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During its 50-year history, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) has witnessed both the development and subsequent demise of innovations in leadership preparation programs. Its relatively brief history also suggests that when new management strategies or instructional innovations, e.g., cohort instructional models, appear, we embrace them with enthusiasm, relying almost exclusively on anecdotal reports for determining program success.[2] Deeply embedded in such "groupthink" are assumptions that with each new iteration we automatically refine our theories and in the process, extend our capacity for critique, and thus substantiate assertions about what works and what doesn't.[3,4] Multiple scholars, including McCarthy and Murphy, have attributed this phenomenon, in part, to the fact that educational leadership preparation lacks a knowledge base defining a "commonly accepted, specialized body of knowledge that involves intensive, often lengthy academic preparation."[5] By simply accepting as effective that which is current or popular rather than institutionalizing our reliance on systematically gathered empirical evidence Malen posited: "...many professors believe their instructional practices and structures are *innovative*; however, these approaches may actually represent *prevalent* practices, which have become generally accepted within the field...Cohorts are one such example. Mentoring for novice and aspiring principals...is another practice dominating the profession."[6]

Others have claimed that what we describe as the "the wisdom of the field" represents little more than our current theories-in-use or descriptions of our existing practices.[7] English extended this criticism by pointing out how the accreditation processes proffered by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the National Policy Board of Educational Administration (NPBEA), the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC), and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) perpetuate the belief that our current assessment efforts automatically translate into self-correcting cycles of ongoing program improvement. Miskel

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characterized the proliferation of these assumptions as "rationalized myths," pointing out that standards and accreditation hardly guarantee students' acquisition of the knowledge, skills, or dispositions for becoming effective school leaders.[8] Further, Stakenas claimed that reform strategies amount to little more than the renaming of existing courses rather than reorganizing or restructuring existing preparation programs.[9] In addition, Schmoker contended that such superficial tinkering results in programs that cannot support their claims for student learning.[10]

Purpose of the Study

One contemporary strategy for reform, professional learning communities, encourages aspiring school leaders to develop sufficient leadership expertise to support effective classroom instruction while, at the same time, facilitating individual and complex organizational transformation across numerous stakeholder constituencies. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom consider effective leadership to include visioning, building capacity, and improving the conditions of the organization.[11] Advocating for parallel district policies that provide critical support to teachers, administrators, and students, they claim that effective student learning requires both focused instructional leadership and a supportive professional community environment. Leadership then becomes the catalyst in implementing and institutionalizing coherent change.

In this article, we examine the prerequisites for leadership preparation programs with regard to implementing and institutionalizing professional learning communities as an instructional strategy. First, we posit that as faculty we must examine and reflect on our own teaching practices and how they influence our reciprocal relationships with students. Second, we argue that capacity for individual and collective student voice must be developed, invited, and applauded in preparation programs. Finally, we suggest that students' newly mastered competencies must be institutionalized as part of an ongoing and systematic analysis of our teaching practices.

The opportunity to study students' reaction to a collaborative learning community environment arose from the unexpected lower-than-normal enrollment in two required core courses in a traditional leadership preparation program. In order to provide students access to the required courses, two sections totaling 24 students were combined into a single large section. After late registration, the course enrollment soared to 38 students. Although the department typically did not allow class size to exceed 25 students, that semester, two senior faculty members were experimenting with coteaching a research class enrolling a similar number of students. By engaging in a coteaching model, the two faculty intended to modify instruction in a way that would meet the diverse learning needs of the large group. This seemed like a reasonable option as the program prepared to undergo revisions to align program offerings with new licensure requirements. It was relatively easy then to construct an argument for a second large group instructional effort. A critical difference, however, was that our class would employ small learning communities as the core instructional strategy rather than the more traditional instructional lecture strategy planned for the other course.

Literature Review: The Current Challenge and Implementation of Innovation

Demands for increased accountability can be found throughout every facet of school operations, leaving schools scrambling for ways to demonstrate improved student performance. At the same time,

schools must invent and provide structures, including contracts and policies, that support meaningful transformation. One such structure emerges out of Dewey's vision of schools as learning communities,[12] with similar notions of schools as centers of inquiry[13] learning academies,[14] and learning enriched environments.[15] In practice, the concept of schools as learning communities suggests that learners and their learning are reflected in the core technology of schools–teaching and learning.

In learning communities, instruction moves from a transmission or banking model of instruction[16] to a constructivist orientation where teachers establish appropriate learning conditions rather than simply communicate the knowledge embodied in our mental models,[17] resulting in a shift to student as learner, thinker, and doer with teachers and administrators modeling identical efforts. Underpinning constructivist pedagogy is the belief that students who assume responsibility for their own learning can master and make better sense of the world with their motivation for learning moving from the extrinsic to intrinsic.[18] Such learning communities assume high levels of program coherence where curriculum, instruction and technology inform the assessment and evaluation process,[19] and thus become a lens for organizing learning experiences.[20] With learning goals solidly grounded in the research and the profession's multiple knowledge bases,[21] thematically-based programming is facilitated by both practitioners and their various partners in learning.[22] These integrated and complementary strategies facilitate integration of program elements, allowing assessment efforts to be compared against a coherent vision of what ought to be, and contribute to the building of individual and group capacity.[23]

Leadership for schools constructed around collaborative efforts requires distributed leadership rather than top-down management models that demand compliance rather than develop commitment to goals that celebrate "the dignity and worth of self and others; that fosters the empowerment of both, and that encourages and support the maximum development of human potential for the benefit of the common good."[24] A second tenet underpinning learning communities is an ongoing practice of reflective decision-making relying on mastery of subject matter and pedagogy; orientation toward regular use of informed inquiry; ongoing across-the-board assessment; openness to diverse views and critique; and a firm commitment to lifelong learning.[25] Consistent with the hard work required for continuous improvement, reflective practice also underlies collaboration through double-loop learning and expands our understanding of community.[26] Unhindered by a school's physical boundaries, expanded learning communities include parents, families, and community members, making the expansion of the critical nature of the academic, social, personal, and social justice functions of schooling possible.[27]

Joyce acknowledged multiple shortcomings in current professional development initiatives.[28] Developing the collaborative inquiry required for professional learning communities requires a certain mastery of implementation skills. With strategic planning, team teaching, the middle school movement, and whole school reform programs falling short of expectations for transforming the learning environment, Joyce reiterated that teachers sit at the center of reform and require ongoing assistance "concentrating on one high-quality strand at a time, with the content a part of a curriculum or a teaching strategy that will enhance the learning of the students...Connection to the knowledge base is very important."[29] He concluded with the assertion that ultimately schools must reflect on purpose and

process. Stated another way, what is most important is how schools systematically study data gleaned from the improvement process and apply that knowledge to improving student learning.

Additionally, opportunities to make sense of program innovations are key to implementation. Attempts to shortcut this process may result in the premature and false clarity described by Fullan and the untimely demise of reasonable strategies for preparing school leaders.[30] If Cuban was correct about our penchant for reform,[31] and if Achilles' argument about implementation rings true,[32] then perhaps Doolittle and Barnett were correct in their suspicion that persistence in confronting and struggling with the uncomfortable and messy issues involved in the implementation process may be reasonable predictors of future program success.[33]

Method

Our first major problem surfaced as we sought suitable classroom space for 38 students and 3 instructors. Adequate classroom space was practically nonexistent in the aging 1970s building, and other suitable instructional areas throughout the campus had long been committed to other courses. Although more appropriate learning space was made available off campus, moving the location of the class was not approved. Fortunately, our knowledgeable department secretary persuaded another department to open their social sciences laboratory for our class. Happy to secure a room large enough to accommodate the entire group and excited that the classroom offered tables and chairs rather than the usual supply of clumsy college classroom desks, we realized that its size and organization would still constrain the small group instruction we intended for collaborative learning.

As course instructors, we were concerned about our ability to facilitate expected student-learning outcomes without a little more time to consider other instructional strategies. Further, in order to manage the number of students, provide adequate support to the small groups, and find time to address the learning needs of the diverse learners enrolled in the course, a doctoral research assistant was recruited to support the learning process. Beginning to help organize students into small learning communities of six to eight self-selected individuals, the assistant established as his priority to meet with students, individually and in small groups, during and outside of our regularly scheduled class time. Determining through individual and small group conversations that course participants lacked mastery in the writing process, it was soon clear to us that they also lacked the core content knowledge and skills outlined in the Interstate School ISLLC standards. Overall, course participants barely reflected entry level knowledge and expertise.

In a quick reassessment of our original course goals, we agreed that students would need to complete all course requirements in order to demonstrate the learning outcomes outlined in the syllabus. Nevertheless, we did elect to negotiate with the students to modify some assignments to increase efficiency. Course requirements originally included a 20 page organizational analysis, a book review, a small group oral presentation, and a ten minute presentation of a leadership platform. After some discussion, we shortened the requirement for organizational analysis by several pages and limited platform presentations to eight rather than ten minutes.

One assignment that remained unchanged, however, was the requirement that all students submit at semester's end a four to six page learning reflection. The assignment asked students to consider what they had learned and how they were applying this knowledge

to their current professional practice. Students were also assured that the assignment would not be calculated as part of their final course grade. Moreover, in an effort to model a safe learning environment, we advised the class that we would not read these reflections until after course grades were recorded. We were confident that we would receive honest and candid responses from students about the nature of their learning experiences. In fact, during the past three years, all department members had adopted this innovation.

Initially, the purpose of examining students' course evaluations was to provide an additional set of student-generated feedback to the department as they updated the existing leadership program. With the state's recent adoption of the ISLLC Standards for leadership preparation programs, we anticipated that our program was going to require substantial revision in order to receive reaccreditation. Learning reflections were also selected for analysis because we believed that they operationalized the constructivist philosophy underpinning our own instructional leadership beliefs. Typically, this assignment provided us with rich insights about how students acquired mastery of course content and applied competencies in their professional practice. Second, although we acknowledge that this assignment might represent another round of self-reported anecdotal data, the fact that data were collected from students by a majority of faculty during the past four years attested to its value. Moreover, the stipulation that the learning reflections were ungraded and were not read until after course grades have been submitted consistently produced richer and more meaningful data than the traditional course evaluation process required by the department and the college. Most faculty in the department had come to recognize that this particular heuristic encouraged students to offer authentic feedback and to engage in metacognitive strategies about their learning experiences without fear of affecting their grade.

Data analysis paralleled course rubrics and the process of systematic inquiry. All data were coded using the open and axial techniques developed by Glaser and Strauss and grouped into themes.[34] Themes were subsequently organized into major categories for further analysis. Selective coding was accomplished after faculty reviewed data pointing to practices for improving the instructional process in a large group instructional format.

Findings

We believe that our original goal of implementing a learning community environment in a traditional leadership preparation program was successful for several reasons. First, students indicated that the learning community model provided a safe learning environment with a high level of trust established among learners. One student remarked:

> The fact that the professors allowed freedom to express feelings and situations in a trusting atmosphere definitely altered the environment.

Another student wrote:

> I was absolutely amazed to see how some people opened up and shared personal experiences with the class.

For several students, the coteaching effort provided an important role model and bridge between students and the instructional team. Indicating that a majority of the instruction they received in the traditional preparation program left them bored and disengaged, they described themselves as "passive learners".

A recurring theme in the data was how our modeling active listening contributed to their membership in the class learning community. One individual indicated:

> The most important thing...was to always listen to others... [and] make sure that people feel and know that they've been listened to.

Understanding that relationships are the building blocks of a learning community and that dialogic communication functions as a key mechanism fostering relationships, they expressed increased understanding of the collaborative learning process:

> It was an amazing combination of qualities. Each one of us did our part within our learning community, and it made us strong.

Constructivist theory emphasizes the value and importance of student voice during the learning process. As we continued to analyze the data, it became apparent that the learning reflections provided evidence that students themselves were learning to value voice within the learning community. One student stated:

> I learned that if I relaxed and really listened and observed my group members, our sessions together went better... and getting everyone's opinion often led us to a new place.

Second, the course format promoted students' discovering and exercising voice in the learning process and highlighted the importance of our listening to each student as a prerequisite for engaging them in the learning process. We discovered early in the semester that for some students this course was intimidating simply because it was their first graduate experience. Several students shared their feeling of being surprised and somewhat unnerved to discover that the course deviated significantly from the traditional educational setting they had come to expect during their undergraduate programs. Another group of students expressed their reservations about the learning community format:

> I am used to writing papers and reporting data. I have worked many times in groups, and usually it is an unpleasant experience....

Finally, several students expressed surprise as they considered the learning outcomes expectations listed in the syllabus. To them, acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and performances associated with the ISLLC standards seemed virtually impossible to understand, much less master in the absence of traditional classroom strategies.

Predictably, most students assumed that the course structure would incorporate a hierarchical relationship between student and instructor following a teacher-as-knowledge dispenser model of instruction. Not anticipating opportunities for student dialogue, one individual noted:

> This class offered a certain freedom that I had never experienced in a class. Students were welcome to express their opinions and engage in the class. At times, it almost seemed like a large group of friends had gotten together to express their concerns or troubles about work.

Another student stated:

> What I will always remember about this class is the way the class was taught. We learned a lot more by teaching ourselves, and one another, than we could have by listening to someone lecture.

As we completed our analysis, the data provided ideas of strategies for improving instruction for large groups of students. Although some students complained about the classroom space, almost all reported mastery of course content and insights consistent with a disposition toward transformational leadership.[35] Preferring similar interactive environments for future learning, students expressed surprise about the amount of knowledge acquired during the semester. Explaining that they had initially expected to sit and learn without having to expend much time or energy, their learning reflections confirmed our belief that an enhanced understanding about their individual values and beliefs was a critical factor in helping them identify that they did, in fact, want to become school leaders. Students related how they looked forward to meeting with their small learning community each week. Finally, they described how multiple opportunities for clarifying course materials and objectives was helping to shape their current professional practice in spite of what we would describe as abysmal conditions in many local school districts.

Learning communities helped students work through the enormous content associated with the course and to work through what they described as ambiguity. Many of the student reflections echoed their initial reluctance to engage in the learning community process. In one learning reflection, a student noted:

> I was rethinking my decision to go back to school...on our first night of class.

Several students expressed frustration with the ambiguity of the instructions regarding the course assignments, particularly creation of learning communities. Students articulated their struggles in trying to develop effective learning communities:

> The members of our group worked very well together. This happened progressively over the course of the semester. The first time we met... I wouldn't say that the group gelled.... We were polite to each other and yet distant. We managed to move forward with our assignments, but initially working together seemed forced.

The learning community environment provided students with an opportunity to engage in the learning process in a new and challenging way. One student wrote:

> Through our interactions we were able to teach each other...Even when someone thought they were 100 percent right about something, there was always another way to look at the same problem. This experience was quite humbling.

Socialized to be passive learners, students expressed surprise at their success in completing the work and, more importantly, at the knowledge and skills that they acquired during the semester.

Equally critical to successfully engaging students were the tutoring sessions made available to all students. Offered by the graduate assistant, this led to our most important insight. A newly matriculated student stated this best when acknowledging appreciation for the support offered her:

> I was out of this class in body, mind, and spirit after one night. But, you cared enough to pull me back in.

Overall, we observed greater risk-taking among students expressed through increased and more extensive vocal class participation after consultations with the graduate assistant. For these students, the learning community, by itself, did not automatically constitute a safe environment for learning.

Individual conferences with the graduate assistant were characterized by his modeling active listening and unconditional positive regard for each student. With students indicating their insecurity about their knowledge of leadership theory, first, they were encouraged to discuss their understanding of the course material as it related to their practice, and then personal work experiences were used to analyze leadership theory and organizational structures. Dialogue with the graduate assistant centered on personal experiences and enabled students to explore their particular role within their organizations. Students were also encouraged to consider how the insights gleaned from their organizational analysis might contribute to local leadership and change initiatives.

Adding individualized support was necessary in order to fully engage them in our constructivist learning strategies. For example, one student shared:

> I was afraid that I was going to look foolish in front of the class because they are all teachers and have so many good ideas.

Citing the graduate assistant as non-threatening, students expressed a willingness to be more open or vulnerable with him. One student expressed relief that he was able to voice his concerns about diversity issues, and he later shared his views openly with the rest of the class. The initial reluctance of some students to be more public directed us to consider the notion that in order for students to participate fully and engage in the learning process faculty must encourage students; accept where individuals are as learners; and develop multiple strategies to engage them in the learning process. In short, our initial efforts to create a sense of safety fell short of the mark. Students still perceived the class environment as a potentially judgmental and, hence, threatening. We observed that the additional individualized assistance provided by our graduate assistant helped students gain the required sense of the self-efficacy so crucial for adult learning.

Our initial assertion that student participation was the cornerstone of our learning community strategy did produce active participation by most students. Actively engaging all students in a meaningful way, however, required them to make an overt personal investment and to be willing to be vulnerable in front of multiple audiences. Students were encouraged to discover new personal attributes and, at the same time, relate to course materials. Thus we were able to convey that success in this course transcended the mere acquisition of facts. One student put it this way: "Self-discovery had a place in leadership." Many of the students recalled personal growth experiences, and one student wrote:

> I think I have learned more about myself during this semester...I was challenged personally and forced to explore myself.

In addition, students shared that the emphasis on relationships within the learning community provided experiences that carried over into professional practice. One student revealed:

> All of a sudden I felt connected to everyone in my school... [and] I developed a great relationship with my new principal [by] talking to her....

Although we intentionally modeled unconditional positive regard for students' ability to learn and process the core content, the graduate assistant, emphasizing the instructor's shared belief in students' ability to master the work, was the key factor in students' reporting

feelings of increased support and safety. One student wrote in her learning reflection:

> I think it is wonderful that you are concerned with making sure all students are successful with each assignment.

Secondly, our approach motivated individual students through empathy, active listening, and content knowledge. One student reported:

> feel[ing] more at ease offering opinions within small "family like" discussion groups [that provided] opportunity to get to know the people in the class on a more personal level.

The challenges students faced in the learning community environment required a strong safety net to ensure that they felt comfortable. We were encouraged by the following comment:

> I asked for help, accepted it, and received it. I am grateful.

Because many students seemed uncertain about their ability, our subsequent reassurance was an important contribution to their recognizing potential future success as learners and leaders. One student put it this way:

> You sent courage, compassion, strength, and helped my way.

The modeling of unconditional support that carried over into learning community groups was valued by some students who indicated:

> Class size was much less of a threat as soon as we became ISLLC [group] #1.

One student wrote that the support received from group members served as a "strong tool" that made success possible. Students' fears diminished as they:

> ...had the opportunity to meet many different people who have shared similar situations and struggles [they] have experienced.

This benefit was expressed by a student who acknowledged:

> Peers in the class and the professors have helped me sort out many things that have confused and frustrated me in the past.

Discussion: Implications for Practice

As an instructional team, we were confident about the potential benefits to be derived from enacting a learning community despite the obvious enrollment management issues. Of course, we were a bit intimidated by the large number of students and incompatible classroom structure. Yet we anticipated that our intentional trust building, extensive strategies for communication, and efforts aimed at creating space for multiple layers of collaboration would successfully facilitate a collaborative learning experience for all our students. On a regular basis, we reminded one another of the value in modeling skillful participation, and we intentionally engaged in practices including asking the kinds of probing questions that we hoped would promote students' desire and capacity for examining their mental models. Sometimes, we were silent, hoping to encourage voices to surface by converting a student or faculty concern into a question to be answered by anyone in any group. Finally, we were deliberate and consistent in our efforts to model the leadership and collaborative behaviors we wanted to see in our students.

Data from course evaluations and learning reflections documented that although students were apprehensive about the classroom and its configuration, the instructional strategies, or their lack of experience in graduate courses, by semester's end they reported acquiring

sufficient confidence to engage in an interactive learning process. Underpinning their newly acquired level of confidence, they stated, were the multiple opportunities to engage with our graduate assistant and us in individual and small group situations.

With the profession's current focus on the importance of instruction, our analysis directs us to Burns' recent discussion of transformational leadership.[36] Uncomfortable with the many adjectives that obscure the complex realities surrounding enacting school leadership, we concur that recent demands for accountability and second-order change mediate against leadership being invested in single individuals. Burns argues persuasively that good leaders are easily identified: they build capacity in others rather than engage in quick-fix strategies with them positioned squarely at the center. Subsequently, aspiring school leaders must begin somewhere, and we contend that the intentional sharing of leadership tasks is a good place to begin. However, such a challenging mission requires, at minimum, good role models and opportunities to practice and encode the triad of knowledge, skills, and performances in long-term memory. Although we are, in fact, emergent leaders ourselves, we understand that we must intentionally develop leadership capacity in others. Therefore, our goal to tap into this potential leadership capacity in each of our students emerges from our collective belief that it is incumbent on us as leaders of future leaders to initiate the process.

Toward this end, such intentionality rightfully begins first with an examination of our own teaching and then careful reflection of how we do what we do. Next, leadership preparation faculty must carefully consider how their individual values and beliefs influence our interactions with students. Put another way, we believe that those who work in leadership preparation programs must conduct themselves as leaders. It is insufficient for faculty to simply "talk the talk." Authenticity and, hence, building trust requires us to "walk the talk." Moreover, as we develop our own capacity for reflective practice, we learn to identify the limits and boundaries of our teaching efforts and thus target areas for improving both our teaching of and relationships with students. We acknowledge, however, that recognizing needs in ourselves or in our students is insufficient to leverage the deep change required to transform education. We argue that developing reciprocal relationships between faculty and students are key to this transformation. In practice, this requires both individual and group reflection about shared sense of purpose, engagement in collaborative work, and accepting joint responsibility for creating and maintaining learning community. In summary, our results, although still quite preliminary, point us to the value of guiding multiple stakeholders in working toward common ends and purpose. We posit that our efforts establish an important scaffold for the reciprocity and empowerment that transforms how we enact our profession in schools and in the academy. Learning reflections allow students to be clear about how their learning preferences and experiences shape their practices. If we are comfortable with the argument that reflective practice is important to effective practice, how then can we reject self-reports of those we purport to serve? As adults, we have come to believe that we can trust our students to articulate their requirements for learning.

As we continue to ponder these findings, we are struck with the synergy and creativity unleashed by this mutual self-actualization. Classroom observations support our claim that the learning community environment we created in our cramped, noisy classroom

resonated with students' needs and wants. Students' capacity for exercising voice enacted through increased self-efficacy was evident in learning reflections and course evaluations. In sum, we were inspired by Heifetz's argument that leadership requires us to take sides rather than defer to a lassies-faire approach to teaching and learning.[37]

Conclusions and Recommendations

Armed with data sets from previous course evaluations, we were certain that, despite an unexpected and extraordinarily large class, inviting student feedback would help us to further improve our instruction. To some degree, we had already realized that as our own expertise grew, we were willing to undertake new challenges. This confidence, in turn, mirrored our willingness to engage in what some might term risk-taking behavior.[38] Although we considered the possibility of failure, it seemed like a vague menace at the time. In our own way, each of us envisioned ourselves as a special kind of instructional rebel determined to make this course work for students.

Literally sharing the good, the bad, and even the ugly, we rethought, regrouped, and revised after each class. Wedded to collaborative learning, our confidence level remained high throughout the semester. Our own expertise had grown in recent years because others had taken the time to listen to us. Now we were determined to model this for our class. Cognizant of the research rhetoric, we applied instructional techniques intended to duplicate differentiated instruction. Despite these efforts, the factor that made the greatest difference was our collective effort to listen to all students, promoting their confidence as learners. Avoiding the somewhat predictable tendency to rely on the vocalists (those who sometimes dominate class discussions), we intentionally and systematically sought conversations with all learners, seeking ways to facilitate their learning. It was in this attempt to recruit each course member to active-duty that we discovered the power underpinning learning community. It was a graduate student who made it all comes together for us. We discovered, albeit a bit backward, the importance of building an environment where mutual self-efficacy was empowered.

It's entirely possible that we are merely reporting what experienced veterans have known for years. What has been missing from the research and knowledge base, in our view, however, has been sufficient literature explicating the prerequisite steps to self-discovery as instructor and mentor. With our deepest apologies to Parker Palmer, we lament the failure of leadership preparation programs to have us begin at the beginning...with the fire in our soul.[39] Frankly, while some of our work initially bordered on the intuitive, we acknowledge the efforts of others whose work continues to inform our attempts to become reflective practitioners. We found Osterman and Kottkamp's essential elements for a successful cooperative learning environment profound, but challenging: (1) safety, so people feel comfortable as they contribute; and (2) equity, so everyone has an opportunity to participate.[40] Inherent in the equity standard is a set of explicit values shared by faculty and members of the class. In closing, it seems obvious to us that with leadership preparation programs across the country retooling to meet the new ELCC/ISLLC standards, we need to exercise considerable caution against any sort of programmatic tinkering without first examining the shared values and beliefs that trigger modifications to current course offerings. Such first order thinking simply reproduces past practices.[41] By challenging existing norms, planning our approaches, acquiring new ways of thinking, and, ultimately, new sets of skills and values, we focused our efforts at building capacity for second order change.

In sum, we now recognize how our constructivist roots obviated our previous practice of relying on the vocalists to generate classroom excitement, energy, and engagement. Such practices seem indicative of naïve beginning teachers. Finding ways to engage all learners seems more reliable but takes considerable time and expertise to enact. We have a growing confidence that learning communities can be successfully developed in both traditional and nontraditional leadership preparation programs. In the process, we acknowledge that we are learners, still.

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