RECONCEPTUALIZING CONTEXT AND COMPLEXITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION
Learning Teaching as an Interpretive Process

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More than a decade ago, Cochran-Smith (2003) argued that a major problem with efforts to reform both teaching and teacher preparation is a failure by many stakeholders to comprehend the "unforgiving complexity of teaching" (p. 3). Much of the discourse of educational policy and reform, both then and now, conceptualized teaching as a relatively simple process of teachers enacting particular strategies or teaching moves that would result in a linear progression of increased student achievement as measured by high-stakes standardized tests (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Warner, 2016b). Such a theory of teaching ignores the complex, recursive, and often rhizomatic nature of both teaching and learning to teach (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith, Ell, Grudnoff, Ludlow, Haigh, & Hill, 2014; Nash, 2013; Strom, 2015; Yarmus & Vagliardo, 2014). Ignoring these complexities to focus on linear, process-product theories of teaching might be forgivable if public education in the United States could demonstrate a record of helping all or even the majority of its students achieve high academic outcomes. Unfortunately, it cannot truthfully do so.

Minoritized (McCarty, 2002) American students are caught in a produced structural crisis as they are consistently overrepresented in special education, underrepresented in gifted programs, and disproportionately represented in discipline referrals (Blanchett, 2006; Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2004; Skiba, 2014). They often attend schools that are under-resourced and have high rates of teacher turnover (Office for Civil Rights Office, 2014). Furthermore, results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveal that most American students (not just the minoritized) score below a level of proficiency in the core subjects of math, reading, writing, science, and history. In fourth grade, 60% of students score at or below proficiency in math and 64% of students in reading. By eighth

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grade, additional ground is lost with 67% of students scoring at a basic or below basic level in math, 66% in reading, 68% in science, 73% in writing, and 82% in history (NAEP, 2011, 2014, 2015). Students' scores are further divided along socioeconomic, racial, and linguistic lines: 36% of urban fourth-grade students score at a proficient level or above in core subjects compared to 44% of suburban students (NAEP, 2015); 45% of White fourth graders score at or above a proficient level compared to 28% of Pacific Islanders, 21% of Hispanic students, 21% of Native American students, and 18% of Black students (NAEP, 2015); and only 21%–24% of speakers of heritage languages other than English meet proficiency in core subjects (NAEP, 2014). These inequities highlight the imperative to move beyond business as usual in teacher education. We agree with Boutte (2012) who encouraged us to move from "viewing urban schools from a crises perspective," and to "pause and question, 'How can we change the prevailing image and substance of urban schools from that of endemic nonsuccess to one of success?" (p. 525).

Like Hollins (2015b), we consider that

> the challenge for teacher educators is that of designing preservice teacher preparation programs that consistently prepare teachers who are capable of facilitating excellent academic performance for all students, including those from … cultural and experiential backgrounds [that differ from their own backgrounds]. (p. 118)

When referring to cultural differences we view culture from a cultural-historical perspective (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003), taking cultural fluidity (Paris, 2012) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) into consideration, moving beyond "tendenc[ies] to conflate ethnicity with culture, with assignment to ethnic groups made on the basis of immutable and often stable characteristics" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 21) and "expectations of individual skills and behaviors on the basis of category membership, assuming that all group members share the same set of experiences, skills, and interests" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 20). Such an approach is elsewhere labeled as "analytic stereotyping" (Sarangi, 1994) which feeds into "discourses of othering" (Dervin, 2016, p. 43) and perpetuates false dichotomies around the complex notion of difference (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003).

In contrast, Hollins' (2011, 2015b) conceptualization of *learning teaching as an interpretive process* (LTIP) provides guidance for candidates to look at "how engagement in shared and dynamic practices of different communities contribute to individual learning and development" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). In order to cultivate these habits of mind, defined as "professional reasoning underlying the practitioners' actions" (Grossman et al., 2009, p. 2071), candidates are guided to focus on the individual experiences of each learner from "inside out" rather than "outside in," moving away from teaching to a community that presumably shares certain traits to teaching a learner with unique cultural experiences.

Thus learning teaching as an interpretive process is key to bringing about social justice in urban schools, as it focuses systematically on the actual teaching practices teacher candidates develop and apply in such complex contexts, rather than on exemplifying the characteristics and practices of their mentor teachers, or on strategies to change their ideologies toward minoritized students (Anderson & Stillman, 2013). This is particularly important as "the academic performance of underserved students depends on access to high-quality teaching and learning experiences" (Hollins, 2015b, p. ix). Currently, most schools in urban communities are failing. They have the highest rates of teacher attrition, with between 13% to 28% of novice teachers leaving after the first year, and between 44% to 74% leaving within 5 years (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2015). Teacher attrition directly effects student achievement, even among students whose teachers have not left, and principally in schools serving urban students (Papay et al., 2015). The extent to

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which teachers can provide pre-K–12 students with excellent teaching depends on a teacher's proficiency in creating learning experiences that draw on students' knowledge and experiences, which implicates the need for teachers to learn to place their teaching practices in the context of students' lived experiences. Yet the demographic divide (Boser, 2014) between students—49% of who are of color, and teachers—80% of whom are White (U.S. Department of Education, 2016)—has widened, making it more challenging for teachers to provide contextualized instruction for students. In order to meet these challenges, teacher preparation programs need to make a substantial departure from traditional models to adapt to the complexity of urban school contexts (Hollins, 2015b).

Taking up this charge, this paper recounts how a group of faculty members in an urban teacher education program at a research university in the Midwestern United States is attempting to restructure teacher preparation using Hollins' theory of *teaching as an interpretive process* (TIP) (Hollins, 2011, 2015b). Organized into three sections, we first present a conceptual frame articulating our understanding of TIP (Hollins, 2011, 2015b) in contrast to traditional models; second, an account of our struggles as teacher educators and scholars of teacher education to reconstruct our conceptions of teaching and learning to teach in light of TIP, including a description of a tool we have utilized to help teacher candidates understand and internalize TIP; and fourth, implications of our work with thoughts on moving forward.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME

Central to our inquiry is the assertion that teaching and learning teaching are contested concepts whose definitions vary both within the field of professional education and the general public (Eisner, 1984; Jackson, 1986; Lefstein, 2005; Smagorinsky, 2013; Smagorinsky, Rhym, & Moore, 2013; Warner, 2016b). Undergirding these varying and sometimes conflicting definitions are contrasting understandings of the values, purposes, and processes of teaching with such understandings having significant implications for teacher education (Biesta, 2013; Labaree, 1997; Lefstein & Snell, 2014).

Hollins (2015b) described two major paradigms for conceptualizing learning teaching, which she labeled *learning teaching through representation and approximation of practice* (LTRAP) and *learning teaching as an interpretive process* (LTIP). The former is the traditional and most prevalent model, which gives primacy to replication of practice and assumes that teacher candidates learn best by emulating the behaviors and actions of experienced teachers. The latter, in contrast, foregrounds inquiry into specific combinations of learners, learning environments, curricula, and communities, assuming that teacher candidates truly learn to be teachers by internalizing patterns of professional thinking and applying those habits of mind to each unique learning context in which they are asked to teach. In the following paragraphs, we provide additional details regarding each paradigm.

LTRAP

In the more traditional representation and approximation paradigm, teacher candidates are provided with models of practice in the form of teaching demonstrations by faculty and field apprenticeships with master teachers, are expected to emulate that practice, and then receive feedback from mentors. The preparation of teachers to work in Montessori schools is an example of the LTRAP model (Rust & Clift, 2015). As Rust and Clift (2015) describe

> The elements that guided the first Montessori schools—observation (representation), deep knowledge of the didactic materials (decomposition) and design of the environment (approximation)—remain essential to Montessori programs and are accomplished through coursework and guided internships.

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> [Guided internships] offer supervised practice with equipment and with an instructional approach. (pp. 61–62)

In this way, the LTRAP model rests on an idea of teaching that could be conceptualized as a Platonic Form (Plato, trans. 1952)—*Teaching*, with a capital *T*. In such an understanding of Teaching, a universally generalizable best practice is assumed to exist, and master teachers who can deliver lessons that are as close to that Form as possible must be sought in order for teacher candidates to undertake a "cognitive apprenticeship" (Hollins, 2015b, p. 18). As Hollins (2015b) stated, "the understanding of teaching practice candidates construct depends on how teaching is represented, the approximations of teaching practice observed and the approaches they enact" (p. 15). That is, the success of this paradigm is dependent upon the possibility of a teacher education program assembling a sufficient number of master teachers whose own practice comes as close as possible to embodying the teacher education program's vision of *Teaching*, and the ability of the teacher candidates to replicate such practice faithfully. While this model may be possible with Montessori and other specialized schools and programs, it is not the best way to prepare candidates to teach in urban schools because "the least qualified teachers typically end up teaching the least advantaged students" (Darling-Hammond, 2004) in these settings. LTRAP is an inherently conservative vision of teaching, as it assumes that teaching as it currently is represents teaching as it should continue to be.

LTIP

In contrast, the *teaching* in *learning teaching as an interpretive process* is conceptualized as cyclical and recursive, placing it in stark contrast to the traditional, linear, input-output constructions of teaching that have dominated education discourse for at least the last half century (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Strom, 2015). If the LTRAP model is centered upon a Platonic Form of *Teaching*, then LTIP could be conceptualized as an Aristotelian counterpoint to that paradigm (Aristotle, trans. 1952). Just as Aristotle rejected Plato's Theory of Forms for its assertion that an ideal Form existed somewhere separately from its physical context, so does the theory of learning teaching as an interpretive process reject the theory of learning teaching as representation and approximation of practice for its assertion that ideal Teaching can exist absent deep understanding of the context and lived experiences of the learners involved.

A teacher candidate trained in a program centered upon LTIP would envision the act of teaching itself as

> an interpretive process for facilitating learners' growth and development through the application of professional knowledge of learning, learners, subject matter, pedagogy, purpose, and the conditions and context within which learners grow and develop. This interpretive process is the ongoing documentation, interpretation, and translation of students' responses to learning experiences and learning tasks for improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes. (Hollins, 2015a, p. 185)

In order to live such a process, teacher candidates must internalize habits of mind that drive them to inquire into the social, emotional, academic development as well as personal, familial, and cultural values of their students; plan learning experiences based upon those individualized student profiles; carefully observe and interpret student responses to the planned learning experiences; and translate those interpretations into new learning experiences.

Learning teaching as an interpretive process then, is far more complex than replicating individual activities and teaching moves or reproducing the behaviors of a particular teacher; instead

> Learning to teach is a complex and multidimensional process that depends on the ability to synthesize, integrate, and apply knowledge from multiple sources in constructing an

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> understanding of how to facilitate learning in complex dynamic contexts with a multiplicity of aspects that require attention and action. (Hollins, 2011, p. 403)

LTIP Epistemic Practices. In order to facilitate teacher candidates learning teaching as an interpretive process, Hollins (2011) argued that teacher education programs must be organized around specific *epistemic practices*, which are

> purposefully selected interrelated and reciprocal practices that provide coherence, continuity, and consistency for acquiring, constructing, and exploring new knowledge and reexamining existing ideas in a particular setting under particular conditions. (p. 84)

A teacher education program organized around LTIP is less dependent upon recruitment of master teachers in urban schools than upon its own ability to develop epistemic practices that nurture the skills and habits of mind candidates need to engage in concurrent cycles of teaching and inquiry as described above. The three primary categories of epistemic practice for LTIP are *focused inquiry*, *directed observation*, and *peripheral participation/guided practice* (Hollins, 2015b).

According to Hollins (2011), "Focused inquiry includes reading the research and theory that supports [a] particular area of practice; examining documented accounts and descriptions [of that area of practice]; and interviewing practitioners and participants" (p. 120). An example of LTIP in action includes the way teacher educators facilitate teacher candidates' learning about classroom management, a perennial concern of new teachers. Using an LTIP model, teacher candidates might read articles on various perspectives of management concepts and theories, watch videos or read accounts of teachers attempting to put those concepts into practice, and interview current educators about their personal understandings of management. After completing *focused inquiry* into a particular element of teaching practice, teacher candidates then complete a *directed observation* of teaching in a particular context, looking specifically at the ways the element of practice under study, for example management, are manifested in that specific environment, and, more importantly, how the individual learners in that environment respond to that practice and make progress toward the intended learning outcomes.

Teacher candidates then compare their *directed observations* to what they learned during their *focused inquiry* and consider ways in which teaching practice for learners in that specific context might be improved or adjusted in order to facilitate students' achievement of learning outcomes. Next, with *guided practice*, candidates attempt to enact, "a learning segment under the close supervision" of a more experienced teacher, university supervisor, or teacher educator (Hollins, 2015b, p. 120), asking themselves questions about the response of learners to their practice as they had previously asked about the practice of others during directed observation. These questions should lead to new *focused inquiries* into interrelated elements of teaching, and the cycle of epistemic practices would continue, constantly generating new questions and new lines of inquiry.

METHODOLOGY

To study our interactions with Hollins' theory, we chose self-study research methodology due to its epistemological and axiological compatibility with the tenets of TIP itself. Self-study enacts the understanding that educational theory is living—growing and changing as education practice grows and changes (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Like LaBoskey (2004), we seek "to determine whether or not our practice [as teacher educators] is consistent with our evolving ideals and theoretical perspectives" (p. 820), in our case, our evolving ideals and theoretical perspectives on TIP and LTIP.

Supported with a small start-up grant, a group of faculty members and graduate students began meeting in the fall semester of

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2015 to engage in TIP implementation across several programs. Our goals were twofold: first, to study the effects of restructuring the courses we teach and, eventually, the certification programs in our school with TIP as the unifying conceptual frame; and second, to engage in self-study of translating TIP from theory to practice and sharing our learning with institutional colleagues.

Participants and Setting

Clear articulation of context and positionality is central to rigorous self-study (LaBoskey, 2004). The university housing our inquiry is part of a statewide public university system and enrolls over 16,000 students. The School of Education, whose mission is centered on social justice in urban contexts, is 1 of 14 academic units on campus with 891 students—38% undergraduate and 62% graduate. The School of Education is made up of three divisions: Educational Leadership Policy and Foundations, Counseling and Educational Psychology, and Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies. The TIP working group—Connor, Clare, Julia, Katya, Kindel, Leah, and Rhianna—is composed of current faculty and doctoral students in early childhood, elementary, secondary, literacy, and graduate education programs. Connor is a former high school English and history teacher who studies axiological and logistical questions in teacher education policy, programming, and assessment. Clare, who taught in public schools in Columbus, Ohio for 15 years, studies issues of equity and social justice in mathematics education, particularly as related to inquiry-based learning, classroom discourse, and classroom connectivity technologies. Julia, an early childhood educator and former preschool director, focuses her research on guidance practices, teacher efficacy, and linguistic diversity. Katya is a former early childhood teacher with a research interest in educational experiences of resettled refugee children in the urban core. Kindel is a former urban early childhood educator and literacy specialist with an interest in teacher identity and high leverage literacy practices. Two of the researchers, Rhianna and Leah, are graduate students who have both taught and assisted in courses throughout their work at the institution. Rhianna is a former early childhood educator and administrator with experience in teacher professional development. Leah is a former middle school teacher with a background in mentoring preservice and novice teachers and literacy programing for adolescents.

At this point, our inquiry has led us to reconceptualize our own understandings of teaching and learning to teach, develop tools to facilitate teacher candidates' development of these new understandings, and allow teacher candidates to use those understandings within their own emerging professional practices. Simultaneously, we have been inquiring into our own practice in order to determine whether the teacher candidates were indeed developing the habits of mind and deep understandings of practice that we believed we were facilitating.

Data Sources and Analysis

A vital technique of self-study is researcher dialogue to develop ideas about practice that continually inform decisions about data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Weekly dialogic meetings have served as the central forum for our self-study as both researchers and teacher educators. During our weekly meetings, we discussed our understandings of TIP in order to examine the extent to which student thinking is influenced by the use of TIP epistemic practices in the courses we teach. This dialogue

> Allow[ed] for the social construction of knowledge … capture[d] the distributed and dynamic nature of teacher cognition, provide[d] for immediate opportunities to confront misconceptions, support[ed] the development of caring communities, and help[ed] strengthen the voices of … participants. (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 851)

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The meetings were audio recorded and transcribed by a team member. Transcriptions were then used as data for further analysis to reveal our developing conceptions of TIP and to archive our research process. Although we have also engaged in data collection and initial analysis of in-depth, phenomenological teacher candidate interviews (Seidman, 2013), candidate work samples, and observations of actual classroom practice, this process is ongoing. Thus we are not prepared, at this point, to make definitive claims about the degree of success we have had in facilitating our teacher candidates' adoption of TIP practices and habits of mind. Instead, to illuminate our evolving practice of TIP, we focus mainly on excerpts of transcribed dialogue surrounding "critical incidents" (Kosnik, 2001, p. 66) from our weekly dialogic meetings. Specifically, we highlight data surrounding how we struggled to reconceptualize both our own and our students' thinking about learning teaching and share some of the strategies we have developed as we have implemented LTIP.

Limitations

LaBoskey (2004) argued that self-study research such as ours "advance[s] the field through *the construction, testing, sharing, and retesting of exemplars* of teaching practice" (p. 821) and "contribute[s] to a larger reform agenda by making the 'local knowledge' we have generated available to the whole educational community in ways that will raise new questions, stimulate debate, and suggest other possibilities" (p. 858). Even so, we recognize that the findings presented in this article are preliminary, and intend to share more after full data analysis is complete. As such, the purpose of this article is to communicate our initial tensions and understandings about the processes of transforming university teacher preparation at the program level. Revealing the transformation process is important as, in the current research literature, there are very few teacher preparation implementation models centered on student learning outcomes. LTIP is predicated on student learning as the essential outcome of socially just work (Hollins, 2015b). In order to understand and eventually improve their own practice, teachers and teacher educators must be "simultaneously concerned with our own learning" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 819). Thus, we begin discussing our inquiry into LTIP at the program level by exploring our own struggles to learn a new conceptualization of teaching and learning teaching. Before we can understand the possible implications of our work on candidates, we must understand its implications for ourselves (LaBoskey, 2004). As the cycle of interpretation itself, our own work is ongoing and recursive.

FINDINGS

In this section we explore two major themes that have emerged from our self-study of the process of reshaping our teacher education coursework and programs around LTIP. The first of these themes centers upon our own difficulty in escaping from the LTRAP ideological paradigm that was the center of our own training and that dominates the discourse of our current professional contexts. The second theme involves our realization of the importance of shifting our own and teacher candidates' unit of analysis for interpreting successful practice from the whole class to the individual student.

Teacher Educators Trapped in LTRAP

Analysis of our meeting transcripts and journals indicated that our central challenge in redesigning our coursework and certification programs around the conceptualization of *learning teaching as an interpretive process* was that we, as teacher educators and former pre-K–12 teachers were deeply steeped and saturated in *learning teaching through representation and approximation of practice.* All members of the research team had received their teacher education through traditional teacher education programs that, in one way or

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another, provided models of "best practice" and expected teacher candidates to emulate those models. These experiences as classroom teachers were powerful forces in shaping our identities and practices as teacher educators.

For many of us, our first foray into teacher education was in serving as cooperating teachers for student teachers placed in our classrooms, and the universities we worked with tended to frame our roles as providing models of practice for their student teachers to follow. Furthermore, when we made the transition to teaching in university settings, we became members of teacher certification programs rooted in LTRAP. Time and again in our research meetings, different members of the team recounted struggles in framing instruction for teacher candidates, explaining the purposes of analytic tools, or establishing purposes for clinical observations. This was problematic because, as Julia argued, "if we as teacher educators are doing our job, [conveying TIP as] the expectation of a good teacher, there shouldn't be a discrepancy between the expectation of a good teacher and how we prepare the [teacher candidates]." That is, if we were going to argue to our candidates that theoretical clarity and interpretive habits of mind were essential to their future teaching practice, then we, as teacher educators, also had to learn to consistently practice and maintain such theoretical clarity and interpretive habits of mind. Yet what we realized was that, when candidates did not grasp a TIP concept by means of our first attempt at teaching the concept, as instructors, we tended unconsciously retreat to the familiar and explain using an LTRAP paradigm because it was what we were most comfortable with, as Kindel, Julia, and Connor discussed:

> **Kindel:** I wonder if we might incorporate those into students' interpretations of practice … you said something like, "What inequities might I be—"
>
> **Julia:** Reinforcing.
>
> **Kindel:** Reinforcing … and in that way are we teaching students to develop those habits of mind of thinking that way?… *Thinking* that way isn't enough though, because I used to think that way as a [pre-K–12] teacher but then feel powerless to do anything.
>
> **Connor:** I wish I knew [then] what I … know [now]—that … it was okay to critically analyze myself and my practice and find fault and that I could then change

Though we recognized that our experiences as teachers and teacher educators had been rooted in the LTRAP paradigm, we initially failed to realize just how difficult it would be for us to fully shift our deep-seated conceptualization of teaching and learning from LTRAP to LTIP. In order to do so the research team had to confront the tacit understandings of teaching that we brought into the project before we could then deconstruct it and then construct a new understanding of both teaching and learning teaching.

Shifting the Unit of Analysis

A key both to establishing that conceptual clarity for ourselves and to facilitating such clarity for students was shifting the unit of analysis by which we judged successful teaching from the whole class to individual students. Connor explained the importance of this realization:

> When I was in the classroom as a K–12 teacher, I thought I was really, really good [at teaching]. And I was really, really good for a particular set of students … but only in retrospect am I able to see [that] I was really, really good at being what teachers were expected to be, not [at being] what teachers should be … I didn't have any preparation to really question … "what am I reinforcing through my practice, what kind of inequities … are going on here?" … I didn't have the tools to really analyze my own practice … [W]e have like 26% of graduating seniors who are proficient in math and 35% who are proficient in reading[1] … as a whole the system [public education] isn't really working.

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This excerpt from our group dialogue centered upon Connor's recognition that the conceptualization of teaching that guided his practice as a classroom teacher did not necessarily serve all of his students well. In fact, as Connor and Julia talked through these issues, they were reminded that, not only did the conceptualization of teaching that Connor was describing inevitably lead to a bell curve, but that, in some sense, the goal of such teaching was to establish a bell curve.

Through dialogue with the research team, Connor came to understand that the way he learned to teach involved a linear, process-product teaching practice. He explained

> I was taught, here's your list of strategies that you use as an English teacher. Here's your outcomes … if there was any kind of discussion of responsiveness, it was at the class [level], the class was the unit of analysis, which becomes [problematic] then, [leading me to think], "Alright, I'm shooting for the 70% [of my students mastering the content] here" … as long as most of my kids get it, I move on to the next thing … that's how I was trained, and I think that's how most teachers are still trained.

He began to realize that prior training led him to evaluate his teaching using the entire class as a unit of analysis, which resulted in judging effective teaching as that teaching which was effective for most of his students, even though it may not have been effective for certain individuals in his classes. His work with LTIP, however, helped him to shift the unit of analysis of effective teaching to consider individual students' needs within the classroom. This shift helped him realize that prior approaches he had taken to teaching would inevitably not meet the learning needs of some students. For Connor, whose philosophical stance toward education centered upon social justice and equity, such disparity in outcomes was unacceptable.

TIP Commentaries. We hope that such outcomes are unacceptable for our teacher candidates as well. Providing them with tools that will help them to shift their own measures of effective teaching from the majority of the class to meeting the learning needs of individuals has been a central activity in our TIP research. A major tool that we have used to facilitate changes in our teacher candidates' analyses of students' learning needs is the TIP commentary process.

The TIP commentary process involves *focused inquiry*, *directed observations*, and *guided practice* (Hollins, 2015b). Teacher candidates first engage in *focused inquiry* into a particular subject by reading a series of texts about the concept, ranging from practitioner-oriented pieces to theoretical and conceptual articles. They are also asked to perform *directed observations*, inquiring into the ways in which that subject is manifested within the teaching practices at their field experience placements. Having carried out focused inquiry and directed observations, they write a commentary on the class Blackboard site, responding to the following prompts:

1. How do the readings and viewings in this week's module relate to each other?
2. How do they relate to the real context of your field experience?
   - How are the topics or connecting themes of this week's readings addressed in your field experience?
   - What do you/your cooperating teacher do/teach in order to facilitate learning related to week's topic/theme?
   - What seems to be the purpose(s) of what you/your cooperating teacher does/teaches in relation to this week's topic/theme?
   - How have the individual students in the class responded to your/your cooperating teacher's attempts to facilitate learning related to this week's topic/theme?

Teacher candidates' written TIP commentaries then form the basis of discussions, both online and within class meeting, as they work together to deconstruct the complexities of

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teaching and learning environments. With the help of a faculty facilitator, they draw upon both the research literature used for focused inquiry and the directed observations of student learning to develop adjustments to practice that they will enact when they return to their field experience sites for *guided practice*. The commentary tool asks teacher candidates to make sophisticated interpretations of practice, much more than the typical reading response.

While the commentary questions themselves may seem rather simple, the responses our candidates have generated are quite complex. To illustrate this, we will provide excerpts from a commentary written by a candidate who we will refer to as Jayne, in response to a series of readings on methods and theories of teaching grammar. This particular commentary was chosen because it exhibits a variety of the elements of LTIP in a fairly compact package. However, it is also representative of the level of detail and analysis that we have seen to this point from nearly all of our students. This example provides a representation of the depth of thinking that our candidates engage in as they use commentary as a tool.

Rather than the tired summaries and discursive rehashing of articles that so often characterizes reaction papers and Blackboard posts in college classrooms, Jayne's commentary demonstrated her ability to use the week's readings as a lens to critically analyze the teaching practice she had observed in a high school English classroom. For example, Jayne observed that the lack of significant writing instruction in her placement, and the substitution, instead, of parts of speech identification worksheets

> is largely a function of my [cooperating teacher's] priorities in class: maintaining classroom order and sticking to a schedule.… Writing, as demonstrated in our reading and videos, is no easy process. It requires revision, feedback, collaboration, and teaching students how to be constructive critics of their classmates' (and by extension, their own) writing, and giving them the freedom to do so. This requires a teacher to dedicate significant classroom time to modeling and instructing these skills, as well as giving students time to practice and gain mastery of them. This would take time away from other instructional activities, and most likely would produce some "controlled chaos" in the class, a concept my [cooperating teacher] admits that she hates.

In an LTRAP model, Jayne would be looking to approximate the practice of her cooperating teacher, which tended to involve privileging classroom order over the experimentation and process-oriented strategies for teaching grammar recommended in her course readings. The difference between LTRAP as experienced by the student and what we are proposing in university classrooms would likely promote the theory-practice divide so often discussed in relation to teacher education, with the university coursework representing theory and the observed instruction of the cooperating teacher representing practice (Anderson & Freebody, 2012; Hughes, 2006). The TIP commentary process provides an opportunity for students to realize the relationship between theory and practice—that indeed *all* practice is driven by theory, whether or not teachers are aware of the influences of theory on their own practice, because theory is derived from analysis of practice.

One goal of LTIP, accordingly, is to help teacher candidates identify and analyze differing practices. Using the TIP commentary process, teacher candidates are able to realize how practice driven by one theory might look compared to practice driven by another. Later in Jayne's commentary, she demonstrated awareness of such a difference:

> My [cooperating teacher] relies most on a behaviorist model of pedagogy, where she gives students facts that they are expected to memorize and replicate on multiple-choice benchmark tests they take about once a week. A more constructivist approach, would rely more on students building their own knowledge based on their own prior knowledge and

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> experiences, a critical part of authentic writing, has not been legitimated by the classroom culture, and thus even writing becomes a rote completion of a five-paragraph essay. Thus, the activities that have been explored in today's [university methods course], would be a departure from what has occurred in the classroom so far. I think Smagorinsky's (2007) belief that writing [is] "tied to a person's growing sense of self" (p. 100) would help students engage more fully in the writing process, but I also think that in order to get students to write this way, a culture shift and community building needs to occur in the classroom.

In these examples, Jayne has demonstrated the TIP habits of mind of using research as an analytical lens, interpreting practice in light of learning theory, and translating that analysis and interpretation into potential action to improve learning outcomes for the specific students in that class. Such habits will allow Jayne to move beyond a paradigm of teaching modeled by her cooperating teacher and that she has likely been immersed in for most of her educational life. They are the habits of mind of someone who is putting teaching as an interpretive process to work.

DISCUSSION

Drawing on Schon (1983), Barnes (1998) noted that "Merely to change teachers' conscious beliefs was not enough to change their classroom practices. Genuine innovation depends on changes in the unconscious frames of reference that shape their perceptions of what is possible in their lessons" (p. xii). We discovered that, in order to develop programs of teacher education centered upon a new conceptualization of teaching and learning teaching, we, as teacher educators first had to confront and then shift our own unconscious frames of reference. The recursive dialogue we have undertaken as a result of our self-study has allowed us to confront and shift our own unconscious frames of reference, and our understanding continues to evolve as we learn more.

Implications for Practice. Darling-Hammond (2006) argued that an essential component of effective teacher education programs was a "common clear vision of good teaching that permeates all course work and clinical experiences, creating a coherent set of learning experiences" (p. 305). This push for coherency in vision has been included in the new Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation processes for the accreditation of teacher preparation programs, particularly for those institutions who choose the Inquiry Brief pathway to accreditation, which "emphasizes study of candidate and completer outcomes … starting from the provider's questions about the programs' mission and results" (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2016, p. 7). However, our self-study results indicate that achieving a coherent and cohesive vision of teaching across an institution is much more difficult than simply agreeing upon that vision and then implementing it. While reaching consensus upon a vision of good teaching itself might very well be a difficult endeavor, given the many competing understandings of good teaching that permeate the profession (Wang, Lin, Spalding, Klecka, & O'Dell, 2011; Warner, 2016b), our research indicates that reaching consensus is just the first step. To truly enact a new and shared vision of good teaching, as we have attempted to do with our LTIP work, space must be made within teacher education programs for faculty to engage in structured dialogue (Hollins, 2011) that will allow them to confront, deconstruct, and, eventually reconstruct the tacit and entrenched conceptualizations of teaching and learning teaching that have guided and continue to guide their practice.

We also believe that such dialogue would benefit teacher candidates as they move throughout their programs. Research clearly indicates that candidates enter teacher education programs with powerful preexisting notions about what it means to be a teacher and what characterizes good teaching (Chong,

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2011; Lortie & Clement, 1975; Poulou, 2007; Warner, 2016a). If teacher education programs are going to have the kind of impact upon teaching practice that is not only an imperative for social justice, but increasingly expected by both local and national policymakers, then teacher education programs will need to develop multiple means to help teacher candidates deconstruct their preconceived notions about teaching and construct new beliefs and understandings.

Implications for Research. While we have developed a variety of tools that we believe will help our teacher candidates reconceptualize teaching as an interpretive process, further research is needed to establish the efficacy of the tools in changing teacher candidate belief and practice. We are in the process of analyzing data from phenomenological interviews with teacher candidates, which we are triangulating with course assignments and performance assessments to attempt to answer that question. Further research is also needed to investigate the longevity of any change we might effect, as we are concerned about the socialization mechanisms of schools in reshaping candidates' beliefs and practices once they entered the workforce (Flores & Day, 2006; Smagorinsky et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION—MOVING FORWARD

Recognizing the failure of dominant theories of teaching and learning teaching to guide teachers and teacher educators toward the facilitation of learning for all students, Strom (2015) called for teacher education researchers to consider "new lenses and tools [that can] turn our attention to the processes through which outcomes are produced" (p. 330). We believe that Hollins' theory of TIP has given us the necessary lens to produce and implement such quality tools. We have watched our teacher candidates delve deeper into the "unforgiving complexity of teaching" (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 3) in their analysis of readings, observations, and interpretations of developing professional practice. By engaging these candidates and ourselves in cycles of teaching and learning teaching as an interpretive process, we have tried to diverge from the linear path of the dominant theories that have, so far, been unsuccessful at producing high academic outcomes for all pre-K–12 students. However, as implied by the excerpts of dialogue above, diverging from traditional, well-worn paths is not an easy task. Process-product paradigms of teaching and LTRAP models of learning to teach are pervasive in our own backgrounds and in the institutional histories and current contexts of public schools. Yet continuous cycles of critical analysis and interpretation of our own practice have resulted in an effective TIP process that we continue to hone as we collect and analyze data further.

Along with the commentaries, drawing upon Hollins's (2011, 2015b) work, the TIP research group has implemented a variety of other tools to help students understand and apply TIP including a three-part notetaking tool, a teaching dilemma, and a process for interpretive clinical rounds. As these tools are refined and revised, we anticipate describing them in future presentations of our continued work. More importantly, as we continually engage in self-study, analyze student work samples, observe our candidates in the field, and follow them into their own classrooms after graduation, we hope to be able to say with some degree of certainty that they are indeed adopting the practices and habits of mind inherent in TIP, and that those practices are benefiting the pre-K–12 students who we all serve. We believe, based upon Hollins's (2011) work and the work of like-minded scholars (Linton & Gordon, 2015), that such sustained change in practice will lead to improved learning environments and learning outcomes for the pre-K–12 students. For the sake of our students, we hope that other scholars and practitioners will step off the linear path with us and explore the complexity of TIP (Hollins, 2011, 2015b) to envision a new landscape of teaching and teacher education.

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NOTE

1. Actual NAEP (2015) data indicates that 26% of graduating seniors are proficient in mathematics and 38% in reading.

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