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## Reflecting on Pupil Learning to Promote Social Justice: A Catholic University's Approach to Assessment

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*In contrast to current education policies that conceptualize pupil learning largely in terms of standardized exam scores, we offer an alternative view, one that conceives of pupil learning as a source of insight for pupils and teachers alike. Drawing on survey data and a qualitative study of the teacher candidate experience, we explore the following questions: In a teacher education program committed to promoting social justice, embracing an inquiry-into-practice stance, and affirming diversity by meeting the needs of diverse learners, how do teacher candidates assess pupil learning, in particular, how are their assessments influenced by these program themes? Further, how do they respond when dilemmas linked to pupil learning arise? Specifically, we focused on dilemmas two teacher candidates encountered that engendered a sense of "disequilibrium," a feeling something was not quite right with their teaching. In turn, we consider how they responded—typically taking ownership of dilemmas and modifying their teaching, while occasionally distancing themselves from responsibility for pupil performance. To conclude, we discuss implications for teacher educators, and specifically for Catholic institutions of higher education that prepare teachers for both public and Catholic schools.*

**A**t present, "pupil learning"<sup>1</sup> represents a preeminent focus throughout the United States educational system (Cochran-Smith, 2001), a development epitomized by the No Child Left Behind Act (2001),

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1 Throughout, we use "pupil learning" and "pupils" so as to differentiate between the learning of teacher candidates who participated in our study and their pupils in K-12 schools. When we quote teacher candidates, we use the term "student" to maintain their word choice.

which ushered in an era of test-based accountability for public schools in which pupils, teachers, schools, districts, and states can all face sanctions if pupil learning falls below established standards (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Elmore, 2002). Although we too view pupil learning as critical to the success of any educational system, public or parochial, the prevailing conceptions—defined largely as performance on standardized, high-stakes exams—seem myopic. Furthermore, speaking to the matter of assessment and accountability for Catholic schools, in particular, Leanne Kallemeyn (2009) recently wrote, “High-stakes assessment practices no longer emphasize improvement, development, and learning; rather, the fundamental purpose is accountability or monitoring. Using assessment for these purposes is not consistent with the identity of Catholic schools” (p. 512)—largely because of its potential to undermine the trust between teachers, students, and families that is pivotal to Catholic school performance. While pupil learning *should* be the focus of classrooms, schools, and teacher education programs, that focus should broaden to include any classroom endeavor “that provide[s] information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities” (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, p. 140), what is typically understood as “formative” or “informal” assessment. From this perspective, pupil learning becomes a source of insight for teachers and pupils alike, a means to enrich classroom teaching and pupil achievement. Moreover, pupil learning seems inextricably entwined with issues of social justice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009): U.S. public schools are entrusted with educating our youth and preparing them for democratic citizenship, as are Catholic schools, which pursue “cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school” (Vatican Council II, 1965, n. 8), while instilling Catholic morals and faith traditions to develop the whole child in both intellect and conscience. When pupils fail to learn, their life chances are diminished and our democracy weakens. Thus, every day justice is either enacted or denied in classrooms across the country, including both public and parochial schools, and, by assessing pupil learning, one can gauge this critical outcome.

Blending survey data with a qualitative study of the teacher candidate experience, we explore the value of having educators focus on pupil learning by considering the following questions: In a teacher education program at a Catholic university committed to promoting social justice, embracing an inquiry-into-practice stance, and affirming diversity by meeting the needs of diverse learners, how do teacher candidates assess pupil learning? Further, how do they respond to dilemmas that arise in the course of their teaching? In addressing these questions we describe difficulties and uncertainties linked to pupil learning two teacher candidates encountered that engendered a sense of

“disequilibrium” (Nadler, 1993), a feeling something was not quite right with their teaching, commonly linked to pupil underachievement and their sense of teaching for social justice. In turn, we examine how they responded—how they typically took ownership of these dilemmas by somehow modifying their teaching, enacting strategies aimed at helping diverse pupils learn while maintaining a commitment to their initial standards. On occasion, they distanced themselves from responsibility for pupil performance. Based on our findings, we outline a series of implications for the field of teacher education, and specifically teacher education programs in Catholic colleges and universities.

### **Conceptualizing Pupil Learning**

Educators, policy makers, and the public all seem to agree that pupil learning represents a fundamental purpose of schooling. It also plays a pivotal role in the promotion of social justice, as learning instills the needed “knowledge of economic, societal, and political structures in which our contemporaries find themselves immersed” (General Congregation [GC] 34, D. 16, n. 396) to critically examine these structures, and is integral to “form[ing] young people and adults able and willing to build a more just social order” (GC32, D. 4, n. 60). In the current political and educational climate, pupil learning is commonly understood as a summative evaluation of pupil achievement, a perspective widely embraced by classroom teachers (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b) and reinforced by a high-stakes testing paradigm that emphasizes evaluative judgments of pupil achievement at a specific point in time (Cochran-Smith, 2005). This popular conception, however, has drawbacks. For Catholic schools, in particular, a broad base of trust across the entire institution is a central element to their success (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993). However, once trust becomes “institutionalized” in the form of scores on standardized exams, it can “erode the trust of ordinary individuals” (Kallemeyn, 2009, p. 512).

Further, when creating purely evaluative assessments teachers tend to “reshape instruction . . . [to] lower the complexity and demands of the curriculum” (Shepard, 2001, p. 1067), emphasizing “rote and superficial learning” (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, p. 141), largely because of a preoccupation with measuring and comparing pupil work to that of their peers. The matter becomes even more complicated for low-achieving pupils, as evaluative assessment “often has a negative impact” (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2004, p. 9), leading them to believe “they lack ability . . . that they are not able to learn” (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, p. 142). If nothing else, “a numerical . . . grade does not tell students how to improve their work” (Black et al., 2004, p. 13).

Moreover, rather than focus on pupil learning, teacher education programs typically emphasize “the acquisition of standardized routines that integrate management and instruction” (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003, p. 1487). When assessment is addressed, programs typically emphasize the construction of tests and other traditional assignments, giving less attention to the “formative” potential of assessment, to how assessment might inform instruction and enhance pupil learning (Hiebert, Morris, Berk, & Jansen, 2007; Shepard, 2001). In an extensive review of formative assessment, Black and Wiliam (1998a) described a comparable inattention to formative assessment among practicing teachers. Offering an international perspective, they wrote: in the United Kingdom “information about pupil performance is insufficiently used to inform subsequent work”; in Canada, secondary teachers consider formative assessment “unrealistic”; and in the United States, assessment-for-teaching is “not common even though . . . [it is] promoted in the professional literature” (p. 141). It therefore seems no surprise that teachers often “feel that learning outcomes are unpredictable, mysterious, and uncontrollable” (Kennedy, 1999, p. 528), as do many pupils (Wiggins, 1992).

To enrich pupil learning, Shepard (2001) maintained that assessment should “illuminate and enhance the learning process” (p. 1066), serving to “help students learn and to improve instruction, not just to rank students or to certify the end products of learning” (p. 1080). When assessment is effective, teachers come to “know [students] in a variety of ways, including observation and discussion in the classroom and the reading of pupils’ written work” (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, p. 140). They then use their deeper understandings to “monitor pupil performance against targets or objectives . . . inform next steps in teaching and learning . . . [and thereby] turn assessment into a learning event” for pupils and teachers alike (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 217). Black and Wiliam’s (1998b) review of research on formative assessment speaks to the effectiveness of this strategy, as they found unequivocally that “attention to formative assessment can lead to significant learning gains” (p. 17).

Despite such promise, rather than using pupil learning as a source of insight, teachers at times distance themselves from responsibility for pupil performance, often by attributing pupil performance to influences beyond their control, such as students’ socioeconomic status, ability, or lack of family support (Datnow, Borman, Stringfield, Overman, & Castellano, 2003; Johnston, Guice, Baker, Malone, & Michelson, 1995). In contrast, approaching assessment as a learning process for pupils and teachers alike can enhance pupil achievement and encourage teacher ownership of pupil learning. By focusing attention onto the implications-for-teaching rather than the implications-for-grading, formative assessment can lay the foundation for a “culture of

success, backed by a belief that all pupils can achieve” (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, p. 142). Indeed, Catholic schools are in the unique position of recognizing the “merely human power of evaluation” (Kallemeien, 2009, p. 516) because they are not mandated by government reforms as public schools. Catholic schools, therefore, can promote formative assessment practices—where teacher candidates adopt an implications-for-teaching stance and take ownership of student performance—that best serve the needs of their teacher candidates and thereby promote social justice.

### **Description of the Study**

Data for this study were derived from the Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative in the Lynch School of Education (LSOE) at Boston College (BC). A Jesuit university serving 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students, BC prides itself on providing a strong liberal arts education while maintaining the Jesuit mission of preparing students to be “men and women for others.” Promoting social justice is a defining characteristic of Jesuit higher education (Kolvenbach, 2001), where education is “not simply the updating of technical or professional knowledge” (Arrupe, 1973, p.1), but must “train [students] to be scientists, doctors, teachers, and business persons of integrity” who critically examine national and international realities “with an advocate’s eye for the down trodden” (United States Assistancy, 2006, n.36). As such, promoting social justice is critical to the LSOE teacher education programs, where faculty and students are encouraged to “challenge inequities in the social order and work to establish a more just society.” Like many Catholic colleges and universities that prepare “teachers who can be effective in any setting” (Watzke, 2002, p. 145), BC prepares teachers to work in public school settings as well as Catholic schools.

Our research focused on teacher candidates in the LSOE master’s of education (M.Ed.) program. As is typical with teacher education, the program includes a series of teaching methods courses and foundations courses as well as two practicum experiences. During the semester-long pre-practicum, teacher candidates observe veteran teachers 1 to 3 days a week and teach occasional lessons. The 14-week student teaching experience engages teacher candidates in extensive lesson planning and instruction. In both experiences, teacher candidates regularly engage in dialogue about teaching and learning with their university supervisors and cooperating teachers. One unique aspect of the program, Inquiry Seminar, is a two-semester course during which teacher candidates identify a research question related to pupil learning, cre-



ate a research design, conduct the study during student teaching, and consider the implications for their teaching.

In 2003, Boston College joined 11 other universities in the TNE project. This initiative, funded primarily by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, aims to change how teacher education is understood and enacted by drawing on three guiding principles: first, that decisions about teacher education programs are driven by empirical research, including tangible evidence of pupil learning; second, that arts and sciences and education faculty collaborate in educating and mentoring prospective teachers; and third, that teaching should be understood as a clinically taught profession. To honor TNE's commitment to decisions driven by evidence, the LSOE created the Evidence Team to collect qualitative and quantitative data that would constitute a portfolio of TNE-related studies.<sup>2</sup> Over the 5 years of the project, the Evidence Team collected a rich array of qualitative and survey data. For this article we focus on two pieces of the Evidence Team's work, student surveys and the Qualitative Case Study (QCS) project,<sup>3</sup> which examines the M.Ed. program by focusing on the process of learning to teach from entry into a teacher education program through the third year of teaching, though in this study we examine only the pre-service year.

### ***Research Design and Methods***

The QCS project represents a multi-participant case study (Stake, 2006) informed by critical sociocultural theory. Here, culture is assumed to be a framework of values, beliefs, and symbols through which individuals interpret and act on the world (Geertz, 1973). In this view, all social practices—including teaching and teacher education—are informed by some set of cultural ideals, beliefs, principles, and values (Gee, 1996). To generate a cultural understanding of “learning to teach,” the QCS Project examines the beliefs and values teacher candidates bring to the M.Ed. program, as well as those they encounter in the LSOE and their practicum placements, and how the interplay among these influences shape their classroom practices and beliefs about teaching. For this study, we focused on the relationships among pupil

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2 The Evidence Team, chaired by Marilyn Cochran-Smith, includes BC faculty members and administrators Alan Kafka, Fran Loftus, Larry Ludlow, Patrick McQuillan, Joseph Pedulla, and Gerald Pine; TNE Administrators Jane Carter and Jeff Gilligan; and doctoral students Joan Barnatt, Robert Baroz, Lisa D'Souza, Sarah Enterline, Ann Marie Gleeson, Cindy Jong, Kara Mitchell, Emilie Mitescu, Aubrey Scheopner, Karen Shakman, Yves Fernandez Solomon, and Dianna Terrell. For more information about BC TNE, see <http://tne.bc.edu>

3 Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Patrick McQuillan are co-principal investigators of the QCS project. Core researchers include: Joan Barnatt, Lisa D'Souza, Cindy Jong, Karen Shakman, Robert Baroz, Aubrey Scheopner, Dianna Terrell, and Ann Marie Gleeson.



learning, classroom inquiry (including formative assessment), and the larger ideal of teaching for social justice. In particular, we examined how teacher candidates assessed pupil learning, how they made sense of subsequent pupil performance, and what, if anything, they did differently when dilemmas arose in the course of teaching, when they experienced a sense of “disequilibrium.” In presenting case studies we assume, as Robert Yin (1989) has written, that this approach is appropriate “when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 13).

Data for this article were collected by the QCS research team, a subset of whom authored this manuscript. We drew extensively on six 2-hour, semi-structured interviews conducted with two teacher candidates, Elizabeth and Sonia, over the course of the 2005-06 academic year. The interviews offered participants opportunities to discuss their educational backgrounds, LSOE themes, and the general experience of learning to teach. We also collected 20 hours of observational data from five 2-hour visits to each teacher candidate’s classroom. To complement these data, we interviewed a subset of LSOE faculty, observed LSOE classes, collected samples of teacher candidate course work, and analyzed course syllabi, all with an eye toward understanding how faculty integrated the themes of social justice, classroom inquiry, and affirming diversity by meeting the needs of diverse learners into their courses.

Overall, data collection and analysis were informed by a “consensual” approach (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). That is, with a concern for validity in mind, the Evidence Team jointly created an overarching conceptual framework for understanding the impact of teacher education on teacher candidates. Drawing on this conceptual understanding, the team collectively developed interview and observation protocols to guide the qualitative inquiry and ensure a measure of comparability across researchers in data collected (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). In analyzing data the team employed a constant comparative method in which team members collectively identified and modified key concepts and themes over time through multiple readings of the data by multiple persons (Charmaz, 2000).

Although much of what we describe in our case studies was consistent across all 11 research participants (D’Souza, Miller, McQuillan, Scheopner, & Mitchell, 2007), we intentionally selected two teacher candidates, Elizabeth and Sonia, because they embodied much of what the LSOE teacher education program sought to achieve. In this sense, they represented “exemplary” research participants (Wolf, Borko, Elliott, & McIver, 2000). They were capable students whose practices and sense of social justice aligned with LSOE ideals. Further, in line with criteria Wolf and her co-researchers used when

selecting exemplary study schools, we selected teacher candidates who were making “good things . . . happen” (p. 357) in their classrooms though they faced considerable challenge, such that we would need to “look deeper than surface explanations for *why* good things were happening” (p. 358). The case studies of Elizabeth and Sonia, therefore, offer a sense for what is possible, though not inevitable. However, by exploring the possible, one gains a sense for how program dynamics might work most productively.

## **Research Findings**

### ***Connecting LSOE Themes to Teacher Candidate Practices***

Throughout the M.Ed. program, three mutually reinforcing themes represent common touchstones as well as a means to enact “education for justice”: promoting social justice, inquiry-into-practice (often manifest as a focus on pupil learning), and affirming diversity by meeting the needs of diverse learners. With regards to promoting social justice, every LSOE syllabus reads: “At BC, we see teaching as an activity with political dimensions, and we see all educators as responsible for challenging inequities in the social order and working with others to establish a more just society.” In accord with this theme, many faculty seek to integrate related issues into their teaching. For example, the syllabus for Teaching Language Arts read:

[To create] a more just and democratic society, we need to consider the potential for literacy to increase the social, academic, and vocational opportunities of the students we teach as well as the possibility for school literacy practices to exclude students from the political and social mainstream.

In an interview, the instructor for Literacy and Assessment in Secondary Education explained that she asked students to consider one foundational question about all their lessons: “Will this be empowering for students?” The Secondary History Methods course addressed social justice directly: To complete the “social action assignment,” the professor required each student to do something that semester “to somehow make the world a better place.”

Moreover, faculty consistently linked social justice with academic achievement. As the Secondary Methods in English syllabus noted, teacher candidates learned “to help students read critically, write effectively, think deeply and broadly....[including] a dedication to high standards.” In her research, one LSOE professor highlighted the matter of rigor in teaching English language learners (ELL): “Classroom activities and the content of lessons should

be...challenging....High dropout rates for too many bilingual students may be attributed to low expectations in designing curriculum” (Brisk, 2006, p. 174).

The LSOE teacher education program also emphasizes inquiry-into-practice and professional reflection, with a focus on pupil learning, as key to teacher growth and development and for identifying how and where issues of social justice need to be addressed. As all syllabi read, faculty seek to “bridge the gap between research and practice by fostering critical reflection and by treating classrooms and schools as sites for teacher research and other forms of practitioner inquiry.” Along these lines, students in Social Studies and the Arts learn “to observe, reflect upon, and assess multiple dimensions of classroom-based instruction.” For Inquiry Seminar—the two-semester sequence that culminates in an empirical study focused on pupil learning—teacher candidates consider the following questions: Are all pupils learning? How do we know? How can we measure pupil learning? How can we adapt instruction to improve pupil learning? Moreover, during student teaching, teacher candidates regularly engage in informal seminars with supervisors and other student teachers and use weekly journals to reflect on their experiences.

A third LSOE theme, affirming diversity by meeting the needs of diverse learners, offers a means for realizing social justice. As all LSOE syllabi note, this objective has become increasingly salient, “especially as the school population becomes more diverse in race, culture, ethnicity, language background, and ability/disability.” Consistent with this assumption, the syllabus for the elementary course, Teaching Reading, observed that “all excellent pedagogy begins with the premise that learning must be connected to and catered for all learners’ needs, interests, abilities, and backgrounds.” Promoting a similar commitment, the syllabus for Children with Special Needs noted: “The teacher is the primary person responsible for constructing a learning environment in which ALL students may acquire and generalize the problem-solving strategies that are necessary for learning.” After identifying varied ways to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students as well as special needs students, the instructor for Elementary Social Studies and the Arts emphasized:

I’m at the point where my students realize these strategies are helpful not just for ELL students or for students with special needs. They’re helpful across the board....Taking my students through those exercises, they begin to realize how that helps all learners.

To assess the degree to which program graduates as a collective internalized the themes of social justice, inquiry-into-practice, and meeting the needs

of diverse learners, the next section presents findings from a 2006 exit survey of program graduates.

### ***Survey Scales: Social Justice, Inquiry-into-Practice, and Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners***

As this study focuses on the interplay among three LSOE themes, we looked at the class of 2006 exit survey data, the same cohort from which we selected our study participants, Elizabeth and Sonia, for this article, to see if graduates conceptualized the three themes in ways that aligned with the LSOE ideals. In this regard, survey scales, developed by the Evidence Team through a series of factor analyses, revealed that these graduates had a commitment to teaching for social justice and felt relatively able to conduct inquiry-into-practice and meet the needs of diverse learners (Ludlow, Enterline, & Cochran-Smith, 2008; Ludlow, et al., 2007).

A series of principal axis factor analyses with both varimax and oblimin rotations were performed on the 2006 exit survey and produced four factors that accounted for 42% of the variance among survey items. These analyses were followed up with the computation of Cronbach reliability estimates for each factor. The results of these statistical analyses, as well as the results from conceptual discussions with teacher education professionals, produced a total of four scales and eight subscales for the exit survey.

One 12-item scale, examining graduates' conceptions of teaching for social justice, was found adequately reliable ( $\alpha = .72$ ). That is, using a 5-point scale—from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*—teacher candidates' responses consistently expressed a positive association along directional scales to questions such as: "An important part of learning to be a teacher is examining one's own attitudes and beliefs about race, class, gender, disabilities, and sexual orientation," and "Issues related to racism and inequity should be openly discussed in the classroom." In addition, 2006 graduates expressed a relatively strong commitment to the principles of social justice, as over three-quarters of this cohort (76.0%) on average either *agreed* (42.0%) or *strongly agreed* (34.0%) with the 12 survey statements.

A second subscale, which measured graduate perceptions of their preparation to engage in classroom inquiry, was highly reliable ( $\alpha = .92$ ). On all 10 questions LSOE students rated their inquiry preparation rather high. When asked, for instance, to assess on a 4-point scale how well their teacher education program helped them develop the ability to "seek and use feedback to improve instruction," "reflect on and improve my teaching performance," and "make decisions about teaching based on classroom evidence," 88.3%

of M.Ed. graduates on average rated their ability as either *good* (39.0%) or *excellent* (49.3%).

Survey data also suggested that 2006 graduates had confidence in their ability to work effectively with diverse learners. A third subscale, "Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners," contained 10 items, including the following sample questions, which asked students to rate on a 4-point scale how well the teacher education program prepared them to teach pupils: "in an urban school system," "with different linguistic backgrounds," and "with special needs." On the same scale, graduates rated their knowledge and understanding of "multi-cultural issues and perspectives," "social and political roles of schools in American society," and the "legal and ethical responsibilities of teachers." The reliability estimate for this scale was also highly reliable ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Further, this cohort expressed confidence in their ability to enact this ideal, with more than three-quarters on average (79.0%) rating their ability to meet the needs of diverse learners as either *good* (40.3%) or *excellent* (38.7%).

These combined data suggest that M.Ed. students had multidimensional and consistent conceptions of what it meant to teach for social justice, how to conduct classroom inquiry, and how to meet the needs of diverse learners. They also considered themselves rather qualified to actualize these ideals in their teaching. These findings offer a contextual backdrop to our case studies that examine how two teacher candidates from this cohort drew on their inquiry skills to address the needs of diverse learners and thereby enact a commitment to teaching for social justice.

### ***Qualitative Case Studies: Teacher Candidate Use of Pupil Learning***

To gain a sense for how the threads of promoting social justice, inquiry-into-practice, and meeting the needs of diverse learners intertwined in the experiences of two teacher candidates, we next present case studies of Elizabeth and Sonia and highlight the dilemmas and associated disequilibrium these teacher candidates experienced when they focused on pupil learning.

*Elizabeth: "I like seeing social justice in action."* Elizabeth, who grew up in an affluent White community, graduated from a selective Jesuit university with a degree in English and an interest in urban sociology. Having tutored urban youth as an undergrad she felt comfortable, effective, and appreciated working in this context. In fact, while tutoring, Elizabeth experienced a measure of disequilibrium that contributed to her decision to become an English teacher:



I was working with these kids one-on-one and I knew their writing was not up to par....[I]t was just disturbing....[T]hat really sparked my interest because this is important—they need to learn how to write well and learn how to read. They need to understand how to look beneath the surface and see what is really going on. (Interview 1, August 8, 2005)

After deciding to teach, Elizabeth enrolled in the LSOE's program for urban teaching, in part, because of its emphasis on social justice: "One of the most appealing things to me was BC really comes out and says they want to teach teachers ways to promote social justice. I really like that mission. I like seeing social justice in action" (Interview 1, August 8, 2005). Throughout her pre-service year, Elizabeth linked her evolving understanding of teaching for social justice with holding all pupils to high standards and thereby creating "the foundation they need to make a good life for themselves....giving them the tools to be able to do with [their lives] what they want" (Interview 1, August 8, 2005). In part, this meant "keeping expectations high and pushing [students]....looking at things analytically, critically, asking questions about what they read....[T]hat is really empowering" (Interview 1, August 8, 2005).

Elizabeth completed her pre-practicum and student teaching at the same site, a public, inner-city high school that faced many challenges afflicting urban schools nationwide. Pupil attendance was poor and dropout rates high. Security officers monitored the hallways and parking lot. Elizabeth considered the school climate unwelcoming and apathetic:

[W]e leave [school] at about 2:03. No one stays. No one....It's the whole school....An announcement comes on every day after school, "Students, if you are not with a teacher, you must leave the school building"....And students don't want to stay. And teachers don't want to stay. It just seems like everyone leaves in a blah, okay-the-day's-over kind of mood. (Interview 2, November 8, 2005)

In this context, Elizabeth maintained a commitment to social justice, allowing it to shape not only *how* she taught but *what* she taught. For example, after realizing that many students saw their communities in a negative light, Elizabeth felt compelled to offer an alternative perspective. Describing the themes she emphasized when teaching the novel, *A Lesson Before Dying*, Elizabeth explained:

[T]he book...has to do with the community all these characters live in and what type of responsibility one man has to teach another man a lesson before he is

executed, and how that might help his community, which was a highly segregated Black community in Louisiana...in the 1940s. I've asked them several times, "What kind of responsibility do you have for your community?...Is it someone else's responsibility to make things change or to make your environment a nicer, safer...place to live? Or what can *you* do?" And I thought that question would really hone in on the social justice issue....I just thought, "Yes, you as one individual can do something for the good of a larger community if you've got the drive and motivation to do it." And I think if they see [contemporary examples]...they'll start to understand that yeah, that really can happen in 2006 right now, not in a novel based in the 1940s in the South. (Interview 4, March 17, 2006)

To complement her sense of social justice, the LSOE's emphasis on focused inquiry offered Elizabeth multiple opportunities to reflect on her beliefs and related practices. As she remarked, "I have certainly become a more reflective person....BC's had a lot to do with that because [there's] constant reflection, either writing or meetings or group talks...they just push that so much" (Interview 6, August 10, 2006). Further considering the role inquiry could play in her teaching, just prior to student teaching Elizabeth discussed how she might use dialogue journals to enhance pupil achievement while enriching her relationships with pupils as well:

I hope to incorporate dialogue journals next semester for [pupils] to really tell me what they like and what they don't like and what's working. And hopefully...they'll know I'm sensitive to their different needs, and it will help me figure out who's really struggling and who's not. (Interview 3, January 9, 2006)

In line with LSOE ideals, Elizabeth also embraced a commitment to meeting the needs of diverse learners. For instance, when asked to identify the skills and knowledge needed to be an effective educator for an assignment in her English methods course, Elizabeth wrote:

I need to incorporate a vast array of teaching techniques in my class as...everyone learns differently and it's necessary to incorporate visuals, auditory aids, text....I [also] need to be keen on the personal needs of my students—some may have more difficulty with phonics while others have this area mastered but have a difficult time with comprehension or picking out a central theme, identifying the tone, etc.



While student teaching, Elizabeth taught a literature unit aimed at enhancing pupils' writing ability and inductive thinking that she originally developed for a LSOE course. For that assignment, Elizabeth assessed how her pedagogical strategies aimed to meet the needs of diverse learners:

By asking students to produce both a visual and written presentation of their historical research within groups, they are given the option whether to work on the more artistic or more technical side of the final product. This opens up the possibility for those students who are English language learners and those who may not have strong writing abilities to show their creativity in another way while still being held accountable for gathering information their group needs to complete the assignment....[Further,] building bridges between a variety of subject matter seems like an effective way to target the interest of students, particularly those who tend not to have an interest in English but may have a passion for other subjects....The group work is [also] a good means of promoting social justice by encouraging collaborative efforts on the part of everyone to produce a good final product.

Having spent her pre-practicum in the same classroom and having gained a sense for pupils' interests and skills, when teaching the unit Elizabeth modified her lessons accordingly. As she remarked:

I developed that [unit] plan without knowing how it might even work on the students themselves. And so...I've added a lot more to it, and there's stuff that I didn't even use at all....[W]hen you get into the classroom, it's a whole other ballgame. (Interview 4, March 17, 2006)

Continuing with this train of thought, Elizabeth went on to endorse formative assessment further: "[Y]ou can't just prepare [a lesson] once, have them do it, and then not revisit it. You need to keep working at it" (Interview 4, March 17, 2006).

In fact, as she taught the unit and gained more insight into what students knew, she further modified her lessons. The culminating assessment for the unit, for example, asked pupils to "identify a question in the novel [*A Lesson Before Dying*] that addresses a real life issue . . . [and] two literary elements the author uses to explore that theme, and then show how the two [literary] devices come together to answer the question" (Interview 5, June 1, 2006). To prepare her pupils, Elizabeth taught a lesson on literary devices—including characterization, tone, and point of view—after which pupils identified examples of each strategy in the novel. As pupils presented their ideas, Elizabeth

compiled a list of their answers. In so doing, she assessed how well pupils understood the literary devices and created a reference sheet to aid pupils when selecting literary devices for the final essay. Here, assessment offered a means to enhance pupil learning, as they had opportunities to learn from one another and Elizabeth's teaching, as she now had a better sense for what pupils knew.

After completing the lesson, Elizabeth experienced a dilemma and a related sense of disequilibrium: She realized her pupils did not fully grasp certain literary elements. Feeling a need to address this concern, Elizabeth developed an additional lesson to help her pupils understand how various literary devices can operate in a novel. In that class, Elizabeth posted questions on chart paper around the room, all related to the final essay: What character changed the most thus far? What is the central theme of the book? What lessons have we learned from each character? Why are we reading this book? In small groups pupils addressed each question and recorded their responses on chart paper. When finished, the class came together to discuss their ideas. To conclude, as Elizabeth explained, each group identified "one theme...you are taking away from the book and two lessons you learned" (Interview 5, June 1, 2006), topics directly linked to their final essays. Again, Elizabeth focused on pupil learning, utilizing her inquiry skills as a pedagogical strategy and source of insight for later instruction and thereby enacting a commitment to meeting the needs of diverse learners.

When implementing the unit, Elizabeth encountered a second dilemma. In her English methods course she reviewed pupil work that revealed the benefits of using multiple drafts to teach writing. She noted, "By the [final draft], it was really unbelievable that it was the same student. The [essay] length increased....It flowed better" (Interview 3, January 9, 2006). After sharing this experience with her cooperating teacher, Elizabeth heard a different point of view: "That takes a long time," implying that the benefits might not be worth the additional effort. With no personal experience to draw upon and respecting the opinion of both her professor and cooperating teacher, Elizabeth was unsure what to do. After assessing the two points of view, she assigned multiple drafts, believing it would generate the richest writing and best serve pupil needs.

That Elizabeth used formative assessment extensively accorded with what she experienced in some LSOE courses. As she explained in an interview, two LSOE professors regularly sought student feedback and thereby modeled the value of formative assessment. The lesson seems not to have been lost on Elizabeth:

It was very clear they wanted to hear what we had to say. They listened to us and that was very important. They seemed to be learning just as much as we seemed to be learning from them, which is something that I think I'm doing in the classroom right now....They definitely listened, and they definitely were able to read their class and respond appropriately to what we needed. (Interview 3, January 9, 2006)

In her year long school placement, Elizabeth's cooperating teacher further nurtured her development in ways that aligned with LSOE themes. Though her cooperating teacher considered herself an "old school teacher" who stressed classroom management, Elizabeth appreciated her advice. As she recalled, this mentor regularly reminded Elizabeth of the importance of formative assessment: "Make sure, whatever you do with them in class, that they are responsible for a final product....[O]therwise you really won't know if they're getting it" (Interview 2, November 18, 2005). Reinforcing the LSOE's commitment to educating diverse learners, she told Elizabeth: "Every student has the ability to learn and to think....I believe that wholeheartedly. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here" (Interview 2, November 18, 2005).

Elizabeth began the LSOE program with a commitment to social justice centered on enhancing pupil achievement that was further nurtured in the program. To realize this end and despite teaching in a challenging context, she drew on her ability to assess pupil learning, derive implications for instruction from what she learned, and teach in ways that met the needs of diverse pupils, in essence, interweaving inquiry, formative assessment, and social justice. LSOE faculty and her cooperating teacher worked in relative concert to support her growth and development, drawing on similar values to do so. In this overall dynamic, pupil learning played a central role.

After completing the M.Ed. program, Elizabeth accepted a full-time English position where she student taught. She has taught there 3 years and has no plans to leave. She has continued to pursue various professional development opportunities, and, though relatively young, she has assumed a leadership role at her school, advocating for policies and practices aimed at ensuring all students are held to consistently high standards.

*Sonia: "I can't just give up when something is hard to do or if it didn't work out."* Sonia did her pre-practicum and student taught with the same fourth grade teacher in a low-income, urban public school that enrolled many ELL students of color. She had an impressive educational background before enrolling in the LSOE. Both her parents are educators. She attended school in Mexico, France, and the United States. A Latina, she is multilingual. During

her summers she taught swimming. While in college, she tutored migrant workers and served as a bilingual aide in a dual-language, immersion school. After college, she worked as a research associate for a federally-funded math and science collaborative. As she wrote in an “autobiography of learning” she created for a LSOE course, this experience notably influenced her thinking:

It was this year...that I began to develop a true sense of education as a means towards social justice. This began to be clear to me as I...[saw] first-hand how unjust certain life situations can be, and how education can provide a way to better oneself and one’s community.

Drawing on her varied experiences, in her first interview Sonia defined what “teaching for social justice” meant for her: “Giving the same [educational] opportunities to everyone....I’m never going to have low expectations of [English language learners] just because they are from a low socioeconomic background or because they speak Spanish” (Interview 1, September 9, 2005). In a later interview she reiterated her stance: “[T]aking as a norm that your students, no matter who they are or where they come from, can learn” (Interview 3, January 17, 2006). Recalling her student teaching, for Sonia, social justice also entailed treating students equally in routine classroom interactions:

As far as [social] justice in our classroom and fairness, that’s something you always want to keep in mind. When I’m up there, I’m thinking, “Am I calling on the same student? Have I called on the shy student?” So it’s something I think I’m aware of and you have to constantly keep working on: “Am I paying attention to all the students equally, or do I have favorites?” (Interview 4, March 27, 2006)

As with Elizabeth, for Sonia, enacting social justice included meeting the needs of diverse learners, “provid[ing] a range of opportunities and experiences [appropriate] to the level of all students...differentiating instruction or providing the supports needed” (Interview 5, June 18, 2006). Expanding on this belief in her inquiry project, Sonia acknowledged her responsibility for promoting pupil learning:

All students are capable of [higher-order thinking]....It is simply that everyone does so in different ways. It takes longer for some, while others understand quickly. Some may need to see an explanation, while some may need to hear it; and yet others will need to touch it, manipulate it, sing it, or create it. Most of us, however, will need to do a couple of these things before we come to a

better understanding of any concept....[I]t is my responsibility to provide these different avenues through which my students can arrive at the “aha” moments. (Interview 6, October 7, 2006)

Beyond improving individual lives, Sonia viewed “teaching as a way [to promote] social justice, social change. It’s how you better humanity in many ways....[S]chool should be a positive place, where [pupils] better themselves as people and hopefully go out and better their communities” (Interview 6, October 7, 2006). To enrich her teaching, Sonia often relied on her inquiry skills to gauge pupil learning and interest. As she explained, “[Y]ou have to....listen for [pupils’] understanding, first of all, for what you’re teaching. But [also] listen for their interests or for their ideas . . . to guide your teaching” (Interview 2, December 12, 2005). She continued:

[For] all the activities I think of, I think of my students: Is it relevant to them? Is it going to be meaningful to them? Is it going to be exciting for them to learn about this? So it’s always the starting point when I think of developing any lesson. (Interview 2, December 12, 2005)

In a paper written for the Teaching Language Arts course, Sonia restated her commitment to formative assessment: “I think my students will be the most important source of information and feedback for me as a teacher to revise and continually improve my teaching.” In line with this belief, Sonia recalled a lesson on hurricanes she taught in her pre-practicum, noting how the lesson “began out of students’ questions and curiosity”:

[W]e talked a lot about that in my science [methods course], how the best lessons will come out of students’ questions because they’re already interested in learning about it. So it’s just a matter of feeding their interests. And they’ll [be like] sponges. They’ll absorb all this information. They’ll get excited about it.... It’s good when you take their natural curiosities and you foster them. (Interview 2, December 12, 2005)

For an assignment entitled, “learning from students,” Sonia interviewed two students to assess how they conceptualized historical knowledge and what it meant for her as a teacher. She wrote:

[T]he sources of information students drew upon [to explain historical phenomena] were their home/family experiences and pop culture....It seems then that a powerful implication for my own teaching practice is finding ways to

continually link my instruction to home and family experiences and to the pop culture...Another idea [students offered]...is having many visuals—graphic organizers, maps, terms and definitions, etc. up on the classroom walls.

Building on these experiences, for her inquiry project Sonia focused on better understanding her pupils by addressing the following questions: “How does communicating through dialogue journals improve my knowledge of students? In turn, how does it affect my teaching practice, and ultimately, student learning?” In her paper, Sonia described a dilemma that arose and led to her feeling she “needed to do a better job getting to know my students”:

During my second observation and conference with my supervisor I found myself unable to answer the more detailed and significant questions about my students’ behaviors, learning styles, and home situations. This came as a shock to me, since I considered myself a caring teacher who knew her students well. It was apparent to me that I had to know more about my students....Thus, dialogue journals for me had the potential to become not only a strategy that could improve my student’s writing and language development, but also a way through which I could get to know my students on a deeper level.

Sonia went on to describe how the project informed her teaching:

The dialogue journals were particularly valuable as tools for informal and ongoing assessment for students’ writing skills, language proficiency, and content areas. For example, in my field notes...I noted: “In Nancy’s dialogue journal, she misused a period and had many sentence fragments”....That same day I took note of two other students’ common problems: “Maria—easily confuses homophones; Tomas—atrocious spelling!” These notes informed my instruction and provided ideas for mini-lessons based on student needs.

Consistent with her views on social justice and inquiry-into-practice, while student teaching Sonia used formative assessment to promote high expectations for her pupils. In one instance, after several class discussions centered on books the class had read, Sonia felt a need for change, a sense of disequilibrium about her teaching. She realized her pupils “weren’t very good at supporting their opinions with evidence” and were often rude to one another during such lessons. She also felt they read many “childish” books. Hoping to address all three concerns, Sonia instituted “shared inquiry.” This literacy practice, promoted by the Junior Great Books Program, asks pupils to discuss a common reading and use evidence from the reading to support



their thinking. In the process, all pupils should participate and respect one another's opinions. To set a foundation for the shared inquiry lesson, pupils completed a reading and addressed lower-order questions about story plot. Building on this understanding, the next day the class discussed a series of questions that asked them to compare, infer, and evaluate. They included: "Have you ever given away something very valuable? How did you feel?" "Based on how [the character] has acted so far, what have we learned about the lady?" And, "Why did [one character] feel lighter as she gave away her possessions?" After the discussion, pupils wrote an essay describing what they learned. In retrospect, though Sonia felt pupils needed more practice supporting their ideas with evidence, she was generally satisfied: "[T]he kids really got into the story. And I was pleased to see them into it because sometimes the Making Meaning<sup>4</sup> stories we read are good but [they're] picture books" (Interview 5, June 18, 2006), implying that the readings were not demanding. She also came away with ideas for next year, when she had her own classroom:

I think [shared inquiry] can mix well with Making Meaning because Making Meaning is about inferencing and...they add a lot about values....[T]hey have discussion prompts that are very similar to the way you're supposed to discuss a shared inquiry....I think I'll try to...use good books that will make them think and set up the curriculum so they...discuss interpretive questions. (Interview 5, June 18, 2006)

In a math lesson, Sonia used formative assessment to gain a sense for her pupils' skill with inductive analysis and their ability to represent mathematical concepts in written form, in this case, fractions. For the activity, entitled "Guess My Rule," pupil groups identified secret rules and created graphs that detailed which and how many class members did and did not fit the rule. Other pupils guessed the implicit rules, which included, "Students who speak more than one language," "People who are wearing sneakers," and "People who have on something pink." Aiming to help all pupils, Sonia grouped them heterogeneously, so those more capable could assist others. After completing their studies, pupils wrote up their findings, using fractions to represent what portion of the class did and did not fit the rule. Reflecting on what she learned from analyzing pupil work, Sonia observed:

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4 Making Meaning is a literacy program Sonia's school adopted.



I have to help them through and scaffold a little more...the language you use and the way you [use] fractions to describe people....[T]hey just needed...help with integrating their language to describe the class in fractions....[A]s far as the mathematical concepts, I think that was clear to them. (Interview 5, June 18, 2006)

In both lessons Sonia promoted higher-order thinking and expected all pupils to learn, adopting instructional strategies—shared inquiry and heterogeneous grouping—with both goals in mind. To monitor progress and inform subsequent planning, she focused on pupil learning. As such, pupil learning was central to enacting social justice.

At times, Sonia's lessons did not work as planned and she experienced a sense of disequilibrium, wondering what she might do differently. In one case, she designed a "really ambitious" reader's theater that required pupils to organize independently and assume specific roles in presenting a reading to the class. Given the public nature of this assessment, pupil learning—or in this case, a lack thereof—was readily apparent. Sonia reacted by maintaining a commitment to pupil achievement: "I can't just give up when something is hard to do, or if it didn't work out" (Interview 5, June 18, 2006). Taking ownership of this dilemma, during her planning time the next day she kept some pupils in from recess and had them present their reader's theater again. For her, the logic was simple: "[I]f they're not meeting the objectives, they're not learning" (Interview 5, June 18, 2006). Though disappointed with the lesson, Sonia considered the experience beneficial: "I think you learn a lot more from bad lessons. Or I guess it just sticks with you a lot more because [these] would be mistakes you made....which is okay because that's what you're going to try and improve" (Interview 5, June 18, 2006).

Hoping to manage classroom interactions better, at one point Sonia used stickers as rewards for "good behavior," rather than "always yelling and pointing out bad behavior." This included having pupils "nominate classmates whenever they made a good choice." Here, too, Sonia encountered difficulty. Shortly after the policy was implemented, some pupils conspired with one another, saying, "You nominate me, and I'll nominate you." Others considered the system unfair. As one girl told Sonia, "Kids are making good choices just because of the stickers, and that's not right....It's not fair" (Interview 4, March 27, 2006). After sampling pupil opinions, Sonia and her cooperating teacher decided "not to have stickers, to just remind [pupils] throughout the week to make good choices and then have a Friday meeting where they would review their behavior, think about their choices" (Interview 4, March 27, 2006).

In these two instances, Sonia encountered dilemmas and some associated disequilibrium: How to respond to poor pupil performance and how to motivate pupils to take responsibility for their learning? They arose in part because she was attentive to what pupils were learning, even though the sticker experience involved no formal lesson. While Sonia experienced a sense of disequilibrium at first, in both cases she took ownership of the dilemma, drawing on what she learned from pupils to inform her consequent actions.

As with Elizabeth, Sonia's relationship with her cooperating teacher was beneficial, in part because she completed both her pre-practicum and student teaching in her classroom. Discussing her cooperating teacher's "strengths as a teacher" Sonia observed:

[S]he really believes in her students. I don't think she thinks any of her students can't do [substantive work]. She really cares about her students and wants them to succeed....And she knows she has to differentiate teaching and learning. So she knows she has to teach in different ways for her students, the ELL students....I think she believes all children can learn. (Interview 2, December 12, 2005)

Sonia also appreciated her cooperating teacher's use of formative assessment:

[S]he's good at monitoring comprehension and understanding in her students. She observes them a lot. She'll jot down notes on who's doing well and who's not, who's understanding and who's not. . . . And there was always some way for them to be accountable. Even in math, sometimes they had to write down their strategies on the board or record their thinking in some way. (Interview 2, December 12, 2005)

In these ways, Sonia's cooperating teacher modeled practices and beliefs that aligned with LSOE themes, and thereby reinforced their value for classroom teaching.

After student teaching Sonia accepted a position teaching second grade in a bilingual school that serves many low-income students of color. She has taught there for the past 3 years and has been active in professional development, taking both district-sponsored and university-based math courses. She also helped redesign her school's social studies curriculum to include integrated themes and culturally relevant topics.

### *Distancing*

A final point about Elizabeth and Sonia requires mention. Despite the attention given to social justice and inquiry, in explaining pupil performance, at times these teacher candidates attributed success and failure largely to individual pupil characteristics, not to their teaching, thereby “distancing” themselves somewhat from responsibility for pupil achievement (Nuthall, 2004). For instance, saying little about her instruction, Elizabeth linked one pupil’s underachievement to her lack of effort: “She failed at least two terms because she doesn’t do the work...which is so frustrating because she’s so smart, and she knows it. She’s like, ‘Yeah, I deserve the F’” (Interview 5, June 1, 2006). In similar fashion, Sonia described one pupil’s performance on a math assignment in terms of his personal skills and inclinations:

Sometimes [Raul] is not the best student. He doesn’t push himself as much. But he’s quick. He’s bright. And so he got this [lesson] in one day....[T]hings come easy to him....I think he wasn’t very motivated to do this [at first]. (Interview 5, June 18, 2006)

For both teacher candidates, rather than connecting pupil underachievement with aspects of their teaching, they alluded to their pupils’ personal attributes. By drawing on such explanations, to some degree, Elizabeth and Sonia could resolve personal responsibility for these outcomes, as they attributed pupil performance largely to individual characteristics, not their instruction, though such reactions were far from typical for either teacher candidate. In such instances teachers lose the opportunity to reflect and gain insight into their own teaching and their pupils’ learning. When teachers experience disequilibrium and take ownership, they promote social justice through a sense of solidarity with their pupils, gaining important insight into their teaching. This parallels the Jesuit ideal of promoting social justice through “personal involvement” (Kolvenbach, 2000, p. 8). When teachers become involved with their pupils’ struggle to master concepts, teachers experience the “catalyst for solidarity which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection” (p. 8).

### **Discussion**

Belief systems influence what people do. They do not determine behavior; neither are they predictive. But they shape actions into patterns and trends by helping to define the logical, the desirable, and the possible. The LSOE promoted an explicit system of values and beliefs and, one particular value,

the need to attend to pupil learning, was key to program dynamics. Faculty linked pupil learning to social justice: Teachers should aim to meet the needs of diverse learners; anything else was unjust. Pupil learning was a topic of classroom discussion and a focus of school-based inquiry. When formative assessments reveal that some pupils were not learning, teacher candidates might experience a sense of disequilibrium and modify their teaching. Consider, for instance, how Elizabeth reacted to her pupils' inability to analyze literary themes and Sonia's effort to get pupils to support their opinions with evidence. In both cases, teacher candidates linked formative assessment of pupil learning with an ethical commitment to teach for social justice. That is, when aspects of pupil learning seemed problematic, they initiated changes in practice aimed at addressing those concerns, in part because of their overall commitment to meeting the needs of diverse learners. Consistent with their commitment to holding all pupils to high expectations, the subsequent lessons required higher-order thinking and integrated varied teaching strategies. In essence, program dynamics—the interplay among pupil learning, inquiry-into-practice, and a commitment to meeting the needs of diverse learners as means to enact social justice—constituted a coherent and self-reinforcing system of cultural values and practices that worked in concert to motivate teacher candidates to act when they encountered dilemmas in their teaching while helping them gain insight for what to do by attending to pupil learning, all of which intertwined in ways that seemed likely to enrich pupil achievement.

In certain respects the dilemmas experienced by Elizabeth and Sonia accord with the research of Nadler (1993) who studied disequilibrium in the context of "adventure" activities that push participants beyond normal expectations. For Nadler, change linked to disequilibrium emerges from "a psychological tension or pressure that each individual attempts to lessen.... In attempting to reduce this tension, individuals often try a new behavior or change an attitude or belief....[They] do something different or unique" (p. 62). This aligns with the Jesuit call to promote justice; Saint Ignatius committed the Jesuits to more than mere acts of love, but deeds as well: "Fostering the virtue of justice in people was not enough. Only substantive justice can bring about the kinds of structural and attitudinal changes needed to uproot those sinful oppressive injustices that are a scandal against humanity and God" (Kolvenbach, 2000, p. 4). Promoting social justice, therefore, "requires an action-oriented commitment" (p. 4), living in solidarity with those who are victims of injustice and thereby learning through "contact" rather than "concepts." For Elizabeth and Sonia, their sense of disequilibrium emerged from their direct experiences assessing pupil learning and related commitment to social justice.

In this analysis, we are not suggesting that LSOE strategies and structures inevitably promote the outcomes described in these case studies or in the surveys. As noted, in many respects Elizabeth and Sonia were exemplary teacher candidates. Nonetheless, we sought to describe how aspects of the program complemented these teacher candidates' skills and inclinations in ways that promoted positive outcomes in challenging school contexts—triangulating varied data sources to reveal a “plausible” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and “trustworthy” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) logic to the beliefs and practices promoted by the LSOE and the outcomes experienced by Elizabeth and Sonia. We are not claiming causality, but it happened, and we believe the experiences of these teacher candidates offer practical lessons for the field of teacher education.

### Implications for Practice

For schools of education in Catholic colleges and universities, the implications of this study are considerable. First, they would be naïve not to prepare graduates for public school classrooms as well as Catholic schools. There simply are too few Catholic schools to employ all of their graduates. In doing so, Catholic institutions cannot ignore the culture of accountability that now permeates public schools in the United States. That said, as the case studies reveal, the Catholic school approach to assessment offers a caring and just alternative to the narrow, inflexible approach characteristic of many NCLB-inspired assessment strategies. With pupil learning as its foundation and drawing on an inquiry-into-practice stance coupled with a commitment to meeting the needs of diverse learners, graduates of Catholic institutions could be ideally positioned to help U.S. schools—public, private, and parochial—promote social justice for all pupils while maintaining the essential characteristics of Catholic universities set forth in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* of inspiring a Christian community, “includ[ing] the moral, spiritual and religious dimension in its research” (John Paul II, 1990, n.7), fidelity to the Christian message, and commitment to serving the Church and society.

Moreover, for both teacher candidates the LSOE's emphasis on social justice and pupil learning seemed a source of valuable insight. In some instances, attending to pupil performance allowed them to assess their teaching effectiveness. At other times, focused reflection exposed pupils' needs and interests. Perhaps most significantly, when teacher candidates examined pupil learning and consequently experienced a sense of disequilibrium, they consistently, though not always, did something different. All of these mutually reinforcing and desirable outcomes linked to social justice derive from making pupil learning central to program philosophy and practices.



Critically examining pupil learning also reveals that ethical and moral issues pervade the work of teacher candidates. If some pupils fail to learn, it undermines both their life chances and our democratic government. Thus, pupil learning is key to social justice and inheres in the everyday aspects of classroom life, in every lesson that is taught. Schools of education should, therefore, explicitly help teacher candidates consider how ethical issues routinely arise in the classroom and intertwine with issues of pedagogy and curriculum. If teacher candidates never explore the moral dimensions of their work, how will they recognize, let alone resolve, the inevitable dilemmas that arise in the course of everyday teaching? Catholic institutions of higher education seem especially well positioned to provide teacher candidates with opportunities to develop habits of critical inquiry by drawing upon Catholic traditions and teachings, as BC has in embracing the Jesuit tradition of promoting social justice. Indeed, in both case studies the teacher candidates' sense of social justice provided a critical source of motivation for the actions of these exemplary educators.

Thus, to promote disequilibrium in a nurturing, supportive context, teacher education programs should help students confront the ethical dimensions of teaching by equipping them with the support and skills needed to recognize a problem and enact appropriate change. While student teaching, Elizabeth and Sonia regularly encountered dilemmas and disequilibrium, generated largely by their attention to pupil learning and related commitments to social justice. And as their experiences suggest, with the proper support, pedagogical skills, and philosophical disposition, the inevitable challenges that arise in the course of teaching can serve as a source of growth, insight, and learning.

While we applaud the efforts of Elizabeth and Sonia, future research should focus on teacher candidates who arrive at BC with limited commitment to and unformulated understandings of social justice. Elizabeth and Sonia offered case studies that illuminate how our survey findings regarding the commitment of LSOE teacher candidates to promoting social justice could influence classroom practice. However, not all teacher candidates shared a comparable commitment to social justice. The LSOE should, therefore, explore whether the teacher education program is genuinely transformative for those less inclined toward social justice. Do their views of teaching for social justice parallel those of Elizabeth and Sonia, or does social justice remain a matter of little concern for them?

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