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URBAN TEACHERS STRUGGLING WITHIN AND AGAINST NEOLIBERAL, ACCOUNTABILITY-ERA POLICIES

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Abstract:
As the educational community continues to consider the impact of the proliferation of accountability-aimed reform on students, schools, and communities, the consequences of said reforms on teachers must be included. Results of this study indicate that even distant, broad educational policies manifest in specific and profound ways in teachers' daily, lived experiences, shaping novice teachers' identity, beliefs, and efficacy. The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the perspectives of 38 Teach for America Corps Members (CMs) to situate how the educational reform climate socializes and oppresses teachers from all layers of influence, resulting in permeated macrotransgressions, which negatively impacts teachers. While this oppressive culture poses serious threats to the teaching profession, particularly in urban contexts, we also highlight the ways in which CMs resisted the confluence of socializing forces resulting from neoliberal shifts in educational policy and reform. Implications for teachers, educational leaders, policy makers, reformers, teacher educators, and communities are considered in order to envision a reprofessionalization of teachers working in tandem with the communities they serve to (re)construct a more just society.

Keywords: teacher professionalism, accountability-era, neoliberal reform, urban education, teacher agency

Introduction: Attrition, Teacher Satisfaction, and High-Stakes Accountability Reforms

Each year, almost half a million teachers in the U.S move, leave the schools where they are teaching, or leave the education profession (Haynes, 2014). The cost of this mobility and attrition is up to $2.2 billion annually (Haynes, 2014). This high attrition rate, the financial toll it incurs, and the human capital cost of attrition disproportionately affect high-poverty schools and threatens urban students' access to an equitable, excellent education (Au, 2009; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Howard, 2003; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001). Educational researchers estimate that the cost of losing an individual teacher in a high poverty, large, urban school district is approximately $9,051 per teacher (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). These financial costs, while immense, do not take into consideration the human cost of losing teachers that put a huge strain on high poverty urban and rural districts as good teachers leave and are replaced by long-term substitutes and underprepared teachers (Howard, 2007). According to the yearly Metlife Survey of the American Teacher (2013), teacher job satisfaction has dropped to its lowest level in 25 years. Since 2008, teacher satisfaction has declined 23 percentage points, from 62 percent to 39 percent satisfied.

Recently, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GPSC) reported that a startling 44% of Georgia's public schoolteachers leave within their first five years of employment (GDOE, 2015). To discover the root cause of the exodus, the GPSC conducted a survey in which 53,066 teachers from elementary to high school responded to questions regarding federal, state, and local policies and their effect on workplace conditions. The findings of their investigation "described a profession that was overcrowded with mandated tests, evaluated by unfair or unreliable measures, and constantly being changed without any input from the professionals inside the classroom" (GDOE, 2015, p.1).

Accountability policies from state, district, and local schools, as well as their implementation through mandated prescriptive and sometimes scripted curricula, coupled with intensive teacher evaluation measures which tie student test scores to teacher evaluation and at times pay, creates a volatile and vulnerable context for teachers and learning (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2007; Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman; 2004; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Smagorinsky, Lakley & Johnson, 2002). These accountability policies and practices are all too frequently implemented in urban, low-income schools, disproportionately impacting the lives and learning of urban learners, teachers, families, and communities (Crocco & Costigan, 2007).

This teacher vulnerability, attrition, and dissatisfaction must be contextualized within state policies and priorities in order to gain an understanding of the magnitude of the shifts that have occurred in Georgia schools in the last 15 years. The Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI) states the austerity cuts to Georgia's education budget total over 7.6 billion from 2002-2014 (Suggs, 2016). During the 2010 to 2014 period, education budgets were slashed by $1 billion each year. In 2016, Georgia ranked 38th out of the 50 states in spending per student. To make up the deficit, school systems have been forced to increase class sizes, lay off teachers, institute unpaid furlough days, reduce or eliminate art and music programs, and cut instructional days from 180 to 172 days. Educational outcomes and future earnings are aligned with school funding. For example, children in poverty

attending better-funded schools are more likely to complete high school and have higher earnings and lower poverty rates in adulthood (Jackson, Johnson, & Persico, 2016). This cyclical process of systematic inequity significantly impacts urban communities, and the schools, families, children, and teachers who share these spaces.

Relatedly, numerous teacher surveys and polls (GDOE, 2015; Haynes, 2014), research studies (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2004; Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Au, 2009; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Nichols & Berliner, 2005), and our own personal experiences and research (Kavanagh, 2010; Fisher et al., 2013; Fisher-Ari, et al., 2014; Fisher-Ari et al., 2015; Fisher-Ari, et al., 2016) have told us repeatedly urban teachers and students are suffering under the weight of mandated tests and workplace conditions.

While teachers have long needed to negotiate the complexities of schools and schooling through the process of socialization into the profession, (e.g. Achinstein et al., 2004; Athanases & de Oliviera, 2008; Flores & Day, 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Veenman, 1984), the social, political, and professional realities that novice and seasoned teachers are now experiencing are unlike those of any previous era. New teachers have been found to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of workplace conditions (Ingersoll & Perda, 2011; Weiss, 1999). As such, if we hope to reduce the financial, educational, and human costs of attrition, we must pay particular attention to new teachers' socialization and induction experiences as they navigate the hidden and abstract, power-laden realities that profoundly impact their work and their students.

We argue this dissatisfaction and high attrition rate are consequences of neoliberal mandated accountability policies stemming from No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and Race to the Top, both of which have drastically and negatively impacted classroom practice (Au, 2007). Their negative impact was exacerbated by their implementation at a time that traditional funding streams to public education were significantly slashed. This paper will illuminate the layers of policies, organizations, and events that threaten the teaching profession, and the contentious climate within which educators are currently situated. Examinations such as this are particularly urgent, since the alarmingly high attrition rates and the current political practices which are systematically dismantling public schools in Georgia are also representative of the national climate.

Situating the Micro within the Macro

Key to this inquiry is connecting and understanding the relationship between the macro-level national educational reform era and the micro-level local context where our inquiry takes place. Research on teacher accountability and socialization undergirds analysis of the Achievement District (AD) (pseudonym) where teachers in this study were learning to teach. In AD, a high-stakes testing scandal was breaking while our research team was in the process of investigating the socialization of the Teach for America (TFA) teachers enrolled in our urban alternative certification program. In response to the scandal, the state Bureau of Investigation reported multiple instances of principals and school administrators across the district cheating on state tests or falsifying or even destroying state documents. In some cases, teachers and staff were pressured to do the same, or to conceal such behavior. Additionally, the Bureau reported a culture of intense intimidation to achieve high test scores and to comply with all administrative requests, including those that were ethically compromising. Instances of retaliation against faculty who protested or questioned requests were frequent.

While TFA corps members and their development is a frequent point of contention (Veltri, 2010), the socialization of these teachers was particularly complex as they were learning to teach in a micropolitical context where clandestine cheating practices significantly and negatively impacted the district, schools, and the lives of many teachers and learners. The complexity of this micropolitical context shook the novices personally and professionally while illuminating the devastating and profound role federal accountability policies have played in daily practice in urban schools. While educational researchers have documented the ubiquitous vulnerabilities of induction (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Flores, 2006; Weiss, 1999; Zeichner & Gore, 1990), rarely has the causal relationship between large-scale punitive educational mandates and unethical behaviors, even in the name of educational equity for marginalized students, been so starkly apparent. The toxic nature of these spaces steeped in demoralizing complexities diverged significantly from many previously documented induction experiences.

Power dynamics in school and schooling have been the focus of notable researchers and the field of critical pedagogy (e.g., Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1989). However, despite our experience as as urban teacher educators working for years to prepare novice educators for the unique challenges and opportunities in this particular district, replete with structural and systemic obstacles and inequities, nothing prepared us for the deeply troubling context that was socializing our new teachers. These novices were being socialized during the destructive test-based accountability milieu (Crocco & Costigan, 2007) while navigating the dominating discourses of TFA that position Corps Members (CMs) as leaders singularly responsible for their students' success and failure (Fisher et al., 2013; Farr, 2010; Maloney, 2013;Veltri, 2010). This complex sociopolitical and micropolitical context had major implications for teachers, students, and schools in the Achievement District.

Importantly, it was these TFA teachers, our students, who requested that we use our voices as urban teacher educators and researchers to expose their lived experiences. The larger inquiry within which this examination is nested documents and

theorizes these teachers' extraordinary experiences of socialization amid scandal. Throughout this prolonged, systematic inquiry, we became alarmed at the extent to which the induction period became demoralizing and ethically challenging through the constant focus on standardized testing and the accountability trap (Fisher-Ari, et al., 2013). The increasing frequency of high stakes testing scandals in large, urban districts such as Baltimore, the District of Columbia, Philadelphia, Dallas, and other—often urban—districts are harbingers that these contexts are becoming the norm for socializing our teachers into the profession. This educational climate has devastating consequences for teachers, students, the profession, and urban schools and communities (Amrein-Beardsley, Berliner & Rideau, 2010; Fairtest.org, 2011).

Critical Theory as Theoretical Framework

In our simultaneous roles as teacher educators, critical pedagogues, and educational researchers, we view education as an inherently political endeavor and are concerned with the distribution of power as it is enacted in schools. Alongside critical theorists and pedagogues (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1989) we endeavor to illuminate the effect of schooling on the lives of learners and teachers, particularly in communities which have been historically placed at risk by social, economic, political, and structural inequities.

We grapple with power-laden epistemologies, policies, and curricula which privilege some (often those external from the affected context and communities) as knowledge holders, determining what counts as learning and whose knowledge, stories, and histories are worth learning about. Inspired by our time alongside teachers and learners in our community, we are convinced that current paradigms for schooling perpetuate and maintain inequities even while adopting discourses of "racing to the top" and "leaving no children behind." We join Giroux (2006) in viewing spaces of learning as "places where culture, power, and knowledge come together to produce particular identities, narratives, and social practices" (p. 5). Like other critical theorists and pedagogues, we endeavor to interrogate narratives of schooling, curriculum, and histories, which neglect and exploit the voices and experiences of many in order to benefit the few.

As such, we take a critical stance toward analysis of policies and practices that shape schooling, curriculum, perspectives of knowledge and knowers, and the experiences and opportunities of children, teachers, and communities. Essentially, our work as teacher educators endeavors to support teachers in being and becoming, as Giroux (2006) stated:

> …publicly engaged intellectuals who address the most pressing problems of their society as part of a wider politics and pedagogy of solidarity and democratic struggle, and rewriting the curriculum in order to address the lived experiences that different students bring to the school while not being limited to such knowledge. (p. 5)

To this end, we are simultaneously committed to exposing inequities and sharing stories of teacher resistance and hope. We believe that when teachers make these moves, particularly as parts of larger social movements for equity, schools can become more just and emancipatory contexts for all learners and teachers. We envision and work toward classrooms and schools filled with student and teacher agency, voice, distributive power, and mutually honoring spaces for authentic development. We see the creation of such a reality as one that requires the significant engagement and democratizing efforts those within and outside the classroom.

Methods and Data Sources

Participants for this inquiry were 38 TFA CMs teaching in 26 different traditional public (preK-5th grade) elementary schools across the Achievement District, and who were enrolled in our teacher certification program during one of their first four years of teaching. Data analyzed included nearly 6.000 written reflections for a year-long field-based course in which these novice teachers were asked to draft a short reflective statement describing their most hopeful 'high' moment and most challenging 'low' event of their day. At weekly and monthly intervals, CMs were asked to read over their daily reflections to identify patterns and implications for their instructional or relational practices and to set goals based on emerging trends. These weekly and monthly synthesizing reflections were framed around the following questions: (a) WHAT do you notice? (b) SO WHAT does that mean as far as implications for what needs to change or be magnified, and (c) NOW WHAT will you do?

Upon these candidates' completion of the certification coursework at our institution, we took up their request to share their story and began the process of analyzing the nearly 6,000 daily written reflections, line-by-line using Atlas.ti as the platform for our research team's grounded theory analysis. In coding dyads, comprised of research team members at varied points of the emic/etic perspectives, we consensually coded (Hill, et al., 2005) each line of the data through multiple stages of analysis. During this process, dyad partners sat together, read each line of the portion of data they were analyzing, and came to a consensus about the codes to assign each line. Research teams engaged in memo writing, noting discussions and each individual's efforts to make evident their "speculations, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices"

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 121).

The team oscillated between coding together to check for inter-rater consistency and to develop the coding manual, and dyad-based coding where the manual was used to code predetermined data segments. During each stage, researchers debated and clarified the codes and code book, ensuring consistency and reliability between dyads by coming to agreement about what we meant and how we interpreted collaboratively coded data, continuously revising, clarifying group and dyad consensual coding practices. Each time we all gathered, we evaluated themes for salience and resilience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After careful analysis, our findings led to the creation of the *Critical Ecological Model of Teacher Socialization Amid a Testing Scandal* (Fisher-Ari, et al., 2013), building upon the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) to understand and describe the socializing powers and forces at play in the professionalization and vocational trajectories of teachers and the attending impacts on learners.

This manuscript, a secondary analysis of this research, focuses on the particular themes which cut across multiple situated contexts inhabited by novice teachers in order to reveal the profound effects of federal and state accountability policies which have had devastating consequences for urban schools and communities, and the learners and teachers who inhabit those spaces. Other manuscripts provide insight into the model as a whole and other aspects of the model.

Research Team

Our seven-member research team consisted of teacher-researchers from both university and public school contexts bringing varied emic/etic perspectives, which promoted complex, nuanced meaning-making and data interpretation (Creswell, 2003). Two researcher-participants (who were at the time of their program forth and second year teachers and TFA alumni/CMs teaching in schools under investigation for testing irregularities). These two researcher-participants remain in the AD district and are full time doctoral students examining equity in urban educational contexts. They each offered understanding of the contexts and experiences with TFA, our program, and the AD. A university-based PI was the program coordinator, primary course instructor, and coach of several participants and brought longitudinal understandings of the context, the participants, and the policies and practices in AD, the university, and local schools, which shaped the experiences of these teachers. A fourth researcher was a TFA CM alumni who was not a participant in the program during the breaking of the scandal and who worked in a neighboring district. Her perspective offered a means of understanding TFA practices and policies more generally and the ways that they played out in the socialization of teachers and students. The other two teacher-researchers—one non-TFA teacher working in a neighboring district and one university-based researcher who had worked closely with TFA CMs in our programs across a decade—provided a balanced but contextually knowledgeable etic perspective for analyzing data and interrogating findings.

Each researcher perspective was critical in meeting the ethical demands participants charged us in requesting us to ‘tell their story’ and protect their anonymity due to the highly sensitive nature of this cheating scandal.

Trustworthiness

Throughout this investigation, we have striven to develop an accurate portrayal of the socialization and induction experiences of TFA novice teachers constructing their professional identities within the context and constraints of a notorious district-wide cheating scandal (Fisher-Ari et al., 2013). The range of perspectives from these 38 TFA teachers working in 26 traditional, public elementary schools in AD and the gathering of these written reflection across an entire academic year promotes trustworthiness as it captures the range of perspectives, experiences, and understandings of these specific teachers learning to teach in a troubled context.

The composition and process of our research team also added to the trustworthiness of our inquiry. Our multi-coder, multi-year analysis using constant comparative analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) using Atlas.ti, extensive memos by researchers and coding teams, and a comprehensive audit trail documented the recursive, intensive, and comprehensive analytical process. Seven teacher-researchers with longitudinal connection to the context and from across the emic/etic continua ensured a nuanced understanding of the data.

Discussion of Findings

Permeated Macrotransgressions: Schooling as Controlling and Controlled Systems

At each layer of our *Critical Ecological Model of Teacher Socialization amid a Testing Scandal,* there were interrelated

constructs, factors, and realities that profoundly influenced the socialization of our novice teachers. Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that development of an individual occurs and is influenced by a range of nested ecological contexts, from the local microsystems (family, classroom, etc.) where an individual grows, to the interactions of those microsystems (as a mesosystem), to the influencing exosytems or locations of those specific microsystems, which are shaped by the macrosystem of socio-political systems (laws, policies, overarching cultural beliefs) characteristic of an era (or chronosystem). We thoroughly discuss each theme, layer, and construct as well as its role in new teacher development in other manuscripts (Fisher-Ari, et al., 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). However, while considering the specific spaces of development that Bronfenbrenner theorizes, it became clear that several themes and factors were magnified and played out at every layer of the socialization model, permeating the experiences and profoundly shaping the spaces and experiences that socialized novice teachers. Importantly, these themes stemmed directly from policies, practices, and priorities located in the model's chronosystem, the era of accountability. It is those permeating factors and the responses of novice teachers to these permeating and socializing pressures, which are developed in this manuscript.

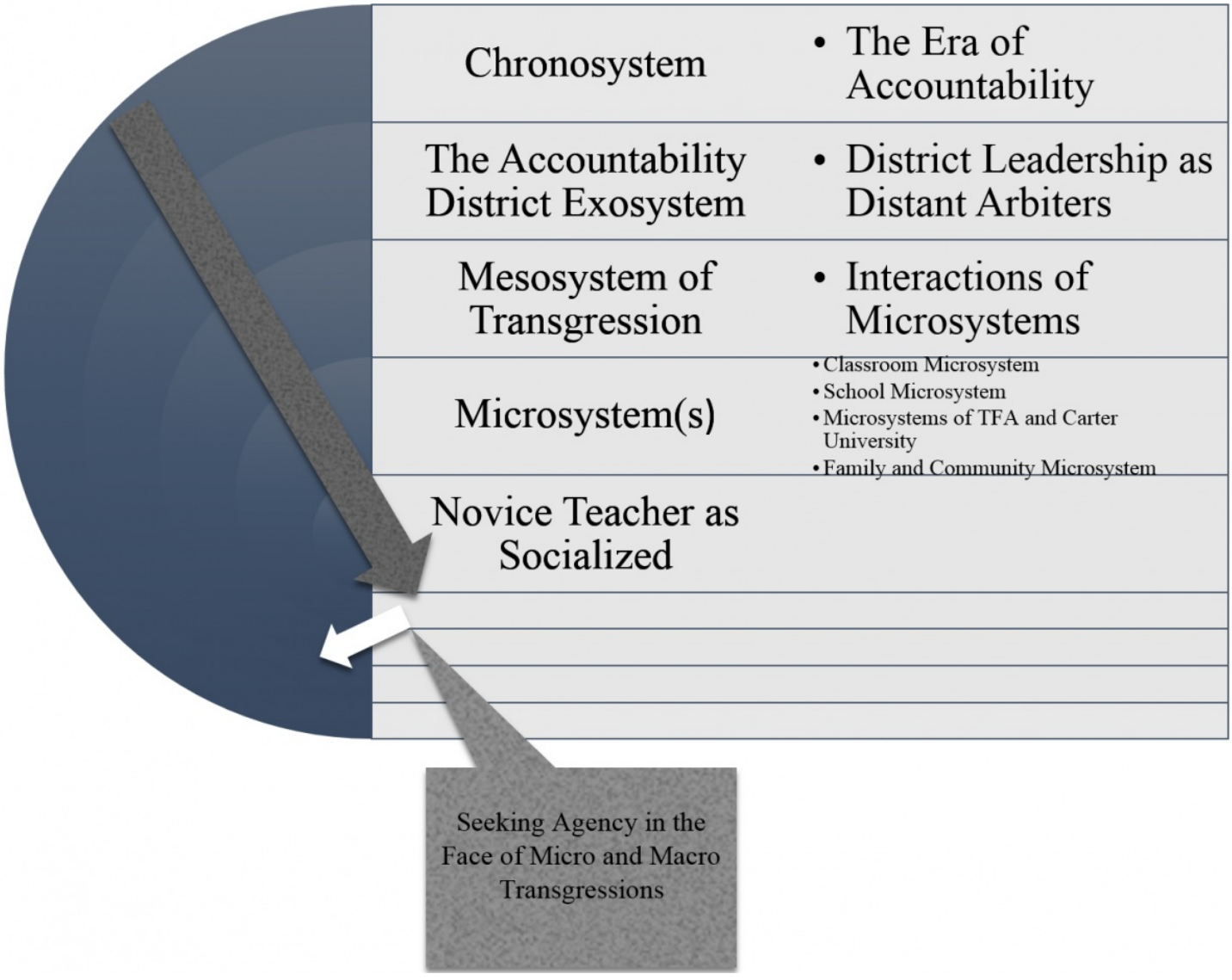

Figure 1. Critical Ecological Model of Novice Teacher Socialization Amid a Testing Scandal
[Click to Enlarge]

Our visual model conceptualizes these converging forces of mandates and pressures as a powerful arrow pushing down on the novice teacher. We assert these ubiquitous occurrences are *permeated macrotransgressions,* or misdeeds and offenses which

violated stakeholders across several contexts of the controlling and controlled systems of schooling. Stemming from the chronosystem, these permeated macrotransgressions are found throughout every layer in the model and influenced individuals who hold varying degrees of power. These constructs profoundly (a) impact the sociopolitical context, (b) influence teaching and learning, (c) dictate districts' priorities and mandates, (d) shape schools' micropolitical spaces, (e) prioritize classroom practice, and (f) socialize novice teachers navigating each context and layer of development (Fisher-Ari, et al. 2013). Specifically considering these nested contexts, we can better understand and articulate the critical factors of socialization and development in this accountability era. The most frequently occurring themes in the larger data set indicate pressures and realities of new teachers and manifested at each layer of the model. These lived experiences of teachers revealed the impact of the policies of this accountability era and the challenges with the implementation of these policies as they were mandated by the district, interpreted by the local schools, and played out in individual classrooms.

This visual model depicts these themes as the dark grey arrow that socialized teachers during this scandal, influencing identity development, sense of efficacy, and autonomy of novice teachers. The salient themes that traversed the nested developmental contexts included:(a) an explicit and pervasivefocus on student growth and achievementwhich was narrowly defined and understood due to lack of (b) meaningful knowledge of the purposes and practices of assessment, and (c) a disturbing narrative of school, teacher, and student accountability. These themes were significant in the novice teachers' development, specifically in how they viewed their role, their students, and the processes and purposes of teaching and learning in this context and time.

Ubiquitous in the data was an explicit and pervasive focus on student growth and achievement (669 occurrences), often in ways that were narrowly conceptualized and defined (Fisher-Ari, Kavanagh, & Martin, 2016). Socialized to conceptualize student growth and achievement in narrowly constructed terms based on weekly, monthly, and quarterly district assessments, teachers often employed and discussed practices that troubled us as their instructors as they were markedly not based on an understanding of developmentally appropriate practice or responsive constructs of student learning. These mandated assessments and their attending assumptions about learners and learning, caused most of the teachers to feel extreme pressure for students to perform better on assessments. This led to an increase in assessment through testing, teaching to the test, and test preparation as the assumed and rarely questioned silver bullet for student success rather than a focus on student-centered learning. This is demonstrated by one novice teacher's written reflection on the low of her day, noting that, "Student A and Student B are repeatedly failing their phonics assessments. I know that Student A studies at home but something is not connecting. What can I do to assess him further and get to the heart of the issue?" Here, the novice thinks that more assessment is the answer instead of different instructional approaches.

The most frequently occurring theme in our analysis was the discussion of student growth and achievement, often defined narrowly by both AD and TFA as test scores. Teachers realized that they were at the mercy of external priorities and narrow, test-based definitions of student growth and achievement, which may not have mirrored their own developing beliefs about learning and the formative nature of assessment. One teacher wrote that her instruction and student learning would benefit when she had a better understanding of curriculum and her goals for their deep understanding, saying, "I think once I am more cognizant of EVERYTHING that the students should learn, then my lessons will be better and the students' mastery will increase." These comments however, still frame growth as "mastery" rather than conceptual development or the social and emotional learning that are needed for the development of the whole child. This was exemplified in one teacher's simple definition of her own success, saying, "As long as they continue to achieve academically, I am doing my job well." While this sentiment was certainly not unique to these teachers at this time, the ways schools implemented accountability-based policies and practices on formal assessments—measuring, rating, and often publically displaying class and individual test scores on 'data walls' facilitated a narrowing definition of student growth (and student and teacher achievement) which was largely determined by test-scores of easily to assess skills (Fisher-Ari, Kavanagh, & Martin, 2016).

As alternatively certified teachers who predominantly did not have experience with or knowledge of different types of formative and summative assessments (163 occurrences), the teachers were learning on the job how to create, give, and use assessments. While it is not surprising these novice teachers had little understanding of meaningful ways to determine, monitor, and consider student development, it is important to note that this is *symptomatic* of a much larger problem of misapprehending (and misrepresenting) summative multiple choice assessments as a valid, reliable, or meaningful (though profitable for some) process of schooling. This limited knowledge of assessments often lead to collecting data for data's sake and an inability to resist the weekly, monthly, and quarterly tests they were required to give and data they were mandated to collect by TFA, Accountability District, or the state. Additionally, these novice teachers often accepted and relied upon these assessments as acceptable indications of student growth and understanding rather than questioning their low-level recall focus. The novices often referred to the average of their class, but rarely could see the individual student needs and abilities or how they could use the assessment to alter their instruction. For example, one teacher said, "The students received no more than an 87 on the test which shows me that the test was not taught to the best ability, additionally my level 1 class received an average of a 38 percent mastery on the exam." This unquestioning stance toward assessments as a meaningful demonstration of learning made it difficult for teachers to imagine a different possibility, even when they experienced tension with the assessment practices mandated by others outside of their context. To be sure, this assumption of causality between teaching effectiveness and test scores is not unique to this era, context, or teaching population. However, it seems that – nested within district and TFA practices and policies which privileged numeric scores as demonstrations of student learning and teacher accountability—and as

novice teachers with minimal preparation and experience, these teachers had limited resources or opportunities to question dominant accountability narratives and practices.

Teachers often noted that externally produced and mandated assessments were not necessarily aligned to what they had taught or where students were in their learning and development. However, teachers noted they were held to a high level of accountability (188 occurrences) for adhering to these mandates and for directly impacting student learning as measured by them. One reflected:

> Since my first year teaching, I have been tirelessly in pursuit of “closing the achievement gap” and “preparing my students to be intelligent individuals” and now I feel as though I have found a workable method to do that. I have establish [sic] a pedagogy, a theory, a mission statement for the type of teacher I want to be and the horrible thing about it is that I, as well as my theories and ideologies, are stifled by the demands of legislature and reform. What’s beneficial is not what they want to see; they don’t want growth, they want results and they are corrupting an entire generation of children because of that.

This level of accountability and pressures imposed by the district and school for student learning fostered in many candidates a feeling that they needed to teach to the test and interfered often with meaningful opportunities for student driven learning and developmentally appropriate practices. Many of the accountability pressures stemmed from district policies that offered monetary bonuses for teachers, administrators, and schools who met district imposed “targets” on state tests, while administrators of schools who did not meet district targets were automatically placed on a “Professional Development Plan”, which was the first step towards termination of employment. These high stakes policies implemented by the AD reinforced the era of accountability and directly impacted CMs in this study.

This cluster of themes cut across each layer of teacher development. They stemmed from the broader neoliberal, socio-political and historical context, to the subtractive mandates of Achievement District, to the politics and practices of the school and classroom microsystems, to the development of novice teachers’ identities. Conceptualizing these socializing constructs spanning each nested layer of the *Critical Ecological Model of Teacher Socialization amid a Testing Scandal* revealed the specific forces of novice teacher socialization in the accountability era at play in this district, the schools, and classrooms during the time of the scandal. Most poignantly and directly related to the issue to teacher satisfaction and attrition was the impact of these permeating forces on the teachers themselves and their developing professional identities and commitments.

Teacher as Socialized

At the center of the *Critical Ecological Model of Teacher Socialization amid a Testing Scandal* , is the developing novice teacher, whose socialization is profoundly influenced by each of the nested layers of development, their volatile micropolitical contexts, power dynamics, policies and mandates within them. Beliefs about urban schooling and the purpose of education writ large are simultaneously shaped by and shaping the novice teacher in these socializing spaces. Below we discuss how these novice teachers revealed their (a) identity, (b) beliefs, (c) efficacy, and feelings about and struggles for (d) autonomy and agency.

The perspectives of these novice teachers on the construction of their own identity (125 occurrences)as a teacher and what it means to teach children, were highlighted by teachers in their reflective practices. Often, throughout the reflections, when teachers discussed their role(s) they often noted that they felt positioned alternatingly as a test giver, script reader, or facilitator, as district policy required teachers to implement the scripted curriculums adopted and district provided scope and sequences with fidelity, as not doing so was grounds for teachers being placed on a “Professional Development Plan.” One stated, “I am left to question whether and how I can teach "to a test" but still have the students enjoy learning for learning's sake, not lose my personality in the process and become robotic in my adherence to standards.” Many grappled with tensions they experienced between contrasting roles and the visions of teaching they had initially held and the understandings they were developing. We noted these discussions of identity and the ways that teachers perceived themselves and hoped others would perceive them.

Data indicated that teacher beliefs (177 occurrences) were predominantly shaped by past school experiences, TFA, and their certification courses. Teachers struggled when the beliefs they had formed before they began their teaching career were challenged or devalued by the everyday realities of their current positions. One teacher explained the evolution of his concept of teachers’ societal roles and the decreasing impact they are allowed to have on students with the rising ubiquity of high-stakes testing caused both by the policies themselves and the ways that schools and districts are implementing these policies:

> Increasingly, I feel that we as a nation are setting so many of our - primarily minority - students up for failure. We as public school teachers have but one job, as mandated by our national standards: to prepare our students for their respective end-of-year exams. In order to do so, adequate time is not built into the school year to encourage student exploration of concepts, to let them wrestle and struggle with ideas, to allow them the space and time sometimes needed to develop at their own pace. Instead, I so often feel that I have to introduce a concept in a fairly quick and cursory manner, and then

> move on to keep in time with the schedule required for sufficient test preparedness. As such, I lament the fact that we are not building a nation primarily of thinkers, but individuals with just barely enough knowledge to demonstrate rudimentary proficiency on a series of tests.

This statement belies the gravity and intensity many of these novice teachers experienced with the implementations of these reforms. This novice teacher had clear beliefs about what learning required, the effortful struggle with ideas that is needed to come to individual understandings, and was incensed that the students served in this district were not being given what was needed for equitable opportunities.

Even when teachers grappled with the relevance or authenticity of these assessment practices, whether their students were succeeding or failing weekly, externally produced benchmarks, teacher tests, or TFA data trackers played a part in their socialization, and specifically their sense of efficacy (334 occurrences). We defined efficacy as a novice teacher's self-perception or perception of his/her instruction. This was evidenced by the statement of one teacher who nearly always reflected primarily on the test-based scores of her learners when she explained, "My students' achievement is a reflection of what I am doing right and what I am doing wrong. That is why I speak mostly of students' achievement or lack thereof." This was particularly striking since this teacher, like many of her peers was required to read from a script for the majority of her day and often did not even work with her own students. This internalization of responsibility and the way that shaped her identity and efficacy were unquestioningly accepted. Generally, when students were successful according to weekly tests, teachers felt efficacious and proud. Conversely, when students were not successful according to data, the teachers turned to negative labeling of students instead of shifting to student-centered practice and differentiated instruction that would help all students be more successful (Fisher-Ari et al, 2013). As one CM lamented, "The Math test went poorly. They could not sit still and it was difficult getting through it. The principal came in and redirected the students, but it was not an easy task. I wish my students would be more invested in their own academic success." The influence of one-size-fits-all tests socialized many novice teachers to think that all of their students would and should be at the exact same place of mastery reached through teacher centered pedagogy and that students' inability to sit for hours of testing at a time was an indication of a lack of investment. These mandates too often positioned learners as objects rather than agents in their own learning process and likewise their teachers struggled with a depleted sense of agency and autonomy under the explicit and implicit pressures of these externally imposed pressures.

Teachers at various times reflected upon aspects of their autonomy as they navigated mandates and structures placed upon them by state mandates and district and school leadership which constrained and restricted teachers in ways that were significant to them. At times, the scripts they were handed even constricted their language and response to learners.

One teacher lamented his struggle:

> Again, feeling as though teachers have to devote so much time to projects and activities that are not driven by and geared toward student-learning, but are instead meant for outsider consumption so that administrators can come by and check the little boxes on their forms to play the "gotcha" game that AD is so adept at.

Another teacher said, "I did not get to reassess today as I would have liked. Bulletin boards had to be up, data notebooks had to be submitted and report cards were due. I truly wish I did not have to take up valuable planning and instructional time for this. "Another echoed her frustration with mandates that took up valuable teaching time:

> It is very frustrating that we lose so much instructional time due to programs and other types of projects that are really just formalities and not really helping kids learn. Today we had a Teacher of the Year program that lasted for 2 1/2 hours. I thought this was a little ridiculous, and for the rest of the day we worked on our Concept Based Unit projects, and this is 3 days after we spent a whole week on academic fair projects, not to mention bulletin boards that have to be colorful and pretty instead of reflect actual rigorous tasks.

Teachers often grappled with requirements that were not aligned with their beliefs about how their time with and on behalf of learners should be spent. However, they experienced strict sanctions if they deviated from the visible requirements that were more easily checked off and noted during "walk throughs" by administration or AD leadership.

This layer of the data was particularly painful for us as researchers to read and code as it was marked by extremely emotional language and indications of genuine hurt. Teachers who were developing their vocational identities in this micropolitical context were experiencing not only cognitive dissonances, but also a great deal of emotional angst and feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and disconnection. Many grappled with whether their investment in the vocation was valuable or valued. Very frequently, they noted it was not garnering any appreciation or notice especially as it was commonly measured in terms of test scores.

From a critical theory perspective, these findings about the *teacher as socialized* are troubling in that they reveal a micropolitical context that, instead of recognizing the social reproductive nature of public schooling, position the individual teachers as responsible for such effects. Clearly the consequences of this are vast, as illuminated by the depths it impacted CMs identity, efficacy, beliefs, and sense of autonomy. As we will discuss in the implications, when teachers and other stakeholders recognize this micropolitical context and the related challenges of creating classrooms and schools as liberatory spaces we can collectively begin to claim agency toward the goal of increasing educational equity.

Seeking Agency in the midst of Micro and Macro Transgressions

Importantly, the converging pressures and required compliance within this oppressive system left little space or opportunity for open resistance or defiance, as evidenced by the high levels of retaliation towards staff and faculty who did, such as being placed on a "Professional Development Plan." However, several novices utilized written reflective spaces to challenge the status quo and their experiences. As portrayed by the much shorter, light gray arrow of subversion in the model, some novices pushed back via their written voices against practices, policies, and pressures by critiquing them and acknowledging that they were perpetuating, rather than mitigating, the opportunity gap for marginalized urban learners. These salient themes included (a) "What's the point of the test?" (b) knowledge of assessment, (c) POST [State Test] instruction, and (d) learner centered instruction. Depicted in our model as an arrow pointing out of the teacher and working to shape her classroom context, we demonstrate the limited ways in which teachers verbally pushed back and resisted the socializing pressures and forces for compliance evident in various nested contexts of development. We coded "What's the point of the test?" (187 occurrences) when the novice teachers explicitly asked or questioned the purposes of these standardized assessments. This push back often co-occurred with the theme "knowledge of assessment" (163 occurrences). Across the year of their certification program, these novice teachers increasingly imagined and wrote about other possibilities for authentic assessment which might document student knowledge and learning more meaningfully than the tests they were required to give their learners.

As teachers' knowledge of assessment and meaningful instruction (163 occurrences) grew throughout their program, many began to critique the instructional practices and reform models which had been adopted. One stated:

> I am continuing to give my students the DRA to assess their reading level and for the most part my students are falling in a mid-2nd grade reading level on average. The students have good fluency, but absolutely no reading comprehension. I would say that is a direct reflection of the skills they are taking away from DI.

This teacher noted that the Direct Instruction Scripted Reform model in place as her school-wide literacy program was failing to promote deep comprehension and was instead supporting fluent word callers. This critique of curriculum, and her use of an assessment which highlighted and documented this way that curriculum failed the students was a subversive decision. Another teacher reflected on her own schooling experience with testing, stating:

> I think back to when I was in school and I don't recall being assessed nearly this much, and yet, for some reason, I feel that I, along with so many of my classmates turned out fine. Do all these assessments really assist instructors? Or, as I imagine, are they there for administrator/bureaucrat consumption? Would not that time be better spent actually teaching (or, as the case may be, re-teaching) students.

As teachers learned more about authentic ways to understand student learning, many teachers envisioned and at times put into place a different type of evaluation structure with more responsive and teacher created assessments. One teacher stated, "I find it frustrating that I am required to assess my students every week in every subject. Sometimes I think it would be more effective to use alternate assessment methods and use that time for instruction as opposed to taking a whole day a week to assess." Another attempted to modify the mandated assessments of her school, explaining:

> Today I was dragging. Fridays are always rough for me and the kids. They sit for assessments all day and are exhausted by the end. I have tried to switch it up and do performance tasks as assessments to make it easier on them.

While in some instances teachers were able to shift the types and processes for determining and recording student understandings, that was not most frequently the case.

Unfortunately, even when novice teachers questioned the ethics and purpose of these engagements, they had little voice or power to change the practices, even within the context of their own classrooms, at least during the majority of the academic year. For many, though, this dynamic shifted significantly after the completion of the state test in April. The time Post-State Test (49 occurrences) was a very different atmosphere and teachers (and their students) were given more agency, choice, and flexibility for authentic learning. This data, with the co-occurring themes of Post-State Test and student centered instruction

demonstrated plans for and implementations of more engaging and relevant learning opportunities some teachers offered during the short four-week period at the end of the academic year. Frequently, novice teachers found that during the month after the standardized test in which they were under less surveillance, they had more opportunity to offer alternative, responsive, and inquiry-based learning engagements that were more aligned with their emerging beliefs. In the time post-standardized assessment, many worked to incorporate more projects, developmentally appropriate practice, and opportunities for student driven learning, thereby broadening the definitions of student growth and achievement. One stated, “Now that the [standardized test] is finally (almost) over, I will return to a focus on pure learning, and growth in reading and math skills that I believe are essential for my students. I also look forward to beginning an extended Social Studies project with my 2nd graders.” Another explained, “I am glad that the [standardized test] is completely finished and I am able to have a little more flexibility in what I do with my students.” Another similarly wrote, “This time of year (post-state test) allows teachers to be as creative as they'd like to be. I'm frustrated over the amount of time wasted focusing solely on the [state test]”.

This post-testing portion of the year also offered them space to provide more responsive and differentiated instruction in order to address the specific academic needs of students. One explained that being released from her previously required fidelity of keeping with her scripted program freed her to support the needs of specific students who she had not realized were not fully understanding concepts she had ‘taught’ throughout the year.

> Since the [State Test] is over, so far I have been able to get away with straying from the scripted math problem. I have been working on problem solving skills with my students. I have seen a lot of progress and my students are engaged in the lessons.. I have been particularly working with [several students] in reading and in math. I have found that they all were very good at pretending like they knew what they were doing, but they actually didn’t.

We believe that learning opportunities focused on individual students and personally responsive pedagogy (Kavanagh & Fisher-Ari, 2015.) is a much more equitable approach to instructional engagement. Many novice teachers also felt significant tension with the pedagogies and practices recommended by the AD. One teacher stated, “My students are learning, becoming increasingly invested in the classroom and their achievement, and I refuse to teach for external consumption. I wonder if I am too iconoclastic for AD.” Additionally, this more responsive and agentive space for teachers to create responsive, inquiry-based, and student centered curriculum fostered joy and had potential to support and extend the commitment of these novice teachers to the vocation of teaching. However, these teachers indicated that their opportunity for this type of responsive and democratizing instruction was limited by the social structures, mandates, and the contexts of teaching and learning in which these teachers were socialized, particularly in the months preceding the state test. Often, the primary thing that teachers could do was to critique the social system privately as they had minimal power to make more wide or substantive changes in the processes that were mandated in their classrooms.

Some of the novices were able to navigate the socializing forces with a modicum of resistance to these pressures within their individual classroom context. Unfortunately, as noted by the visual model, the influence of this subversive push back ended at their classroom door and did not extend to the larger contexts. In written reflections, some novices described ways they were resisting compliance and socialization forces and established school norms by intentionally making curricular and pedagogical choices that were not necessarily approved by district or school leadership or mandates. As educational researchers with a critical perspective that asserts schools have the power to transform society, we believe these convictions and spaces require careful consideration, so other novice teachers can enact a more equitable educational reality in their sphere of influence.

Implications and Conclusions

It has taken well over a decade, but neoliberal and neoconservative reformers slow and steady move to dismantle quality public education in Georgia is nearing its coup de grace. While national and state-based policies and practices have resulted in deprofessionalization of teachers and an increase in dissatisfaction in their profession, these high-stakes policies and practices have simultaneously (and many would say intentionally) made great strides toward fully dismantling public schools. These reforms have disproportionately disadvantaged urban communities, schools, and children growing up in these communities. It will take a concerted effort (like the one happening in Washington next week to fight for public schools- see rethinking schools) to turn back these tides and to change public discourses.

Implications for Teachers

As is evidenced in the voices and experiences of these novice teachers, resistance and attempts to subvert the macro-aggressions and permeating systems of power which structure and in many ways control the climate and curriculum they share with students proved to be a very challenging- if not impossible task for these novice TFA teachers. While groups of teachers (ie. Badass Teachers Association, Garfield High School, CAPE (Coalition Advocating for Public Education) MAPS (Metro Atlantans for Public Schools), Chicago teachers union, etc.) are working in united ways to question policies and practices in order to

challenge and collectively turn back these policies, we cannot expect individual teachers to solely address this cataclysmic perfect storm of policies which is deconstructing the public educational system which has been the fabric of our nation for over 200 years.

Implications for School and District Leaders

School and district leadership can make significant changes within the micropolitical contexts they share with teachers. The GPSC (2014) study indicated that factors leading to teacher dissatisfaction and attrition within Georgia can be mitigated at least in part by those in leadership positions whose actions and practices go a long way toward shifting school community climate. Some factors noted by Georgia teachers which could be assuaged by administration, include providing the resources teachers feel necessary for their own growth, particularly in areas in which they will be formally evaluated.

As increasing options for performance-based assessments and a range of ways to monitor and document student achievement are promoted in the new ESSA legislation, leaders can advocate for, promote, and honor these types of more meaningful, authentic measurements of student growth and teacher success. These shifts in priorities and practices would make significant differences in the ways that teachers feel about their work and their practice, and would provide space for more critical learning opportunities for children. Accountability measures that document the real progress teachers and students make together during the year will shift significantly the discourses not only about schools and schooling, but also the opportunities and experiences that children and teachers share within classrooms.

If school and district level leaders support the necessary risk taking that is required for growth (of students and teachers) the schools and classrooms where teachers and students are socialized and developing would be very different spaces. Providing opportunity, time, and resources for teacher-led and generative professional development opportunities (Fisher 2009; Kavanagh, 2010; Kavanagh & Dunn, 2013) which would ground teachers increasingly in their practice, theory, and research, which could inform their pedagogy. When teachers were professionalized with development opportunities contextualized in their practice and supportive of their professional growth, their leaders were to open spaces for teachers with theoretically sound research and rationale for engaging in innovative practices. It is then likely that many more children would have opportunities to engage in progressive, critical educative experiences that are needed to not only be college and career ready, but to be critically engaged in the world which has not yet become. This does not mean that teachers should ‘resist’ for the sake of resisting, but rather that leaders could be much more open to those who resist current practices with a sound rationale and a reason-based pedagogical alternative. These shifts in the types of leaders in schools, particularly those urban schools placed at risk due to inequitable social structures, would go a long way toward mitigating the stresses, challenges, and ideological incongruences which are overwhelming novice and veteran teachers, (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Flores, 2006; Veenman, 1984; Weiss, 1999; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

Implications for Teacher Educators

Teacher educators and educational researchers are implicated in supporting teachers throughout their vocational trajectories from novice to veteran. As we support preservice teacher candidates, we must provide them with opportunities to practice using their voices and building on educational research to advocate for students and pedagogical decisions. We must create spaces for them to narrate their practice while articulating and justifying their instructional, relational, and assessment practices. As such, when they are attempting to engage in congruent, well-theorized pedagogy in their own classrooms, they will be equipped with knowledge and language to help others understand their intentionality and decision making. Providing multiple opportunities for teachers to articulate rationales for their decisions is inherently professionalizing and will improve planning, instruction, and classroom communities.

Teacher educators must build structures within and beyond courses they teach by supporting preservice teachers working to foster communities of support with like-minded educators. These spaces can help novices navigate, negotiate, and remain hopeful and committed throughout the vulnerabilities of induction and teaching. These communities offer teachers the cognitive, social, and emotional support they will need to stay and work towards changing how education is experienced in order to build more equitable opportunities for all learners (Fisher, 2009). As noted earlier, these communities of teachers, when united, have significant, policy-shaping messages that can collectively shift discourses in and around schooling. Teacher candidates who come to see teaching as advocacy and understand their political role working with others to fight systems which disadvantage their learners, are well positioned to see themselves as agents. When teacher educators help candidates see teaching as inherently political and their role as informed constituents to engage in and be a part of the political conversation on a local, state, and national level, teachers will enter the vocation primed to engage in these ways.

Additionally, teacher educators and educational researchers must reframe our sense of responsibility to extend beyond the preparation and matriculation of teacher candidates. We must engage intentionally alongside school-based practitioners and

leaders supporting them in this critical work of teaching and advocating against the grain, helping them professionalize themselves through relevant development opportunities, and honor the experiences, voices, and realities they encounter in their daily practice. We must frame our research and advocacy for supporting teacher practice and student learning as inherently political.

We are implicated in the socialization, vulnerabilities, and inequities of schooling. We must take seriously this call if we are to contribute to the mitigation of these injustices and to help support the long-term commitment, hope, and effectiveness of the teachers we claim to prepare and support. Noting the responsibility that we have to speak up and against policies, practices, and processes (be they federal or in our own departments and programs) which are not democratizing, just, and equitable is a critical part of our responsibility and one we must embrace.

Implications for Educational Reformers Writ Large

While it can be difficult to assume positive intent of educational reformers whose policies, advocacies, and practices have exacerbated (if not directly caused) the current state of public education, teacher attrition, and myopic views of student growth, learning, and accountability, assuming that the intention is indeed to minimize the inequities which disproportionately affect urban communities can offer some meaningful steps forward. Carefully considering research which indicates that teachers and students in urban communities are suffering under the weight of standardized, accountability-based reforms (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2004; Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Au, 2009; Kavanagh & Fisher-Ari, 2015; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Nichols & Berliner, 2005) and the working and learning conditions and narrowed curriculum which are the results of these policies. Noting the frequency of high-stakes testing scandals, the deconstruction of many public and community schools, and the devastating consequences for communities and learners (Amrein-Beardsley, Berliner & Rideau, 2010) would hopefully bring an opportunity for reformers to pause and consider whether the changes they promote are, in fact, leading toward their articulated goals.

As philanthropic individuals and non-profit agencies concerned with ensuring that every child has the educational opportunities necessary for an equitable educational and life trajectory, educational reformers should partner with members of the communities they purport to serve. Being and becoming more locally situated as a listening leader and learner from community members would enable reformers to consider ways to promote change that is led by and meaningful for those for whom they have been advocating, at times with little knowledge of the individuals or communities themselves.

Implications for Policy Makers

As ESSA legislation opened the doors for alternative assessment practices and in some ways diminished the role of standardized assessments, policy makers must continue the trend of assuming that those closest to the schools and communities must have more latitude for decision-making. Decentralizing the overreach of federal neoliberal policies like No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and Race to the Top which have linked funding with specific measures and types of accountability and growth must be a priority so that communities, schools, and districts, and the range of stakeholders who share those spaces have more latitude in serving and responding to the unique needs of the community.

That said, the increased role and oversight of state and local government means that the representatives who are in more close proximity are again charged with significant responsibility to make equitable decisions which support the opportunities, learning, and needs of not only their direct constituents, but who see educational equity as a democratic, economic, and national priority. Teachers and students in public schools must not pay the brunt of increasingly austere budgetary cuts to public education funding through increased class sizes, teacher layoffs, unpaid furlough days, eliminated music and art programs, and decreased instructional days. When austerity measures are implemented, those already made most vulnerable by structural inequalities must be protected from these measures, particularly as there seems to be a link between children experiencing poverty attending well-funded schools and their eventual likelihood of high school graduation and eventual earnings as adults (Jackson, Johnson, & Persico, 2015). This means that, at least in the state of Georgia, a re-prioritization of financial resources toward public education and assuring equitable learning opportunities must be a shared priority.

In purely economic terms, the economic cost of teacher attrition, particularly impacting high-poverty schools (not to mention urban students' access to equitable education) (Au, 2009; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001) cannot continue. When teacher job satisfaction is at the lowest point in over 25 years (Metlife Survey of the American Teacher, 2014) with only 39% of teachers satisfied with their work, clearly this is a national crisis and must be treated as such. When the loss of one teacher in a large, high-poverty, urban district can cost over $9,000 (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007) it is clear that we cannot afford to continue to lose teachers who have committed their education and their vocation to the endeavor of supporting learners.

In an issue intimately related to teacher satisfaction and retention, policy makers in our state and beyond must take heed of the

voices of over 53,000 teachers surveyed by our state certifying body (GDOE, 2015), noting that Georgia teachers (like many teachers across the US) feel tremendous pressure and accountability and overrun with mandated assessment even while they experience few resources and little authentic support. The vulnerability of teachers in states such as Georgia where teacher evaluation systems are implemented and consequential even before they have been found to be reliable, valid, or indicative of teacher effectiveness. As some legislation creates opportunities to re-envision assessment practices which might more meaningfully document and demonstrate student and teacher growth and success, policy makers on the local, state, and national level must partner with those school and district administrators, teacher educators, educational researchers, and most importantly the teachers, students, and community members who can provide insight into more meaningful, authentic, and just alternatives.

Implications for Students, Parents, and Community Members

Learners in urban communities are the primary individuals whose schooling experiences suffer due to these policies and their implementation (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Diamond & Spillane, 2004). They are subjected to underprepared teachers, scripted curriculum, and testing regimes that limit their opportunities and access to equitable schooling (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2007; Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman; 2004; Au, 2007; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Smagorinsky, Lakley & Johnson, 2002). How might policymakers, the testing industrial complex (TIC), and curriculum design industrial complex (CDIC) (Kavanagh & Fisher-Ari, 2015) utilize the educational research to understand the consequences of policy implementation as realized in urban schooling? In some communities, learners themselves are opting out of taking the tests, though they are subjected to schooling practices, which are overly focused on these assessments across the year. How might educators truly support students' rights to an equitable education and limit the impact that high-stakes testing has on a daily basis in classrooms around the country?

Parents, and community members hold a great deal of sway in reframing the testing culture. When these critical stakeholders use their voices to advocate, and particularly when they do so in mass (Strauss, 2013; Ramaswamey 2015), school structures begin to shift. When families demand more instructional time, more opportunities for developmentally appropriate, student-driven learning, when they know their rights and the rights of their child, and when they are clear about the priorities for education that are democratizing, things change. Families hold great sway over local policies, and when parents are informed about what is best for their kids, they can be the most powerful advocates for change. Current discourses and commitments of families opting out of the testing culture and withdrawing their children from school during testing are gaining momentum.

Partnerships between teachers, families, and community allies can leverage significant structural change. After passing ESSA, state and local officials have increasing control over the direction of educational funding, accountability structures, and the outcomes available to all children. As families increasingly involve themselves in local politics, we feel there is great hope for policymakers and the reforms they support to be increasingly informed and influenced by the voices and demands of the constituents.

Coalitions for Public Schools, Urban Equity, and Educational Justice

It will take all of these stakeholders working together to shift discourses and policies about public schooling and the experiences of those who learn and teach. This is critical work, that must be done by listening carefully to the insights of those who experience, day to day, the realities and implementations of these policies. With this collaboration, we might imagine and work to create a reality which supports equity for learners in every school and community while supporting teachers as they grow more deeply connected to and successful within their chosen vocation.

Those of us who shape policy at all levels must continue to pose the questions "Who benefits and who does not benefit from the decision that is being made? How might these decisions be decided and implemented in ways that are congruent with the intention of educational equity?" Only then might we move closer to such a worthy goal.

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