LEADing for Social Justice: A Journey of Inquiry & Reflective Practice

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Abstract

This article discusses the Leading for Equity, Achievement, and Democracy (LEAD) Program, which is a partnership administrative credential program of the California State University, East Bay (formerly Hayward) and the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools based in Oakland, California. The LEAD developmental journey involves a process of introspection, reflection, and direction (next steps) toward a deeper understanding of what it means to lead for equity and social justice. Central to this work has been the instructional and pedagogical support for inquiry and reflective practice throughout the cohort year. This article presents illustrations of how instructors can support aspiring leaders to develop skills that strengthen their ability to take actions which transform schools into sites of powerful teaching and learning.
For three years, the authors of this article engaged in a partnership effort to support and promote the type of leadership that could transform our local schools into sites of powerful teaching and learning and our school communities into centers of social action and change. In this article, we share the work we have done to establish an administrative credential program that sought to do more than prepare leaders to function in schools as they currently exist. Through the integration of inquiry and reflection, we sought to develop administrative credential candidates who would engage in leadership practice that would interrupt current and persistent inequities and move schools toward shared visions of equity and achievement. Through an analysis of our teaching and through the words of our former students (quotes used to further illustrate our instructional strategies), we explore the role of inquiry and reflective practice as tools for social justice leadership development.

Before launching into our discussion, we believe it is crucial to be explicit about how we define “leadership for social justice.” First, we consider what we mean by leadership by borrowing from the work of Julian Weissglass (1998), where leadership is viewed as taking responsibility for what matters in education. Second, our own understanding of the critical race and critical pedagogy literature and extensive data that have documented the inequities that exist in our educational system have led us to define social justice in education using the following premises: (a) we have in our society an unequal distribution of social, political, and material capital; and, (b) the momentum of institutional hegemony in education, based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation,
ability, and language, reproduces and maintains a system of injustice that results in pre-determined outcomes for students according to their personal and community characteristics. Thus, we define leadership for social justice as an anti-racist, anti-biased stance in education that requires proactive work to name and interrupt patterns of injustice in order to envision another set of possibilities for communities “not supposed” to succeed. We should note that while we strive in our work to integrate conceptualizations that help students understand the multiple levels and impact of bias in our society, we have also found that race, individual racism, institutional racism, and white privilege have been some of the most salient features of the schooling conditions faced by our students; so, we make explicit the anti-racist stance in our definition of leadership for social justice.

**LEAD: A Partnership Administrative Credential Program**

The California State University, East Bay (formerly Hayward) Department of Educational Leadership (DEL) and the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) have had a longstanding connection through strongly aligned organizational visions of educational equity. The two organizations established the Leading for Equity, Achievement, and Democracy (LEAD) Program in 2001 as a partnership administrative credential program to support the design of small schools, created to be more personalized and responsive to the needs of diverse student populations (Ayers, Klonsky, & Lyon, 2000; Clinchy, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Meier, 1995). The LEAD Program is currently in its fifth year of operation with two co-instructors, one from each of the partnering organizations. We (the authors) were the originating co-instructors for LEAD (though Rodriguez is no longer teaching in the program).
Leadership for Equity and Achievement: Conceptual Frameworks

One crucial dimension of the CSUEB/BayCES partnership has been the power of the work each partner has done to conceptualize the preparation of educational leaders for equity and achievement. In the case of DEL, they have engaged in a multiple-year process of clarifying DEL student outcomes and their desired impact on schools. Their conceptual framework for leadership preparation is entitled, “Bold, Socially Responsible Leadership (BSRL)” and is captured by five key areas of leadership practice or “Mindscapes,” (Szabo, Hoagland, Lambert, Lopez, Starnes, Stern, Storms, & Vieth, 2001) including:

- Mindscape 1—Teaching and learning for equity and high achievement;
- Mindscape 2—Systems thinking and strategic approaches to developing a learning community;
- Mindscape 3—Building organizational capacity through resource coherence;
- Mindscape 4—Ethical, caring, and reflective practice; and,
- Mindscape 5—Engaging and influencing forces within the larger community.

These Mindscapes are used to frame the curriculum and learning experiences in which all DEL students participate, and they have been analyzed by the DEL faculty to better understand the potential impact of this framework for future leadership preparation strategies (Szabo, et al., 2001; Szabo, Storms, Rodriguez, & Gonzales, 2003). One important lesson emerging from the faculty members’ use of the Mindscapes in their teaching and field supervision activities is that Mindscape 1 (equitable teaching and learning) is the high-leverage element of leadership practice aimed at improving schools serving large populations of low-income students and/or students of color. This implies
that the other four Mindscapes are supporting elements that further strengthen the focus on teaching and learning that is necessary if aspiring leaders are to have an impact on schools serving diverse learners.

BayCES has also invested considerably in the refinement of the BayCES “House,” which depicts the conceptual framework that guides both their overarching mission as an organization and the particular leadership preparation work conducted within the LEAD Program. BayCES frames their work with an overarching “Theory of Action,” which states, “If we build the will, skill, knowledge, capacity, and emotional support of leaders across roles and groups, then they will take action and make change toward high student achievement and educational equity in their local contexts” (BayCES, 2002). The foundation of the BayCES House consists of concerted and deliberate efforts to (1) create and maintain a school learning community that provides intellectual and emotional support; and, (2) build relationships and create alliances across race, class, gender, role, and experience. These elements are key to leadership preparation work that is intended to support innovative practices designed to reverse longstanding trends of underachievement in many local schools. Furthermore, the articulation of the need for both intellectual and emotional support speaks to the often neglected personal challenges that arise among new and established leaders to maintain their educational focus in the face of sometimes overwhelming circumstances in schools (Weissglass, 1998).

Upon this foundation is a system that places the vision for student achievement and educational equity at the center and facilitates and fosters that vision through the use of data-based inquiry and decision-making. Inquiry within this framework is defined as
both a process and a stance. As a process, inquiry enables a leader, along with a school community, to systematically identify the school’s challenges in supporting high achievement and work collaboratively to frame useful questions, gather appropriate data, engage in critical discussions, develop school-level theories of action and measurable goals, and take action to improve the situation. As a stance, inquiry enables a leader to resist the temptation to simply react to daily (even hourly) crises or challenges. Instead, leaders develop a discipline of framing a given situation in light of the knowledge acquired about the school community and to consistently ask questions to formulate a thoughtful, reflective, and more systems-oriented response. Such a stance contributes positively to the development of the school community as a whole and the quality of the leadership practice enacted. The inquiry stance is also characterized in the literature as reflective practice for leaders (Lambert, 2003; Schön, 1983).

Using the combined conceptual frameworks for educational leadership, CSUEB and BayCES provide LEAD students with a set of professional development experiences aimed at improving the equity conditions of local public schools. More traditional approaches to leadership preparation do not always emphasize the importance of maintaining a focus on teaching and learning, nor do they explicitly support students’ use of inquiry and reflective practice as leaders. When the emphasis is placed on leadership as merely site management, it is difficult for leaders to move beyond “crisis mode” to a sense of vision and an inquiry stance. Indeed, the themes that characterized our students’ developmental journey through the LEAD Program included introspection, reflection, and direction (next steps). Recognizing that our students had been selected because they had already articulated and demonstrated their desire to be educational leaders for equity
and social justice, we understood that our starting point would need to prompt students to share how it is they had arrived at this part of their journey. We were also explicit about students’ interdependence as learners, and the cohort structure was a specific design element which served to provide a container for reflections, as well as a source of emotional support for social justice leadership development (Weissglass, 1998).

**Introspection: The LEAD Retreat**

LEAD’s year-long journey began with a June orientation, at which time cohort members met one another, reviewed various logistics, and received important reading and writing assignments to complete over the summer. The various pieces encouraged them to explore who they were as leaders by making explicit the different identities that each of them held. It was an approach that we viewed as “leading from the inside out” (Lambert, et al., 1995), where aspiring school leaders are asked to interrogate how their identities, experiences, and schooling influenced their leadership development, and likewise, how their leadership development influenced their identities. At summer’s end, the cohort reconvened for an intensive, three-day retreat during which they publicly shared their work. The purposes of the LEAD Retreat were to: (1) build inclusion in and among the cohort; (2) explore various experiences that had led to that point and their implications for LEADership; (3) engage in the analysis of text and discussions of ideas related to oppression and bias in school; (4) learn more about BayCES and the CSUEB DEL frameworks; and (5) introduce various structures and processes we would use in the coming year. Leading from the inside out required an introspection that enabled our students to engage with, confront, and question their own beliefs and values. The retreat
work provided the backdrop for a year-long exploration of their development as leaders who were committed to equity, achievement, and democracy.

**Inquiry & Reflective Practice: Creating a Vision of Equity & Achievement**

Each quarter included a contextual component and an aspect of substantive, leadership development work that contributed to the students’ journeys as developing leaders. Having deeply examined their own backgrounds prior to LEAD, students were then asked to locate these experiences within the sociopolitical context of public schooling in the United States and, in doing so, we attended to the need to expose our students to terminology, concepts, and literature on educational equity and social justice to ensure that students could engage with the themes in a serious, inclusive way. We also encouraged our students to begin formulating their individual visions for equity and achievement, as well as to begin thinking about what types of schools could support that particular vision. This involved revisiting beliefs and values, as well as surfacing the ways in which professional (and personal) experiences with the sociopolitical context of schooling had shaped the beliefs, values, and vision that students held about educational equity.

**Inquiry for Equity: Articulating a Vision of Powerful Teaching & Learning**

Instructional leadership became the focus of the Winter quarter. The context we provided to our students was the current environment of high stakes accountability and the urgency of the achievement gaps that exist in most urban schools. The focus for substantive work was on supporting teaching and learning activities that result in transformed, responsive schools that could serve the needs of culturally, socioeconomically, and linguistically diverse students. Students considered how the
context of external accountability—while a reality of their lives as leaders—could be limiting to their sensibilities as leaders for equity and social justice. Indeed, accountability to students, parents, and other local community members for what kids should know and be able to do as a result of being a member of their school communities, became an important challenge for students to begin grappling with as new leaders. The challenge to our students was to look deeply at their school communities through multiple lenses that incorporated, for example, Special Education, support for English Language Learners, and the engagement of parents in supporting equity and achievement.

As one student expressed,

> Vision Matters….Visions hold us together and keep us strong. If successfully used, visions can also help us see the results of work done so far. When data is periodically and systematically created, a school community is able to see the progress being made. This progress simply serves as further inspiration to keep doing the hard work of grappling with race and culture, embracing community, supporting one another, being in inquiry, and practicing.

**Inquiry and Design: Vision Enacted**

As is probably common with most administrative credential programs, students often challenged us as instructors to incorporate more “nuts and bolts” issues into the curriculum. Often, this urgency came from an under-exposure to the technical aspects of the role of school principal. The Spring quarter thus focused on the design issues that were implied by the articulation of visions for equity, achievement, and powerful teaching and learning. The context for our students was a revisiting of the focus on small,
personalized learning environments for students attending urban schools and a systems approach (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Lambert, 2003) that was necessary to ensure that the visions our students held could be realized. This approach reframed budgets, master schedules, hiring, and parent engagement activities as the domains of equity and social justice work in the schools. As instructors, one of the strengths of our program was the deliberate connections we made between the in-class work with students and their out-of-class fieldwork activities. Many programs have a field component, often required by the state administrative credentialing agency. Rather than treat these hours as disconnected from the classroom experience, we alternatively centered the field experiences as the substantive work of enacting one’s vision for equity, achievement, and powerful teaching and learning. One student shared:

From the work in doing observations to leading cycles of inquiry, I feel that I have gained a number of tools…Also our work in building professional learning communities has given me some key insights into the foundations and structures necessary to actualize a vision of equity and achievement. The practice with different protocols as well as the meeting tools are very practical elements that I will be able to carry with me in establishing a culture in which we can work for equity.

**Direction/Next Steps: The LEAD Handbook**

In the spirit of supporting our students’ ongoing journeys, we also ended the year with requiring our students to reflect on their learning and make explicit their “next steps” thus setting forth a direction for their continual development as leaders for social justice. They synthesized their final reflections in a personal LEAD Handbook that was to
be the “go to” resource for each new LEADer. In addition, we encouraged students to identify mentors, allies, and other sources of ongoing support in anticipation of the challenges of leading for social justice. The richness of thought encompassed by most of the Handbooks is illustrated in the quotes used throughout this article.

**What Does Teaching Reflective Leadership for Social Justice Look Like in Action?**

We have described the conceptual frameworks and overall scope and sequence of the LEAD Program in previous sections to provide readers with a sense of our pedagogy and curriculum content. However, we appreciate the need for colleagues to get a more detailed understanding of what such teaching looks like “on the ground.” In this section, we describe a sample of cohort activities that we believe capture the focal ideas, themes, and content for LEAD. We continue to discuss pedagogy and curriculum within this context because these aspects of our teaching continue to be inextricably linked to our ability to fully support our students as aspiring (and evolving) leaders for social justice. We invite and encourage readers to resist the need to “replicate models” as instructors and instead push toward local contextualization of the types of guiding principles we share below that make it possible for us to teach social justice leadership.

**Getting Started with Introspection: Locating Ourselves as Teachers, Learners, and Leaders**

We learned from our own instructional and school coaching experiences and reading of such authors as Paolo Freire (e.g. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) that we had to acknowledge that there was a “before” to our students’ lives as participants in LEAD, and there would be an “after” that we hoped would be in some way influenced by what we experienced together in the cohort. Thus, the metaphor of “journey” became salient to us
as instructors: each of our students had already been on her or his own educational journey, and now we had the opportunity to share a part of that ongoing journey with them. Making this acknowledgement of their prior experiences and understanding explicit was a key starting point for our year with the cohort. We used a variety of entry points to help our students identify or “locate” themselves as learners and leaders, while we also located ourselves as their instructors and as co-participants in this journey of social justice leadership development.

“Who are we as educational leaders?” was an exploratory theme that we used to encourage our students to be introspective in their entrée into social justice leadership. We prompted them to share the many ways in which they identified in the world, and their one-page representations of these complex identities included phrases, such as, “White male,” “African American,” “Teacher,” “Mom,” “Out Lesbian,” “Christian,” “Jewish,” “Middle class,” “Bilingual/Bicultural,” and so forth—very literally responding to the simple prompt, “How do I identify?” We also asked our students to bring a representation of their own educational journeys, beginning with their experiences with schooling as youngsters and continuing until the time they joined the cohort. Our retreat site was soon filled with journey maps, photo albums, poster boards, and collages that featured the types of triumphs, setbacks, confusing situations, mixed messages, “a-ha” moments, and other turning points that illuminated how unique each person was and how wondrous it was that we might all cross paths in this particular cohort. We asked for this “educational autobiography” to remind our students and ourselves that the program was not the starting point of each person’s journey as a leader for equity and social justice, though it would likely be an important milestone. We wanted to hear what they had
learned along the way and what it took for them to choose this particular path and to join this particular cohort.

As instructors, we also added our own responses to the identity prompt and prepared representations of our respective educational journeys to ensure that our students could also have a sense of who we were as members of this learning community. In addition, we engaged in text-based analysis with them to support them as critical participants in examining identity and one’s location in the world. For example, we used readings such as, Beverly Daniel Tatum’s (1997) *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* and Otto Santa Ana’s *Tongue-Tied: The Lives of Multilingual Children in Public Education* (2004) to enable us to establish some common language and insights to help facilitate dialogue about how our respective identities, biases, and privilege influence who we are—where we locate ourselves—as learners, teachers, and leaders. In keeping with the conceptual frameworks that guided this program, we persisted in designing learning activities that provided a critical framework and instructional guidance for our students to co-create meaning and understanding of what the literature, shared experiences, and current insights brought to bear on their leadership development. One student wrote:

To be extremely honest, initially when I came into LEAD I was quite unsure of what the context of the program was going to be like. Reading the book, ‘Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?’ was an interesting start to it all. I had never really given my race and privilege in society a lot of deep thought. It was quite alarming to really see how society was set up and how people of color are continually
victimized in education across the board in our society. As I started thinking and reflecting on my own experiences as a child/student and comparing my experiences to the students I have been serving in [my city] for the last 5 years, I was alarmed to come to grips with how bad it really is.

We believe the complexity of setting the foundation for teaching social justice leadership was captured well in the following key learning experience, “Examining Equity Perspectives,” which occurred on the second day of our LEAD Retreat. Having had several opportunities for students to begin to get acquainted with each other and to learn about the conceptual frameworks guiding the program, we moved the group into a learning activity that involved (1) reflecting individually on a series of “perspectives” on equity; (2) listening as a group to two very different individuals reflect aloud on the perspectives; and (3) engaging in pairs using a process of deep listening designed to support one’s reflection upon one’s own views, reactions, and questions. For this learning experience, we relied heavily on the work of Julian Weissglass and the National Coalition for Equity in Education (NCEE), based at the University of California, Santa Barbara. We used two important inputs for this work with our students: first, was a document that listed twelve equity perspectives developed by NCEE (2003) to facilitate dialogue and action on critical issues in education; and second, was a structured process NCEE refers to as “Constructivist Listening” (for a detailed discussion see Weissglass, 1990) to enable our students to practice supporting each other to be reflective in leading for equity and social justice.
This learning experience required risk-taking on our part, as instructors. Given that the group had already shared some of their diverse (and divergent) perspectives about education, we thought it would be important for us to initiate the next step in making our individual reflective processes transparent by sharing our reactions to the equity perspectives aloud with the whole group. The purpose was to demonstrate that, as leaders, we should resist the temptation to operate on assumptions about each other by making explicit what we understand about equity at this point in time and what our challenges are in continuing to face inequity, given our respective locations in the world. We took turns responding with our reflections on statements such as, (Equity Perspective #6) “Educators are an important force in helping many people overcome the effects of societal bias and discrimination, but schools also serve to perpetuate the inequalities and prejudices in society.” What was powerful to share was the insight that our own responses to such perspectives changed and evolved as we gained a deeper understanding of ourselves as leaders and of the challenges we faced in education—and how we located ourselves in the world informed that synthesis of knowledge and understanding. That is, being a Latina from a working-class background or being a White male who identified as Jewish and middle-class helped to shape our responses to the equity perspectives in ways that our students might not have understood had we not taken the time to make that explicit for them. It also meant that by taking this risk to share our views, we were also willing to share responsibility to develop understanding as members of this learning community.

Risk-taking also occurred among our students in the Equity Perspectives learning experience. After we had responded aloud to two or three equity perspectives at a time,
we asked our students to work in pairs and engage in a “Dyad” or constructivist listening structure conducted in pairs, to help them each reflect upon their own reactions to what they witnessed and to the actual equity perspective statements. NCEE developed constructivist listening structures to affirm that in order for leaders to take action in inequitable schooling situations, they needed to find ways to seek and receive emotional support for this critical work. Specifically, the Dyad is informed by the view that each person agrees to listen to a colleague for a fixed period of time, bearing in mind that the listening is for the speaker’s benefit. Thus, it is not important if the listener is completely following the speaker’s thinking expressed in the Dyad, but it is important to be fully present and focused. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient space in this article to elaborate on the many uses and dimensions of constructivist listening. However, the risk-taking supported by the Dyads resulted in our students being able to verbalize in-the-moment reactions to a variety of equity perspectives and to begin to make explicit for themselves how their identities and experiences had shaped their own perspectives about education, equity, and social justice. At the same time, the exercise served to model a concrete way in which these future leaders could launch equity-centered conversations at their own sites.

*Educational Vision & Instructional Leadership: Supporting and Facilitating an Inquiry Stance in Practice*

The learning community foundation established at the LEAD Retreat helped us to continue to challenge our students to be reflective practitioners in the spirit of Freire’s (1993) stance on “praxis”, or reflection that informs action to transform the world. During the academic year, we returned to the themes and discoveries of the introspective
work students had done at the retreat, adding to that knowledge base readings and learning structures that enabled students to further engage in critical discourse as leaders. As noted in the overview of the scope and sequence of the year, the first two quarters were opportunities for students to situate their own leadership development within the historical and current sociopolitical context of schooling, as well as the high-stakes accountability context surrounding school systems at present. We continued to build upon the work of the retreat by adding to our discussions key terminology and concepts, such as “social reproduction,” “hegemony,” “transformation,” and “equity pedagogy,” to ensure that we (1) acknowledged the need to create ample entry points for students to engage in more than surface discourse about compelling issues in education; and, (2) encouraged our students to continue to make meaning together about how each of these concepts manifested themselves in their daily leadership environments. The following learning experiences illustrate the conceptual and hands-on work our students engaged in to facilitate their development of an inquiry stance, particularly the instructional leadership aspects of leading for equity and social justice.

To support continual meaning-making among our students and to help them gain a deeper understanding of the role of inquiry for equity, we facilitated a discussion of the leader’s role in negotiating the terrain that exists between reproduction and transformation in education. Our purpose in conducting this conversation was to emphasize that one’s role as a leader for social justice in education is not always so clear that it is easy to determine what transformation looks like within a school community. In fact, we emphasized that in the daily operations of a school, leaders are more typically faced with situations that cause them to straddle the ambiguities between the reproductive
features of current school realities and the transformational features of school articulated in a vision for equity and achievement. What enables leaders to frame the issues facing their school with their school community members is the discipline to maintain an inquiry stance in the midst of these two opposing schooling conditions.

To assist us in this discussion, Baum developed a visual representation that summarized the concepts, terminology, and levels of analysis that we had already engaged with during the retreat and beginning sessions. In the representation were reminders of three levels of analysis that a leader for equity is always engaged in as a reflective practitioner: individual/cultural, organizational, and societal. We should emphasize that in reference to “cultural” in this context, we are focusing on school culture or the taken-for-granted norms that affect both individual and group experiences as participants in the school. To help students visualize the leader’s challenge in leading for social justice, the first column, entitled “Reproduction,” provided examples of reproductive features of schooling that occur at each level of analysis, captured in the broad categories of (1) Alienation and Assimilation (Individual/Cultural); (2) Organizational Reproduction; and, (3) Social Inequality (Societal). The second column, entitled “Transformation,” provided examples of the transformational features of schooling that might be captured in an articulated vision for equity and achievement. It also contained three broad categories of schooling and social conditions aligned with each level of analysis, including “Agency and Access” (Individual/Cultural), “Organizational Change,” and “Social Change.” The middle space between these two columns was literally shaded in gray to emphasize that leading for social justice more often occurs in the “gray area” between reproduction and transformation on any given
day in schools. The leader is called upon to use his or her inquiry stance to assess and frame the current reality with the school community, while also serving as a “buffer” or protective agent against forces that hinder the schools’ progress toward its vision of equity and achievement. By taking the time to use this visual representation, we were able to provide students with a mental map of the levels of analysis, concepts, and sample outcomes of social justice leadership, while supporting their own constructed understanding of what that form of leadership and inquiry stance might look like for themselves.

Building further on the students’ reflective work and mental mapping within the classroom, we asked them to undertake several hands-on activities as part of their fieldwork, which later became the focus of deeper dialogue on the enactment of vision and leadership for equity and social justice. One example was an assignment in which students were asked to engage in an “asset-mapping” exercise that was linked directly to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession and that emphasized collaborative dialogue facilitated by our students with their school colleagues. Multiple purposes were served by this single exercise. First, it enabled students to begin to translate the language of teaching standards into terms that reflected their own vision of powerful teaching and learning. Second, it gave students the opportunity to articulate not only what teaching assets existed within their school communities, but also how these were evidenced by a variety of data sources. Third, asset-mapping supported our students’ thinking about how to inform future professional development decisions. Fourth, this exercise enabled all of our students to experience professional growth in their skills as collaborative colleagues. Finally, by framing the exercise as an asset-mapping activity, we were able to interrupt
the over-reliance on deficit-based descriptions of urban schools. Too often in our work, we hear educators at all levels using shorthand to describe what is wrong with urban schools: “Well, just look at Oakland.” This exercise conscientiously encouraged our students to begin to really take a look at their part of Oakland (or other neighboring school communities they represented) and surface strengths that make it possible to confront the challenges of achievement gaps and find the means to eliminate them.

The enactment of educational vision and leadership for social justice was a concern repeatedly raised by our students beginning with our first encounters at the LEAD Retreat. However, the students’ tendency was to separate the daily operations of a school from their conceptual understandings of leadership, hence our emphasis on inquiry to integrate the two dimensions of their professional lives. One example was an assignment we called, “Investigating the Instructional Schedule.” We asked students to read the article, “Alternative Schedules: To What End?” by Patricia Wasley (1997) that discussed some of the complexities of analyzing schedules from different perspectives to understand extant learning conditions. Students identified a school and used the article as input to formulate their own questions about the instructional schedule. They were prompted to consider what connections they might make between the way time was spent and teaching and learning issues at the school.

For the schedule analysis, students obtained a copy of the master schedule and interviewed at least one parent, one staff member, and one student, using the questions they had developed. Through their analysis, students came to understand how the schedule was perceived differently among the different school community members, reflecting the variety of learning conditions at the school. The exercise encouraged
students to be transparent in the actions they took to understand the schedule and to reflect upon the implications of the schedule for enacting one’s vision of equity, achievement, and powerful teaching and learning. We believe that it reinforced both the notion that leadership for social justice cannot be done in isolation from the rest of the school community and that seemingly mundane activities, such as designing the master schedule, are critically important domains of equity work when one applies a social justice framework to these responsibilities.

**Resistance: Why Do You Keep Asking Me to Answer the Same Question? Or I Don’t Have Time to Reflect!**

Our effort in this article has been to articulate the ways in which, as instructors, we have worked to support the development of leaders for social justice by incorporating the skill-building and emotional support for inquiry and reflective practice. Despite the hard work of any instructor to design curriculum for aspiring leaders that is based on a framework that reflects the goals of a program, most of us encounter a certain degree of resistance. We decided to be transparent about this here, as it reminds us that we also needed to maintain an inquiry stance in order to continue to adapt to the changing conditions we faced with our cohort of adult learners. One student candidly wrote:

> While on one level the class took up precious time, at the same time it has turned out to be an incredible support to engage in so much reflection…I think that having LEAD this year was crucial because it forced me to be reflective as so much whirled past me. The same is true for preparing this handbook which as made me do what I wouldn’t take the time to do on my own: collect and reflect about the experience.
Our Own Reflective Journey: An Inquiry Stance Improves Our Responsiveness as Leadership Instructors

To conclude this article, we offer our own brief reflections on our teaching to share how maintaining our own inquiry stance has been key to our ability to respond to students’ changing needs as developing leaders for social justice. We purposely refer to each other as allies because we believe strongly that each of us brought our own perspectives and unique strengths to bear on this joint effort, but we also shared a commitment to transform schools into sites of equity and powerful teaching and learning. In addition, we were—even in our roles as university instructors—social actors who sought (seek) to contribute to social justice through education. The LEAD Program has evolved because of our reflective work individually, together, and in collaboration with other colleagues at CSUEB and BayCES. Constructivist teaching and learning requires that we turn the reflective lens back on ourselves periodically to ensure that we are creating the intellectual, emotional, professional, and collaborative space for students to co-construct meaning about what they are reading, discussing, and experiencing during their leadership journeys. Admittedly, such considerations are not necessarily common conventions in higher education institutions. However, we return to the power of partnership and alliance among organizations with shared visions of educational equity and achievement for guidance and encouragement in our endeavor to support aspiring leaders who have taken up the calling to lead for social justice. Our point: teaching and supporting social justice leadership in education should never evoke feelings of isolation; indeed, we are on this journey together.
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