social Justice Policymaking in Teacher Education From Conception to Application: Realizing Standard VI

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Background/Context: *This article describes the fundamental role of social justice in public education and professional teacher education.*

Purpose: *The purpose of this policy analysis is to explicate the theorizing, conceptualization, formalization, and implementation of the first standard for social justice teaching and teacher education in U.S. history, published by the National Council of Teachers of English and approved by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education in November 2012.*

Design: *Using a policy narrative approach, the authors explicate the grassroots political processes, professional political action and advocacy, and policy procedures and scholarship undertaken to construct a successfully vetted, approved, and fully implemented national policy in one subject-area professional association (SPA). The authors demonstrate how other SPAs and affiliated groups may pursue similar policies for socially just teaching and teacher education across disciplines, fields, and contexts across education.*

Conclusions: *Using research to theorize responsive teaching pedagogies and using findings from social psychology research to generate a socially just orientation to teaching in public schools, the authors highlight the ways in which social justice teaching is not simply a possible orientation for professional educators to consider but a fundamental tenet and primary consideration of public education overall. The authors conclude that SPAs and public education professionals not only may but must engage in social justice policymaking for educational equity in order to succeed in attaining education reforms that truly serve the public good.*

INTRODUCTION: THE CONCEPTION OF STANDARD VI FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

In an unprecedented move toward ensuring equity for all students in English language arts (ELA) classrooms across the country, the National Council Teachers of English (NCTE) was successful in encouraging and vetting the adoption of Standard VI for social justice (NCTE, 2012), which became an official policy for assessing and accrediting secondary English language arts (SELA) teacher education programs as of October 2013. As of 2014, all programs seeking accreditation for SELA (grades 7–12) teacher preparation programs are required to demonstrate their uses of curriculum, instruction, content, and assessments for social justice purposes, as well as how their candidates and graduates implement such work in secondary school classrooms.

With this change, other shifts must also occur in order to instantiate, sustain, and assess social justice policy elements across contexts. Necessary shifts for this realization include determining the following: How teacher education programs can design curriculum and instruction with social justice as a central consideration; how professional educators can reliably and validly assess whether teacher education programs and teacher candidates utilize research-based, socially just practices; how preservice teachers might integrate socially just practices to support equity while they learn; and how teacher education programs can utilize research and theories of justice and equity to prepare new professionals who will continue *realizing* equitable teaching for all learners throughout their careers.

FOREGROUNDING DEFINITIONAL THREADS

By *realizing* Standard VI and social justice education, we mean *realize* in terms of making something real and causing it to happen. By exploring one *realization* of social justice education as a national policy via accreditation standards for a subject-area professional association (SPA), we describe how Standard VI was developed and made fact by members of NCTE during a time when “social justice” was prohibited as a phrase for generating any policy language in any discipline by national policymaking and accrediting institutions due to its controversial nature (Powers, 2006). Similarly, when we discuss how professional and prospective educators *realize* social justice teaching, we mean understanding it clearly and using it intentionally to identify needs and attain goals in an ongoing process of critically pragmatic policymaking (Cherryholmes, 1999).

When we discuss *socially just teaching and teacher education*, we mean uses of policy, theory, research, curriculum design, and implementation that

reflect the systematic use of scientific, sound, cumulative, and evolving scholarship that intentionally supports diverse professionals and learners in ways that remain adaptive across contexts to optimize student success. Such socially responsive designs and teaching entail collecting data about students' identities and abilities to design curricula and instruction that respond to them in relevant, equitable, learner-centered, and just ways that positively correlate with enhanced student efficacy, engagement, motivation, and achievement in secondary school settings.

Because Standard VI is new and evolving, NCTE and any SPAs that pursue similar standards must address and fill in epistemological gaps regarding how to generate sound education policy and usefully assess socially just teaching and teacher education. To that end, we explore the theorizing, procedures, and shifts that come with realizing social justice standards in policy and practice in one field—English language arts. However, the larger policy issue and implications of socially just education are applicable across academic disciplines and educational fields.

We begin by offering the theoretical frames and scholarship used to warrant explicit social justice policies in one SPA (NCTE), and also explain how members of that organization framed and generated Standard VI as part of that SPA's national standards for professional teaching and teacher education. We then describe how the NCTE/NCATE Standard VI for social justice education was developed and advanced to formal implementation at the national level. We conclude that such work converges in a collective of just and equitable methods we label as responsive teaching (Burns & Botzakis, 2016; Miller & Burns, in press), note opportunities and challenges in social justice policy and implementation, and call for additional research on the nature, practice, and contextualized studies of socially just teaching as essential education policy.

THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

REALIZING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

As the NCTE's Conference on English Education (CEE) notes, teacher education should prepare new and experienced professionals alike to operate in ways that pay explicit attention and respect to specific student identities, including but not limited to "race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, age, appearance, ability, national origin, language, spiritual belief, size [height and/or weight], sexual orientation, social class, economic circumstance, environment, ecology, culture, and the treatment of animals" (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2009, Belief 1, para. 2).

Burns and Botzakis (2016) refer to this approach as responsive teaching. Responsive teaching entails systematic ongoing practices of collecting data about students' identities in context, then using those data to make instructional decisions and designs that are responsive to those learners in socially just ways rather than requiring them (often unjustly) to not only infer teachers' unspoken expectations but also comply with them or risk punishment and significant reductions in educational access and opportunity for not doing so. Responsive teaching for social justice requires an approach that (at least) brackets professionals' personal beliefs and ideologies in favor of knowledge-based and socially just teaching practices that are known to maximize equity for each student and correlate with increased success.

Teaching for social justice is hardly neutral. In fact, current dispositional research reflects challenges to the politicized nature of the polemics of dispositions by taking into account that dispositions are shaped by predispositions, or the ways a teacher's past experiences affect *morals*, behavior, and performance (Carroll, 2007; Stooksberry, Schussler, & Bercaw, 2009). Because morality is built into teacher development work, it has complexly opened teacher education to accusations of classroom politicizing and indoctrination—as teaching a teacher's *morality*. Questions and conflicts for teacher educators ensue: Should we understand dispositions (and, by association, social justice) in different ways for different purposes? Should we define them one way within our own classrooms and another way for external audiences? And if we do, how can we keep from confusing our teacher education students on this issue, while they are still developing their senses of teacher self and remain vulnerable within their preservice clinical field placements? Most teacher educators for social justice wrestle with such complexities and have aptly built these questions into their courses by asking students to wrestle with these very same questions as a tool to mediate their own burgeoning awareness of teaching and advocating for social justice.

To demonstrate dispositional bracketing as a process, Miller's (2014) study found social justice teaching and the development of dispositions to teach with social justice constitute a continuous developmental process of professionalization. Miller further found that preservice teachers enter into teacher education programs with varied understandings and experiences related to injustice and justice. Their dispositional states and evolution through study and practice, as outlined in Miller's (2014, 2015; Miller & Burns, in press) studies show how preservice teachers are in fact able to interrogate their ideologies and privileges in relation to their relative power as teachers in their classrooms by “bracketing” their personal orientations to *prevent* or at least decrease the potential for imposing their

values and/or personal ideologies in coercive or unjust ways. Bracketing, then, is a professional and dispositional technique that preserves teachers' values while professionally emphasizing the importance of avoiding undue personal influence or moral manipulation by a teacher so that students who may be different are not subject to marginalization, indoctrination, or oppression.

Treated in this light, bracketing is a professional technique that can expand educators' knowledge of self and other. Undergirding any of the experiential processes in these studies is the theory of social justice (Miller & Kirkland, 2010), which comprises three key elements: *reflection*, *change*, and *participation*. Throughout each of these different components of the theory are myriad strategic techniques that can support the development and/or rejection of a social justice disposition. Concomitantly, preservice practice with "bracketing" entails individuals actively undertaking a position of informed awareness of self regarding their stance in orientation to social justice issues, providing educators a tool and a guide—to "bracket" or not—as they operate in classrooms. From this position, teachers are well-informed and prepared to take up the professional and ethical considerations inherent in the advocacy stance of teaching for social justice. No doubt, this is complicated and messy work, but it is simultaneously possible and necessary. Simply put, our methods, as Dewey prophetically stated in 1916, should allow opportunities for students to wrestle with conflicts about morality. The dispositional practice and work of bracketing, then, provides teacher education pedagogies with methods for inquiry, discovery, and assessment about the impacts that realizing social justice may have in teacher education and K–12 schooling.

Realizing social justice teaching entails offering a research base that provides a robust, adaptive, and evolving conception based on continuous critical reflection on the nature of social justice and the use of knowledge gained from that reflection to design and attain educational goals for the public good. If education reformers mean what they say when asserting that all people are equal and have equal rights, professionals should constantly ask and answer why it matters who a person is or seems to be when teaching and/or learning in public schools. Why and how do differences in intersections among culture, values, beliefs, sexuality, gender, gender expression or identity, race, social class, fashion/style, body type, and other characteristics affect curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and learning? The right to freedom and the liberty to pursue life and happiness for all members of society are widely proclaimed in American society, and therefore these characteristics do not and should not matter. However, as documented in most research to date, U.S. schools have produced a stratified culture of privilege that negatively sanctions individuals and groups whose

identities do not align with whatever dominant notion of *normal* might be entrenched at any given place and/or time, including now.

When this normative stratification of privilege and power via identity instantiates what happens in schools, *everyone* suffers (including those who are ostensibly privileged and advantaged as “normal”). *Everyone* loses the potential to succeed at optimal levels in the actual purposes of education. These claims are not matters of opinion, nor are they matters of mere moralizing. They are founded on scientific findings about stereotyping practices (Steele, 2011) toward hegemonic purposes of normativity and social reproduction (Apple, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). As these scholars have compellingly documented and analyzed, traditional U.S. public schools have been institutionally designed and socially constructed to maintain and conserve the status quo, even when that status quo may be violent, harmful, negative, marginalizing, and actively oppressive to many people who are legally compelled to participate in that traditional education system. According to Apple, for example, public education does not have to be that way. According to other social justice specialists in curriculum studies such as Ayers, Hunt, and Quinn (1998), teachers must be educated and oriented themselves to operate as social agents who view their roles in terms of moral and ethical obligations to not simply transmit knowledge in traditional formats but also work with their students to make the world a more just and equitable one as it *ought* to evolve toward full and just inclusion and empowerment for all members of society.

WARRANTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE POLICY IN TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION

In current ongoing national education reform movements from No Child Left Behind (2001) to Race to the Top (2009) to the proliferation of states adopting the Common Core State Standards Initiative, one consistent policy element has entailed explicit attention to increasing not only school accountability but also education equity and support for all learners in all contexts. According to the *2015 NCTE Policy Platform*, U.S. schools should not view equity as merely a desirable outcome of professional work but a fundamental tenet of professional practice in which “Equity is essential to meet America’s promise of equal opportunity for all citizens” (para. 7). In its platform, NCTE explicitly defines equity as systematic and intentional attention to “fairness, opportunity, and social good” (para. 7). The platform continues, stating,

Disparity in life circumstances should not result in a disparity of access to a quality education. With fifty-one percent of students attending public schools now eligible for free or reduced lunches,

the growing wealth gap affects families across the United States as well as conditions and opportunities for learning. The federal government has a role to guarantee that all citizens are prepared to participate in a competitive knowledge economy and a strong democracy. (para. 7)

In resonance with these policy platforms, NCTE's *Beliefs about Social Justice in English Education* (2009) anticipates and notes the ever-shifting and therefore complex definition of any social justice policy while documenting clear warrants for design and implementation. It notes that what *justice* means is often contestable, necessarily variable, and sometimes controversial, stating, "Social justice ... is not neutral, and varies by person, culture, social class, gender, context, space and time" (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2009, Belief 1, para. 1).

It is further noted that notions of education justice and equity extend beyond schools into communities and societies, that enacting social justice teaching is inherently ideological, political, and activist in nature, and that any static definition or policy is not only susceptible to but likely to result in overlooking, marginalizing, or otherwise failing to be fully inclusive of all people due to the ever-changing nature of our citizenry and societal conditions. Despite these challenges, NCTE asserts,

We believe that a disposition committed to enacting social justice enables teachers to teach all students more fairly and equitably. For social justice to exist in our schools means that each student in our classrooms is entitled to the same opportunities for academic achievement regardless of background or acquired privilege. (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2009, Belief 1)

Acknowledging and being transparent about the inherent variability required for implementation, NCTE claims social justice must be fundamental to the rhetoric professional educators use to operate in public schools (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2009).

Further research warrants for social justice policy used by NCTE include findings that teacher education and public school teaching practices (thus professional knowledge and preparation) directly and significantly affect educational quality and student success (e.g., Ayers, Hunt, and Quinn, 1998; Nieto, 2000), and that more than 90% of the U.S. teaching profession is comprised of White people while the schools they work in serve populations in which 42% of all students are non-White (Miller & Kirkland, 2010). They note in addition that U.S. schools now serve students of significant and increasing diversity in language, ethnicity, spirituality, race, class, culture, and more, and rightly assert this fact is a central

issue that requires professional attention in preparing teachers to work successfully (Banks, 2004).

As of 2014, minority (non-White) students comprise more than half of the population in public schools. Brown (2005) finds that because of differences between the student and teaching populations, “the evidence is clear that various segments of our public school population experience negative and inequitable treatment on a daily basis” (p. 155). NCTE highlights consistent research findings that non-White and/or impoverished students regularly experience disparities and inequities resulting in lower standardized test scores, and that such students are often (consciously or not) treated differently by teachers who have lower expectations of them than they do of higher achieving students. Such disparities are patently unjust and unjustifiable. Based on these findings and more, NCTE has resolved to teach from a social justice perspective in which teachers are prepared to confront, teach about, and work to reduce and eliminate inequities and injustices in SELA classrooms and in the schools affected. In particular, NCTE highlights the role of teacher education in preparing professionals to implement more socially just practices, and to actively work against policies that may generate or entrench inequitable structures in public education.

Calls for social justice in education are not new, nor is the notion that teachers require explicit preparation in order to generate justice as a central aspect of education. For example, education philosopher Maxine Greene published the following in *Teachers College Record* in 1973:

Justice ... cannot become the central value if teachers do not learn to act consciously on principle, if they have no means of determining when the distinctions they make are relevant, whether the distribution of educational benefits is fair. Justice is not likely to become the central value unless something is done to deal with the inequalities existing in a particular school in such a fashion that “the long term expectations of the least favored,” as John Rawls puts it, are improved. This could mean that more attention will be paid to the better endowed, if that turns out to be the best way to stimulate the least endowed. But the criterion must be fairness, and *fairness demands that the poorest reader, the most apathetic participant, receive the most help and the most care.* (p. 182, emphasis added)

Given these research-based and theory-based warrants highlighting not just the desire but the *need* for social justice in education, we next describe the theoretical frames used by NCTE members to advance advocacy, activism, and ultimately institutional policymaking for social justice education.

THEORIZING SOCIAL JUSTICE

The CEE asserts social justice entails a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, cited in Commission on Social Justice, 2009) founded on the central tenet that

all students should be treated with human dignity, that all are worthy of the same educational opportunities, and that the contract they enter into with schools must honor their sociocultural advantages and disadvantages. It must seek to offer the same educational, sociocultural, and psycho-emotional opportunities ... that [are] mutually beneficial to students and educators. (2009, Belief 2, para. 1)

The rationale for this mutually beneficial orientation is based on findings that preservice teacher candidates, in-service teachers, and teacher educators' dispositions and consequent interactions and assessments of diverse students have real and lasting impacts on educational quality overall and local outcomes for teaching and learning (e.g., Gee, 1996; Miller, 2014). Taking state and national calls in education reform seriously to ensure success for *all* and not just some, NCTE recognizes that "If any student is left behind, the system has failed, no matter how well some may have succeeded" (Miller & Kirkland, 2009).

Aligning the SPA with Nussbaum's (2006) identification that professional, public education has moral and ethical implications, the CEE Commission on Social Justice expresses a sociocultural and critical theory orientation based on scientific findings about the relations between identity and power in teaching and learning (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2009). It explicitly commits to strategic systemic changes when the system is found to be unjust in any way for any group or individual, asserting,

A belief about social justice as grounded theory recognizes and honors the relationships among language, knowledge, and power both in the teaching of English and in the preparation of English teachers, particularly recognizing those relationships that help foster and maintain uneven social and educational outcomes. (Commission for Social Justice, 2009, as cited in CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2009, Belief 2, para. 3)

Such a theory of social justice is designed based on research in which equitable learning is founded on engagement in curriculum and instruction with students' and teachers' identities (Alsup, 2006; Britzman, 1991; Danielewicz, 2001; Vinz, 1996). Engaged learning is a phenomenon

during which the learner is actively participating in the study, analysis, and use of concepts, skills, and practices in any subject area for purposes the learner finds relevant and useful both for academic and personal success and growth in experience and understanding (Hruby et al., forthcoming). As Graves (2004) has put it, if public education efforts are intended to succeed, this fundamental engagement with and response to students' identities as active agents participating in academic learning for their own goals and purposes is the essential element we cannot do without.

As noted, concepts of just education are not new, dating as far back as at least the 1800s (Miller, 2014). "That said, contemporary calls for implementing social justice in education have empirically emerged in more recent years" (e.g., Morrell, 2005; Nieto & Bode, 2011). However, such critical calls have generally been treated as controversial and politically dogmatic, despite clear explications that they are ethical and principled but not prescriptive or "standardizable" in research. As a primary example of the misperception of social justice calls as radical and divisive, in 2006, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) removed and prohibited the phrase *social justice* as a performance indicator for assessing teacher dispositions due to concerns that some individuals and groups see calls for equity and explicit teaching about social injustices as controversial. NCATE's prohibitions of social justice framing for education policy were explained as an attempt to quell such controversies when the organization simply meant the concept to be an example of a professional disposition for successful practice (Wasley, 2006). Others have suggested *social justice* was excised and prohibited in policy language because its definitions are ambiguous, created conflict, and could disenfranchise people who disagreed with its tenets (Miller & Kirkland, 2010).

When social justice orientations were excised from teacher education policy as a criterion for teacher quality, they were replaced by proxy with emphasis on addressing diversity via cultural and linguistic awareness in the classroom. As Alsup & Miller (2014) note,

NCATE's definition of diversity is arguably myopic in scope because it is instantiated by who is defining it, the time it is being defined, and who/what is included/excluded. In this case, using diversity in lieu of social justice can potentially downplay an emphasis on pre-service teacher dispositions that could remedy educational disparities among specific populations of students. (p. 197)

While phrases such as *valuing diversity* have become popular in lieu of teaching for social justice, the former is insufficient because it lacks explicit enumeration as a matter of equity in education. According to Ayers

(2009), social justice is not merely a hopeful or extracurricular goal of teaching (and teacher education). It is, in fact, a central tenet and foundational disposition necessary for successful education and a democratic, progressive, equitable society. Despite the fact that social justice *is* fundamental to teacher education and likely to result in multiple and varied pedagogical responses, NCTE's framework proceeds on the assumption that teachers who acquire dispositions to advance social justice education will work in ways that are more ethical and responsive to students' particular identities and needs compared to teachers who do not. In the next section, we assert that social psychological research findings related to stereotype threat (Steele, 2011) are one set of critical knowledge that enhances social justice policy warrants. Importantly, stereotype threat research offers additional knowledge bases from which preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators can work to identify, understand, and work to eliminate or ameliorate unjust conditions and practices that prevent educational equity.

SOCIAL JUSTICE: STEREOTYPE THREAT VS. ITS CRITIQUES

While we view social justice through engagement with *all* students' identities as relevant to and necessary for students' cognitive, emotional and psychological ability to function well in schools (Alvermann et al., 1996), others see social justice in education as clearly warranted based on rigorously controlled social psychology experiments (Steele, 2011). Affirming this, Steele and Aaronson's (1995) findings about the impact of stereotype threats demonstrate how perceived or implicit threats and assumptions about any person's identity have measurable and statistically significant effects on that person's ability to think clearly and perform well on a task. This negative impact plays out routinely in public schools due to a lack of explicit and fundamental social justice orientations. Steele's reiteration of prior research with his colleagues (2011) entailed studies in which various homogenous identity groups were tested to determine their responses to implied threats related to their perceived identities, especially according to race and gender.

Iteratively, Steele conducted experiments in which two groups from the same identity background (for example, professional female mathematicians, professional White male mathematicians, Black males, and others) were placed in control and dependent groups and asked to perform familiar tasks. In each case, Steele and his colleagues included a single variable in each dependent group for their experiments: a tacit, implicit threat to the groups' identity based on commonly held stereotypes about them. In each experiment, results consistently demonstrated that when threatened

by stereotyping (even when perceived and not explicit), dependent variable groups performed at statistically significant *negative* levels compared to their nonthreatened peers in the control groups. While these experiments have perhaps most frequently been used to highlight tacit injustice toward minority groups, Steele and his colleagues also found that stereotype threat had negative effects even when research subjects were drawn from traditionally privileged populations and identity groups (e.g., White males).

These experiments have been replicated across a plurality of identity groups over time and across contexts. However, some researchers have questioned the effects of stereotype threat in social spaces where variables cannot be controlled as they typically are in experimental lab settings (Sackett, Hardison, & Cullen, 2004; Stricker & Ward, 2004, 2008). For example, Stricker and Ward (2004) found stereotype threat did not significantly manifest for Black students or any other group when they completed high stakes performance tasks in a quasiexperiment in a less controlled nonlaboratory context. However, both Stricker and Ward and Sackett et al. acknowledge that stereotype threat is real and significant. Their findings have been deemed “conservative” and critiqued themselves for failing to account for the fact that other identity groups (e.g., women) *did* suffer significant negative effects (Danaher & Crandall, 2008, p. 1639).

Stereotype threat affects (or potentially affects) *all* people at *all* times. “This is especially true for people who may identify with or be ascribed identities that position them as outside the norm, less able, and otherwise different or supposedly less able to perform in the contexts in which they are asked to engage. In public education, preventing such negative effects is an ethical and moral imperative. Engagement in learning is a fundamental element of socially just teaching and learning. It is an outcome of motivational factors and individual efficacy levels, operationalized across multiple bodies of research as a matter of learners being supported and enabled to attain self-determined goals using new knowledge and practices for their own reasons (Hruby et al., forthcoming).

Based on these theoretical frames and research analyses, socially just methods of education are fundamental because they focus on curriculum designs and teaching methods that explicitly use data about learner identities to generate relevance, motivation, efficacy, and positive representation and expectation for all learners in a given context. Further, socially just and responsive methods and curricula explicitly focused on engaging learners, treating them as agents of their own learning, and positioning them as collaborators in their own learning increase motivation and efficacy. Such engagement, in turn, has been found to correlate positively and strongly (0.8/1.0) with increased learning and academic achievement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Responsive teaching is the systematic data-based design of curriculum and instruction that uses students' identities along with their consequent experiences and prior knowledge to advance and enhance their learning of academic concepts and skills for use in future learning and life. The approach maintains a learner-centered philosophical orientation in which (as much as is possible and appropriate/necessary) students are consistently positioned as primary knowers (Aukerman, 2007) who are supported by their teachers in employing their identities and unique knowledges to collaborate in local classrooms and other contexts to learn concepts, skills, and practices to attain goals they identify as relevant for themselves. They then use their new knowledge and abilities to act as independent agents in academic contexts, their communities, and the larger society with greater success (Burns & Botzakis, 2016).

Significantly, adolescent literacy research has documented the important mediating roles engagement and motivation play in learning (e.g., Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003a, 2003b; Kim & Kamil, 2004; McGinnis, 2007; Weinstein, 2007; Young, 2000). When their identities and contemporary literacies are excluded, marginalized, or devalued in ELA curricula and classroom instruction, it should not be surprising that many adolescents struggle to succeed in schools. Alvermann (2005) remarks that "the level of student engagement (including its sustainability over time) is the mediating factor, or avenue, through which classroom instruction influences student outcomes" (p. 6). Reed, Shallert, Beth, and Woodruff (2004) have also reviewed research on motivation and identity, concluding that curricula and environments that support even minimal teacher responsiveness positively affect students' motivations to engage with academic tasks.

Other scholarship about engagement supported by explicitly responsive teaching practices that engage learners systematically in academic work reflect similar findings (e.g., Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko, & Mueller, 2001; Guthrie & Davis, 2003). These studies emphasize that engaging learner identities in socially just ways is crucial to academic success. Street (2003) connects these contemporary rationales for equity in education to Dewey's philosophies of educative experience at the turn of the 20th century. As Dewey wrote, "the great waste in the school comes from [the child's] inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside of the school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning in school" (1899/1998, p. 77–78, cited in Street, 2003, p. 83).

The phenomenon of engaged learning at the heart of responsive teaching recommends and requires much greater student-teacher collaboration,

not only during classroom instruction but also in the process of designing curricula. The approach entails higher levels of curricular coconstruction in which teachers and students use data about the students' daily lives, knowledges, and experiences beyond school. This approach invites class members to join the teacher as primary knowers in identifying and selecting topics for use as vehicles for content-area construction, identification and use of a wide variety of content-area resources and texts students will find relevant and engaging, and the adaptive use and modification of instructional methods and assessments. In any given content area these curricular conditions increase the likelihood that classroom instruction will result in the kind of equitable praxis and agency Dewey refers to in the quotation above. In classrooms where responsive teaching is implemented, students are not positioned as passive recipients of top-down teacher or school assessments based on what others decide ought to be used as best practice toward student improvement. Rather, responsive teaching positions students as active agents collaborating with the teacher as a content-area expert and also as a kind of lead student who collaborates, designs, adapts, coaches, facilitates, and works *with* instead of *on* students, with particular attention to ensuring curriculum, instruction, classroom interactions, and assessments provide students multiple opportunities to not only coconstruct curriculum and learning with their teachers, but to do so in ways that are far more likely to reflect and thereby engage their cultures and identities. Their cultures and identities are not simply issues teachers respond to; they are central to the design and implementation of classroom work and fundamental to curriculum at all times.

The orientation and goal of responsive teaching is not simply to transmit others' knowledge to students who lack it. Rather, it is to build equitable, just, ongoing collaborative relations and communities among students and their teachers. These localized collaborative classroom communities focus on providing learners with engaging academic tasks that are relevant to their lived experiences and useful for those learners with regard to operating with real agency in their own lives.

Moje and Hinchman (2004) reemphasize Dewey's theoretical orientation with the contemporary research finding that responding to students' perceived needs along with their racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and linguistic identities, literacies, and popular cultures yields higher levels of engagement. If socially just teaching and teacher education is meant to optimize success for *all* students, then responsive teaching and social justice education policies are integral to any design for teaching and teacher preparation. Ideally, they result in a more capable and active citizenry that acts more intentionally and with real agency to participate in and advance democratic society. In turn, then, social justice policies meet calls

from education reformers for increased equity and attention to increased education quality at least since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (1983). Responsive teaching is thus one key approach to socially just teaching and learning across contexts in education.

WARRANTED MOVES FROM THEORY AND RESEARCH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE PRAXIS

These theoretical and research bases demonstrate clear warrants for creating social justice policies for teaching and teacher education, not as ancillary elements but as central, foundational rationales for public education in a pluralistic society. Further, these bases move conceptions and treatments of equity from simplistic moral/ethical political positions and ideologies to essential, assessable, and even (where valid) measurable elements of research-based and proven educational practices at all contexts and levels in the system.

Having fully warranted the need for social justice policies, theorized a conception of social justice, and explicated research about successful academic engagement for student success, we turn now to a policy narrative of how one SPA, the National Council of Teachers of English, used that scholarship to engage in national-level policymaking and attain the historic achievement of a professional standard for social justice.

FROM CONCEPTION TO APPLICATION: THE STORY OF STANDARD VI SOCIAL JUSTICE AND IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN ELA HISTORY

There are several constituents who played instrumental roles in realizing Standard VI. The history of the standard informs its conceptualization and development. We offer this policy narrative as a potential model for other disciplines and as an invitation for them to contextualize and pursue similar policies for practice in their respective fields and disciplines. We turn to the key group that informed the vetting of Standard VI: NCTE's Conference on English Education (CEE) Commission on Social Justice.

The CEE is NCTE's university-level section for teacher educators and graduate students in English education. CEE, home to many commissions, formerly included a "Commission for Race, Gender, and Class," which *seemed* on par with social justice. However, the commission's focus was relegated only to race, class and gender and did not address other identities or intersectionalities of oppression in K–12 schools. Many stressful but productive professional dialogues ensued with the then cochairs, and the commission agreed to change its name to the CEE Commission on Social Justice at the NCTE convention in November 2006. This name change now plays a special role within CEE and NCTE. Not only is it an identity

marker for social justice as an affinity group that lets new and veteran scholars and teachers know there is a rich and vital presence and commitment toward social justice within NCTE, but it also signifies to the nation that social justice is fundamental to the ever-growing and ever-changing ELA curriculum, instruction, and students. Currently, the commission supports scholars, practitioners, and graduate students in their efforts to realize scholarly research and set political agendas in school districts and universities related to social justice.

In 2009, the CEE Commission on Social Justice created two key documents that formalized the working beliefs, values, and positions for social justice in CEE. Documents included a mission statement, which details the vision and mission of the Commission on Social Justice (Commission on Social Justice, 2009), which provides a framework for embedding theory, pedagogy, and the application of social justice into ELA classrooms. The group has grown in active membership from 5 to almost 50 people. Members include university and college faculty, independent researchers, and doctoral students. Some members have served or are on the CEE Executive Committee. Some have won prestigious writing and research awards and mentoring awards, and some are sought-after speakers and authorities on social justice education, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, critical race theory, diversity in education, education policy, and more. Members have authored books, articles, research presentations, scientific research housed by the National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE), and several other major documents which have now been institutionalized within CEE. It was during this same time period that NCTE vetted their *Resolution on Social Justice in Literacy Education* (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2010), a resolution that delineates NCTE's affirmative position on social justice in K–12 classrooms (for more about applying social justice research, see Miller et al., 2011).

While NCTE has long expressed strong values for supporting diverse learners in education (1996, 2006), the expression of this value as a project of social justice is still relatively new. The detailed timeline of events between the removal of “social justice” as a performance indicator for teacher candidates in national policies and its return and successful vetting is detailed in the research of Miller (2014; see Figure 1 below). The role of the commission within this sequence, advocating for social justice in K–12 ELA classrooms, was instrumental in pivoting history and thus the field of ELA toward the conception of Standard VI (see 2009, 2010 in Figure 1). Combined, these historical moments provide a critical context in which to understand the studies that occurred and emerged in simultaneity to inform the discussions within the NCTE Task Force for National Standards members who ultimately wrote and operationalized Standard VI.

Figure 1. Iterations of social justice in English teacher education, 1973–2013

a. **Inception–1973**, American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) issued a policy statement calling for teacher preparation programs to consider the importance of diversity. NCATE developed standards that focused on diversity in all areas of teacher education (focus was on tolerance).

b. **In 2000**, NCATE mandated adoption of Standards 2000 that said teacher candidates in NCATE-accredited programs must develop professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn.

c. **In 2002**, teacher education programs were charged with defining and creating their own performance-based methods. NCATE’s value-driven definition for a disposition was: “The values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities that affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator’s own personal growth. Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice.” (NCATE, 2002, p. 53)

d. **In 2006**, NCATE suggested that “social justice” was merely an illustrative example for a professional disposition and that institutions (Wasley, 2006) *could* require that teachers embody it (contrary to popular belief, it was never a standard of measurement). *Social justice* was removed from NCATE’s definition of professional dispositions altogether.

e. **In 2009**, CEE adopted a position statement on social justice in English education that included the following definition: “Thus, it means that in schools and university classrooms, we educators must teach about injustice and discrimination in all its forms with regard to differences in: race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, age, appearance, ability, [disability], national origin, language, spiritual belief, size [height and/or weight], sexual orientation, social class, economic circumstance, environment, ecology, culture, and the treatment of animals” (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2009, Belief 1, para. 2).

f. **In 2010**, members of the CEE Commission on Social Justice proposed the *Resolution on Social Justice in Literacy Education*, which was adopted by NCTE.

g. **In 2012**, NCATE approved the revised NCTE-NCATE standards for initial teacher preparation in ELA, which contain a social justice standard.

h. **In 2013**, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accepted the newly vetted Standard VI from NCTE and it will be used to assess dispositions.

The first challenge to writing a standard for social justice for teaching and teacher education was the inherent ideological nature of the topic in U.S. history. Both NCATE and some NCTE members have resisted the notion that social justice ought to be a mission of *any* SPA. Especially at the high school level, professionals typically do not see themselves primarily as literacy educators (Moje et al., 2004), let alone people who teach for social justice. They do not primarily see themselves as teachers of reading and writing, and they do not necessarily see themselves as responsible for the success of all students.

Ideologically, the project of teaching English in the United States has been an explicit project of *acculturation* via literary and language study, not a project for attaining social justice (Burns, 2014). NCTE's 1996 assertion that ELA teachers are obligated to "monitor their instruction in ways that honor...language diversity while helping all students achieve academic success through acculturation" (p. 15) may be the most telling marginalization for social justice education in ELA policy to date in that field. *Acculturation* denotes the imposition of cultural changes on a group or individuals by substituting their own identity traits with those from the dominant groups in a society. This orientation is profoundly antithetical to justice in the context of honoring diversity in public education.

To wit, one cannot "honor" diversity by using formal education to explicitly and systematically modify it at the individual, group, and cultural levels by coercing learners to adopt the traits of another culture (especially a hegemonically dominant one). Such an attempt is patently disingenuous and unjust with regard to respecting and honoring social differences. Treating education as a matter of acculturation voids honor for diversity by undercutting it and replacing it with a colonialist/imperialist imposition with the express purpose of making people who are different more like members of the dominant group. Such a project does not merely fail to "honor" diversity; it violates and precludes value for that diversity. Given this fraught historical context, we next present the policy narrative of NCTE/NCATE Standard VI in order to document how the SPA successfully engaged in national policymaking and provide a description of the process that other SPAs and organizations may consider as a model for similar initiatives in their fields.

Throughout its history, NCTE has regularly made recommendations for the preparation of ELA teachers (NCTE, 1996), and from its inception in 1911 the organization has continuously worked to generate inclusive spaces for students, even during periods where at least part of the stated purpose of study was acculturation into a singular "American" culture. NCTE's discourse has always included explicit statements regarding the need for and desirability of valuing diversity as a guiding principle

in teaching. Such values are enumerated during modern times particularly in NCTE's 1996 and 2006 *Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of Language Arts*, a document that was revised each decade from the 1960s until 2006, and which provided the foundations for the NCTE Task Force on National Standards to do its work (Burns, 2014).

In the 1996 version of NCTE's *Guidelines*, five principles of diversity were explicitly stated for use in developing guidelines for teacher education and classroom practices: 1) recognize and value diversity, 2) foster understanding across cultures, 3) draw on student diversity to heighten academic achievement, 4) teach students to make meaning from multiple sources, and 5) help students develop multiple ways of knowing and understanding (NCTE, 1996). The 2006 version of NCTE's *Guidelines* frames similar assertions as basic principles for how teacher preparation programs should proceed.

Using six statements, NCTE stated in 2006 that teachers must understand students make meaning and communicate in multiple ways, that there are many ways to successfully teach such processes depending on the social and political contexts in which a method is applied, and that teachers must understand diverse bodies of research related to the topics they teach so that they are capable of adapting their knowledge to teach successfully in different contexts. They also stated that teachers must understand diverse communication processes and their interactions across cultures, that they must be able to select and implement methods that are justifiable for helping diverse learners, and that they must use theory and knowledge to put such just and justifiable methods in place. Finally, NCTE's 2006 *Guidelines* stress that teacher preparation programs must develop teachers' enthusiasm and respect for teaching diverse learners. In those most recent *Guidelines*, the organization no longer referred to *acculturation* as the central process for implementing these principles. Rather, they advocated what we would call dispositions for responsive teaching that are socially just.

With these principles in mind, NCTE members worked systematically to advocate for social justice as a more explicit and central aspect of professional work in ELA. Key members began forming coalitions to develop affiliations and create spaces to orient the SPA more explicitly to that end. Through their efforts, social justice affinity groups in NCTE framed the issue so that new standards for the SPA would be not only amenable to national accreditation organizations like NCATE but also *strong* standards for the SPA that would position members to work in ways that were socially just, warranted, and responsive to students in ways that would lead to optimal academic success for *everyone*.

FROM CONCEPTION TO REALIZATION: HOW NCTE CREATED SOCIAL JUSTICE POLICY

Subject-area professional associations are both organizational resource groups and political organizations that represent the interests and conduct the business of their fields and memberships. At the federal level, NCTE's Washington, DC, policy office represents the interests, concerns, and initiatives of the organization (NCTE, 2014, para. 3). This office seeks to ensure that the policies that come from NCTE inform and safeguard teachers and schools at the national and local levels with regard to public school instruction—choices of curricular materials and teaching methods—in the English language arts. So how does and how can a policy develop?

“There is a rigorous and formal process for generating policy via a formal SPA resolution used by NCTE and its various constituents. NCTE is broken down into four primary broad focus areas: elementary, middle, high school, and college. Within each focus area there are various interests groups called *conferences*” (2014, para. 8). Across these four groups, NCTE membership and subscribers include well over 35,000 individuals from the U.S. and other countries. Membership is comprised of teachers and supervisors of English programs in elementary, middle, and secondary schools; faculty in college and university English departments; teacher educators; local and state agency English specialists; and professionals in related fields (2014, para. 2). Many of the conferences have smaller groups and commissions, which are formed by members who identify a specific need of the constituents represented by that commission. Any member of NCTE may join groups that align with their interests. Each year, NCTE puts out an annual call for resolutions; based on need, the constituent groups and commissions may propose a resolution for acceptance that can move into an official NCTE policy. A formal resolution *must* go to that group's chair with five members' signatures before it may move ahead to the Committee on Resolutions.

The Committee on Resolutions reviews the document and ensures it meets the requirements before it moves ahead for possible vetting. During this stage the Committee ensures that a resolution is comprised of three key elements: a brief background statement, proper format, and the formal signatures and membership numbers of at least five NCTE members. The committee also looks across all resolutions to determine whether resolutions can or should be combined to avoid redundancy (NCTE, 2013). This committee then determines which resolutions are submitted to the members at the Annual Business Meeting by looking for consistency “with the NCTE Constitution and the stated purposes of the Council, the

likelihood of its receiving support from a substantial number of Council members, the existence of previous resolutions on a topic, and the appropriateness of the content to a business meeting” (NCTE, 2013).

Once approved, the resolution moves to an open hearing where members may ask questions before it goes through a hearing during the Annual NCTE Convention’s open business meeting. To ensure that the voting process is credible, those attending the meeting must have NCTE membership numbers reviewed upon entrance, after which they are also provided a voting card. It is at this point of entry, though some members may already have drafts from their section business meetings, that members receive proposed drafts of new resolutions. During draft presentations of the resolutions, original designators of the proposals are asked to speak on their behalf, and at that time the floor is open for questions and discussions to all members in attendance. After this, members may present other concerns as sense-of-the-house motions. Finally, members vote on resolutions and a simple majority vote is needed for the resolution to move forward. During this open meeting, as a result of commentary, the Committee on Resolutions “may change resolutions, both substantively and editorially, before final preparation of the resolutions” (NCTE, 2013).

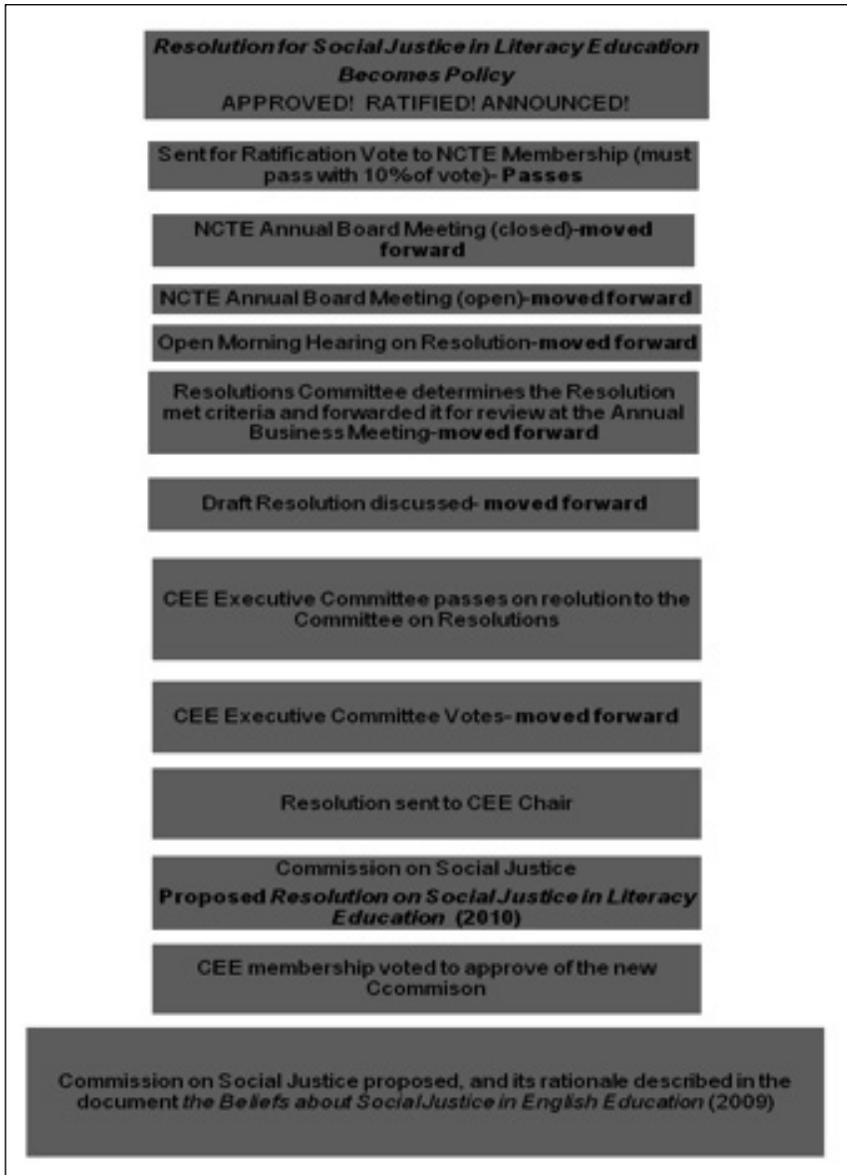
If approved at this stage, the resolution moves to the closed Annual Business Meeting where it is read aloud, and a member of the Committee on Resolutions moves for its adoption. During this stage, resolutions may be amended during discussion. The last and final stage before a resolution can be officially vetted occurs in early January through a ratification vote. For the resolution to pass, 10% of NCTE’s membership must approve. Once approved, it is forwarded to the NCTE Executive Committee for appropriate implementation action. It is soon hereafter that “all ratified resolutions are reported to the membership in *The Council Chronicle* and on the NCTE website” (NCTE, 2013).

HOW THE RESOLUTION ON SOCIAL JUSTICE IN LITERACY EDUCATION BECAME NCTE POLICY

While any of the interest groups or conferences in NCTE may propose a resolution, the vetting of an official resolution into policy is consistent across all constituent groups (for a description of the process see NCTE, 2013). However, for purposes cited herein, the process for the *Resolution on Social Justice in Literacy Education* to move into policy took its own unique pathway and is described here in full detail (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2010; see also Figure 2).

The *Resolution on Social Justice in Literacy Education* emerged from the Commission on Social Justice, which is one of many commissions in the

Figure 2. How the *Resolution on Social Justice in Literacy Education* became NCTE policy (view from the bottom up)



CEE. A proposal for this new commission was suggested by sj Miller during the annual summer meeting of CEE in 2009. Nineteen CEE members came to that initial commission meeting and, collectively, decided to draft a document that could be used to position CEE as a leader in social justice work and further develop research about the imperatives of social justice in education. The document that emerged was entitled *Beliefs about Social Justice in English Education* (CEE Commission on Social Justice, 2009). During the close of the CEE meeting, the Commission on Social Justice Belief Statement was approved unanimously by the membership and the document was posted on the CEE website.

A few months later during the annual convention, the commission met again and drafted the *Resolution on Social Justice in Literacy Education*. Each of the required elements in the document was provided, it was brought forward for approval from the CEE chair, voted on by the CEE Executive Committee, and was again *unanimously* approved. The resolution then followed a similar pathway as described above in Figure 2 and was officially ratified as NCTE policy in November 2010.

COMPOSING STANDARD VI: GENERATING NATIONAL POLICY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The NCTE Task Force for National Standards consisted of members from diverse institutions, including R1 and R2 public research and land-grant universities, liberal arts colleges, and private and religious institutions across the United States. Task force members moved social justice toward a conceptualization of curriculum not as a policy *product*, but as the *foundation* on which all policy is actually made. Given NCTE's historic commitment to valuing diversity as part of the field's purview (Burns, 2014), curriculum and social justice are interrelated parts of the policy ecology in which the SPA functions (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). In that ecology, education is a political project—perhaps *the* project that defines the national identities our society embodies. The Task Force on National Standards' examinations of NCATE policy protocols led to additional dialogue about how social justice is not just desirable but fundamental to successful teaching and public education in general.

As we have noted, although NCATE offered models of policy language that explicitly deployed the phrase “social justice” as early as 2002, by 2006 the term was expressly removed and prohibited in all policy language related to NCATE, teacher education program standards, and candidate assessments. As NCATE president Arthur Wise claimed, “NCATE had never mandated the phrase and did not endorse particular ideological or political approaches” (Powers, 2006). However, due to political and ideological

pressures (including and especially from corporate representatives of special interest groups outside the field of professional education), Wise declared NCATE would excise all references to “social justice” because the phrase was subject to widely variable interpretations that made it impossible to assess.

When the task force drew on the work of the CEE Commission on Social Justice along with scholarship related to responsive pedagogies to frame overarching criteria for social justice education, it generated opportunities for thinking in new ways about policy and practice. The knowledge advanced by the task force in concert with the commission conceptualized social justice and demonstrated how it might be represented in ways that were morally necessary, scientifically sound, and pedagogically justifiable. In particular, social justice had most frequently been represented as a simply a moral good perceived by some as important in a democratic society. For others it entailed a movement to attain full and equal recognition for traditionally minority groups and thereby remedy their marginalization and persecution. However, the most widely voiced concern among task force members was that *teaching for social justice* could not be objectively *measured* and thereby evaluated. It could not be easily quantified in standard ways, and some felt the term carried too much political baggage that made it ripe for use in inappropriately indoctrinating new professionals for particular radical liberal ideologies that are simply not welcome in some political contexts of education.

In the face of sustained attacks and reactions against any attempt to make social justice a matter of national policy, the NCTE Task Force seriously considered avoiding the topic entirely. Some members expressed that while teaching for social justice was desirable, it would be useless to attempt formulating a national policy that could not be assessed via methods that would yield statistical measurements and standard metrics. Whether or not to teach with social justice in mind is a political notion, and it is also a moral impulse that seems like a nice thing to do but an impossible task to enforce. However, without research to support it, and without the means to assess it, such a policy proposal would be unlikely to be accepted. It would be even less likely to be implemented and sustained.

When the NCTE Task Force began developing its standards in collaboration with the NCATE—now the Council for Accreditation of Education Professionals (CAEP)—the group recognized that standards-based education overall was a point of controversy as a sustainable project in any form (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004). Most significantly, the group recognized that accountability systems like NCATE’s required clear and concrete assessment data in order to make decisions about the quality of teacher candidates and the programs that prepare them. While social justice was

already a contested topic in education due to arguments that it lacked clarity and opened the way for potential radical liberal indoctrination into a progressive ideological agenda, members asked serious questions about whether a social justice standard would or ought to be accepted by NCATE/CAEP. After considerable discussion, however, it was determined that the task force would attempt to formulate, support, and pass a standard that explicitly focused on social justice education based on NCTE's ongoing commitments.

Further, task force member Leslie Burns had been synthesizing research studies into the responsive teaching framework noted above, and had identified a key set of studies from social psychology (e.g., Steele, 2011) that in fact *did* successfully measure how responding to individuals' diverse identities in nearly any performance context had significant, positive effects on those individuals' abilities to think and perform at optimal levels compared to individuals whose identities were disregarded, ignored, or otherwise threatened. Given these findings, it could no longer be argued that the effects of social justice education could not be measured. As such, the synthesis of research about responding to student identities (Hall, Burns, & Edwards, 2011) led to a focus on the ethical implications of literacy instruction across sociocultural contexts combined with a focus on experimental science. That synthesis, in turn, provided a rationale in which social justice teaching was not only a morally desirable disposition but also a fundamental pedagogical approach to ensuring teachers worked systematically to use research in ways that support the learning of *all* students—the primary goal of modern education reform.

In agreement with advocacy by Miller and the Commission on Social Justice, the task force ultimately agreed that socially just education not only merited but required a standard of its own. Incorporating the commission's definitions of social justice and elements of its Belief Statement and Resolution supplied by Miller, Burns advocated for and drafted the standard for the task force. Other task force members also fully supported the development of Standard VI, refining the language of the standard and providing additional scholarly bases. Importantly, the task force strongly noted the continuing need to develop a variety of robust assessment methods and models for use by programs and accreditors.

Quite literally, the decision to attempt writing a social justice standard was made because several dedicated members of their SPA made a concerted, active, and especially research-based case for its necessity. Based on that case, Standard VI for social justice now serves as a foundation for ELA teaching and teacher preparation across all programs in the United States. The research it operationalized is explicitly designed to support

diverse student and teacher success. For the purposes of creating a social justice foundation, two of the seven guiding principles for the NCTE Task Force were “ELA teacher candidates must be knowledgeable about how adolescents best learn and committed to responding to the needs of all learners,” and “Effective lessons and instructional units are evidence based, built on the alignment of planning, teaching, and assessment, and reflective of classroom context and students’ dynamic identities” (NCTE, 2012, pp. 7–8).

The drafted standards were shared at the CEE conference held at Fordham University in June 2011, resulting in additional feedback. Further revisions were made, primarily related to the integration of art and multiple literacies and the need for a greater emphasis on literacy instruction versus literary training. In turn, this draft was shared at the November 2011 NCTE annual convention. Given additional revision, the task force consulted with various other professional organizations along with states and institutions of higher education to review the standards and ensure that they were not just sufficient but reliably assessable via NCATE’s accountability system. Responses from the International Reading Association (now the International *Literacy* Association), the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, the National Council of Social Studies, three state departments of education, and nine NCATE-affiliated institutions led to a final set of responses and suggestions. The five major categories of response included a suggestion that Standard VI for social justice add a formal element regarding implementation and assessment in classroom and program contexts. However, despite this recommendation, neither internal nor external reviewers expressed concerns about the inclusion of a social justice standard—a significant shift in the policy ecology (Weaver-Hightower, 2008).

During the revision process, multiple stakeholder groups were solicited to respond to various drafts of the standards, provide feedback, and orient the task force to salient issues. Over the course of two years, task force members reviewed feedback and input from NCTE constituents and other professionals to formulate assessable national standards and submitted them for formal approval to NCATE. By that time, integrating social justice and education equity were stated as part of the group’s explicit charge.

The drafted standards were next shared at the CEE conference held at the November 2011 NCTE annual convention. During that session, as noted by the NCTE Task Force, “Most responses [to the new standards overall] centered on Standard VI about social justice, equity, and diversity” (NCTE, 2012, p. 5). Members were confident this standard

needed to be included but, like earlier reviewers, they questioned the standard's capacity to be reliably assessed across contexts. Members suggested additional relevant research, which the writing group later consulted for incorporation into these revised standards. It was determined by the task force members that Standard VI was sufficient, and no subsequent changes were made, although discussion continues regarding how to develop assessments for both teachers and teacher preparation programs.

The NCTE Task Force's standards were submitted to NCATE in August 2011. In November 2011, NCATE requested an additional revision to make the standards consistent with the four new principles around its own revised framework. Upon completion of the requested revisions, the NCTE Task Force's drafted standards were fully approved in November 2012, including a standard dedicated to social justice education. That standard, Standard VI, states, "Candidates demonstrate knowledge of how theories and research about social justice, diversity, equity, student identities, and schools as institutions can enhance students' opportunities to learn in English Language Arts" (NCTE, 2012, p. 41). The standard also included two elements, as follows: 1) "Candidates plan and implement English language arts and literacy instruction that promotes social justice and critical engagement with complex issues related to maintaining a diverse, inclusive, equitable society," and 2) "Candidates use knowledge of theories and research to plan instruction responsive to students' local, national and international histories, individual identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender expression, age, appearance, ability, spiritual belief, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and community environment), and languages/dialects as they affect students' opportunities to learn in ELA" (2012, p. 41).

Upon notice of the formally approved standards, Burns inquired with NCATE's program review coordinators about the status of Standard VI and its reception in the broader reform community. In May 2013, NCATE's program reviewers formally replied that the standard was "unique" and "not modeled specifically on any other standards" (P. Yoder, personal communication, May 13, 2013). Further, NCATE replied that despite trepidation about how a social justice standard might have been received based on previous history, feedback from constituents to that date was "all positive."

For the first time, as a matter of national policy, NCTE realized a standard for social justice in teaching and teacher preparation, a historic moment in U.S. education reform policymaking.

REALIZING STANDARD VI IN PRACTICE: THE CHALLENGE OF ASSESSMENT

Standard VI may seem general in its overarching statement as policy, but the abilities to interact with and make meaning with others using literate practices is essential for any just society. The standard and its elements lead directly to a focus on lesson and unit planning specified across other standards in the NCTE framework, as well as assessment, especially when considering issues of language, identity, context, and social diversity. An ELA teacher working with students to make sense of and use literature and language should approach issues of social justice in a unique way. Human interactions are often the focus of literary texts, and the social and cultural effects of language are often discussed in ELA classrooms, where it is not just useful but necessary to engage those texts and usages in ways that open them to interrogation from multiple perspectives that support the ability of students from all backgrounds to learn and use them. The elements refer specifically to the modeling of literacy practices for students as well as literacy and language related to professional development and engaged, responsive teaching.

Many consider supporting diversity in classrooms to be a matter of simple recognition, tolerance, and inclusion. Teaching specifically for social justice, however, involves assertions that professional teachers (and therefore teacher education programs) are responsible for not only developing but clearly demonstrating dispositions to teach in ways that are intended to reduce and even eliminate inequities including unequal access, unequal opportunity to learn, and social or institutional practices that are biased with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, age, ability, disability, national/geographic origin, language/dialect, spiritual belief, appearance [including but not limited to variance in height and/or weight], sexual orientation, social class, economic circumstance, environment, ecology, and culture.

REALIZING SOCIALLY JUST TEACHER EDUCATION

Despite controversy and debate related to past discussions in outdated contexts, NCTE's Standard VI is essential to research-based, principled practice in ELA and English teacher preparation. And while debate continues about how teaching for social justice might be assessed for evaluation of teacher education programs and teacher candidate performances, existing research makes such assessment possible. With regard to candidates, for example, the research bases associated with responsive teaching make it possible to assess candidates' performance and quality in more

principled ways (e.g., Alsup & Miller, 2014; Burns & Botzakis, 2016; Miller, 2014, 2015; Miller & Burns, in press).

Teacher candidates can and should be assessed for their knowledge of research bases for responsive teaching and social justice education, for their abilities to implement associated findings and conclusions in their day-to-day instructional practices, and for their expectations regarding the abilities of diverse learners to succeed in ELA. Similarly, teacher education programs can be assessed based on their inclusion of resources, explicit field experiences, and implementation opportunities related to research about methods that lead to increased learning, equitable access, equal opportunity, and the explicit use of language arts to reduce and eliminate institutional, social, and even local practices that are unjust. Teaching for social justice is not merely an elitist brand of social activism or liberal indoctrination in public education. It is an essential aspect of teaching and teacher education that is practical, scientific, and measurable for teachers, students, schools, and teacher preparation programs alike.

CONCLUSIONS

While it may seem reasonable to limit the scope of standards for the utilitarian, instrumental, and superficially apolitical pedagogical needs of program assessment in any SPA or subject area for accreditation of teachers and teacher education programs, such limitation may place artificial constraints on the representation of knowledge about socially just teaching and teacher education through which professionals can then embody and realize equity in public schooling. And although boundaries may be necessary for designing curricula, it is worth considering whether bureaucratic exigencies for institutional accreditation actually enable our profession to accurately represent its knowledge and complexities in ways that attain stated goals for justice and equity in national education reform.

Indeed, it is not at all clear whether assumptions regarding assessments of teacher education and teacher quality are legitimate or desirable. State and national accountability systems rely heavily on assumptions that all elements in an accountability framework must be *objectively* assessable or measurable and that all aspects of teacher education *can* be clearly delineated, controlled, and thereby assessed in objective ways across diverse contexts (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004). These accountability policy assumptions contradict what former NCATE president Arthur Wise argued 30 years ago (Johnson, Johnson, Ferenga, & Ness, 2006). As such, they constitute a policy paradox (Stone, 2002): How can professional educators assess qualitative phenomena like socially just teaching and its effects on learning using objective measurements that, by definition, cannot reliably

measure those highly variable and contextual phenomena? According to Wise, when such accountability mandates for objective measurement are enforced from a high level of governance (in this case, state or national accountability systems) they risk serving simplistic ends that may actually harm public education's capacity for creating equity. Wise further asserts that schooling *cannot be standardized* and that standardization of education accountability measures will lead to "quasi-judicial procedures, rigid rules, [and] pseudoscientific processes" for evaluating outcomes without regard to education's inherent complexities." Wise claimed such procedures, rules, and processes could actually coerce SPAs that participate to prescribe and standardize professional practices in ways that are harmful to the professionals, students, and the stakeholders they serve (cited in Johnson et al., 2006, pp. 67–68).

As Cherryholmes (1999) has argued about curriculum and education policy, their presumed authority and truth is *always* provisional, historically situated, contextual, and political, rather than fixed, stable, universal, or neutral. In order to produce the most useful and influential standards possible, NCTE and other SPAs can use multiple perspectives to represent their knowledge clearly and completely in its complexity so any application is more likely to succeed. Further, stakeholders must learn to treat representations as provisional, periodically reexamining findings and implementation to ensure that policies and practices continue to align in an ongoing process of critical pragmatism that prevents processes of rational policy decision making (Bardach, 2006) from creating pitfalls and negative consequences that are common even when unintended and unpredicted (Stone, 2002).

It is not clear whether quantification of teacher behaviors and psychological dispositions is desirable or even possible, and there is a considerable chance it is neither. Moreover, it is practically impossible to instill a particular, singularly consistent disposition for socially just teaching practices in all individuals who enter teacher education within the always-limited constraints of formal teacher preparation programs. Perhaps the only reason to attempt such quantification is the impulse to make accountability systems like NCATE's appear legitimate. However, quantification is not essential for *assessment* (determining and characterizing ability, quality, or nature) or even *evaluating* it (assigning value). Berliner (2005) has argued that it is practically impossible to measure quality teaching without violating scientific and ethical precepts, and SPAs should resist the impulse to do so.

According to the Rand Corporation (2014), teachers *may* account for *up to 14%* of added value in students' scores on standardized tests of learning. However, that obviously fails to account for the remaining 86% of

variables that *also* affect student achievement at all times. Johnson et al. (2006) note that “there is no objective, valid, or reliable method of quantifying high levels of skill among teacher candidates in schools and colleges of education” (p. 76), which means that assessing teacher and program quality is a challenge regardless of whether the assessments attend to socially just practices or not. Many elements contributing to success or failure are not quantifiable, and it is therefore unrealistic to attempt to measure them because the inescapable variability of classroom contexts precludes standardized measurement. This is not a weakness or failure of education science. It is a profound condition of education as a field of study and a social project.

Stock (2006) has suggested that NCTE and professional teaching organizations like it must study politics and policy and thereby learn how to frame conversations about teaching, learning, accountability, and education policy reform. Stock takes the idea of framing from Lakoff (2004), a cognitive linguist who explains cognitive framing as a technique for persuading others to accept and use a particular point of view, ideology, or other orientation when they think. Once particular frames for ideas are evoked and instantiated in others’ minds, it becomes difficult for them to see an issue any other way. Cognitive framing succeeds as such because it entails more than rhetorical tricks. Ethically developed cognitive frames help people “say what they idealistically believe” (p. 20) and activate those ideological positions in other people’s decisions (p. 21).

NCTE continues to frame and develop its orientations to and implementation of social justice teacher education as both research and scholarship emerge and evolve. In particular, members of the CEE Commission for Social Justice have been generating and discussing both program- and candidate-level assessments for use in documenting attainment of Standard VI to be used by ELA teacher preparation programs towards NCATE/CAEP accreditation. We believe these assessments and dialogues are essential in order to ensure that the standard is both practical and sustainable. In addition, the assessments are being systematically uploaded, stored, and offered as models and resources for teacher educators and teacher education programs so that they can take up the practices and help realize the policy in local contexts. Based on collaboration with NCATE/CAEP program evaluators and NCTE members’ input (Miller & Burns, in press), we have identified the following conclusions and next steps for realizing Standard VI as a fully implemented and assessable policy for ensuring high-quality and socially just ELA teaching and teacher education.

First, preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators must acquire and retain multiple ongoing opportunities and guidelines to provide rich, deep, sustained self-reflection as it relates to explicitly

named subjectivities specified in Standard VI. They must further grapple with challenges and learn how to be allies who support students who bring those multiple subjectivities into contexts for teaching and learning. These opportunities should include preservice and in-service experiences both inside and outside of schools and classrooms in order to achieve maximum efficacy. These reflections and understandings of how to operate as an ally in social justice educational efforts are essential to help orient teachers who then support their students as agents in their own educations and lives.

Second, teacher education programs and in-service professional development programs must be utilized to strengthen contextualized experiences wherein teachers (and their students) don't just "try on" and "practice" socially just methods but fully engage the deep work required to attain the standard's specifications. Programs must be designed to strengthen professional understandings of social justice theory and research so that educators are better able to apply them in local practice. This includes designing teacher education and professional development programs that support teachers in extending their social justice work beyond their classrooms and schools into the communities they serve as agents of change when change is necessary and just.

Third, it is essential for all social justice advocates to continue addressing gaps in the larger project of attaining social justice policy standards and sustaining them over time. Education researchers must contribute ongoing, rich, and methodologically diverse studies of adolescent teaching and learning constructs that allow educators and students to understand how both they and their educational practices have been socially constructed and positioned in ways that affect their capacities to operate in just ways. Teacher education programs must develop systematically designed and principled opportunities for teachers (and students) to operate as activists and agents of change for social justice. Those programs must also cultivate social justice capital by designing rich signature assignments and anchor tasks explicitly oriented to socially just professional practices. Programs must further socialize preservice teachers to build and extend affinity groups that empower prospective professionals to engage in critical inquiry and social activism related to social justice education, using pre- and post- programmatic surveys to assess how understandings and realizations of social justice in their contexts evolve over time. Based on work to fill these gaps, the profession must ultimately socialize, position, and orient new members and new allies to not just try to be socially just in their work, but *demonstrate* how they use and apply their knowledge intentionally to attain social justice in their work and thus fulfill the opportunities and promise of Standard VI.

To these ends, we invite members of all SPAs across all content areas, disciplines, and fields to review the NCLE database for assessment of social justice education, utilize it as a resource, and contribute to it themselves. We further call for subject-area professional associations across the nation in all disciplines and at all grade-levels to join us and engage in the development of socially just teacher preparation that is consonant with research, scholarship, and the particular needs of their unique discourses.

In order to not only realize social justice policies like Standard VI but also implement, expand, and sustain them, groups like NCATE, NCTE, and other SPAs should unabashedly require teacher educators and K–12 teachers to know, understand, and *realize* that social justice is not merely a nice idea. It is a scientifically proven construct and theory of pedagogy that also happens to be moral and ethical with regard to the health of our education system, the children it serves, and the society they will sustain when they inherit it.

Realizing social justice and implementing responsive teaching is not a simple or easy project, but it is one that must be taken up and realized by professionals at all levels across the spectrum of our public education system. The idea that realizing social justice is fundamental to the teaching profession should not be controversial in a society founded on democratic ideals. It should be a public good and a self-evident truth that all people embrace if they are true to the ideal that, in our schools, no child is ever left behind.

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