

## **East Ethnography report**

Produced for CUES by Joanne Larson

### **Introduction**

This research builds on calls for more engaged scholarship in the academy. Gutiérrez & Penuel (2014) argue, “Consequential research on meaningful and equitable educational change requires a focus on persistent problems of practice, examined in their context of development, with attention to ecological resources and constraints, including why, how, and under what conditions programs and policies work” (p. 19). What I have come to know as I have worked alongside urban community activists and educators in collaborative, participatory ethnography is that researchers have drastically underestimated the persistent problems of practice and how, why, and under what conditions those problems persist. The purpose of this report is to present work-in-progress on the UR East EPO that explores the complexities of doing research alongside teachers, administrators, students, and families while committing to equal power relations, co-authorship, and co-production as ethnographers.

I began the research reported here in February 2014, the day the president of the Rochester City School Board called me at home to ask whether the University would be interested in partnering with East. I received IRB approval to conduct a formal ethnography, including existing data from the previous year’s work gathering input from students and families to write the tenet 6 portion of the [EPO proposal](#), in June 2015. With a year sabbatical from the University, I could fully immerse into the East community for the 2015-16 academic year. Following that year and with changes to my profile at Warner, I was, and continue to spend approximately 60% of my time at East to do research and service. In ethnography, the most

fundamental research question is, “what’s going on here?” More focused research questions develop over the course of research. The Spencer grant that partially funded my sabbatical year, focused specifically on exploring the role of literacy in the first year of the school’s transformation process. Given the definition of literacy as a social practice (e.g. what people do with literacy in specific contexts and for specific purposes) used in this study, research questions included: How is literacy used, how does it circulate, and how do power relationships develop and shift over the course of the first year of the partnership? As a university faculty member, I am the principal investigator of the research and a key member of the team developing and implementing the partnership. Through the ethnography, I seek to document what happens as the partnership unfolds and to explicitly be a part of the change itself.

I begin the explanation of the first two and a half years of the ethnography at East with a brief overview of the theoretical orientation of my research, followed by a description of the research and analytic methods, participants, and data corpus. Next, I provide an overview of preliminary findings and research strands upon which I am currently focusing. I end with a description of continued research and work in progress publications.

## **Theoretical Framework**

I use literacy as social practice theories (Larson & Marsh, 2015; Street, 1984) to understand how literacy is used and how power circulates among those practices. Literacy practices are what people do with literacy broadly defined as communication pathways that include not only traditional print text, but also multimodal and digital practices.

In addition to a literacy as a social practice framework and building on Freire’s (1971) argument that to authentically fight oppression, “we” (researchers in this case) must work

alongside people for liberation, not *at or for* them, I use an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that brings together: 1) Freirean concepts of radical human love; 2) an understanding of power as a set of force relations; and, 3) a poststructural view that all intelligence is equal. I use this framework to explore how rethinking who shapes research impacts what counts as knowing. To work alongside people, power relations need to be shifted (Foucault, 1990/1978). To understand how social and power relations are transformed as the school culture changes over time, I use Foucault's (1990/1978) concept of power as a complex set of force relations in which power produces. Foucault specifically notes that power produces both oppressive and positive relations. Lastly, this research assumes equality of intelligence rather than inequality as a starting point for shifting power relations (Larson, 2014; Rancière, 1991). In this view, all intelligence is equal and participation is structured equipotentially (Bruns, 2008). All people have value and can contribute to authentic knowledge production; in this case, all participants can equipotentially produce knowledge that animates meaningful change.

## **Methodology**

Building on participatory designs in qualitative research, I adapted participatory ethnography as a methodology that has been shown to be particularly well-suited for complex organizations (Darrouzet et al., 2009). Often used in complex corporations, participatory ethnography aligns with the critical literacy framework of Freire (1979) with its focus on researching with participants, not *at or for* them (Kinloch et al., 2016). When the complexity of an organization is as massive as a school's, it is disingenuous to think a single researcher will walk away with an understanding of that complexity. Instead, participatory ethnography focuses on building understanding within the system, alongside the participants, and positions all parties

as knowledge builders and actors of change within the system. Furthermore, the critical participatory stance I adapted to this methodology explicitly positions the research as emancipatory and the researcher as full participant in that emancipatory work. As such, participatory ethnography in this study moves past building capacity in participants because of the organization's complexity (Darrouzet et al., 2009) toward working alongside the East community to co-construct justice and equity in urban education.

There are 31 formally enrolled participants in the ethnography: 9 administrators; 12 teachers; 10 students. The racial, ethnic, and gender makeup of the adult participants mirrors the school's demographics for teachers and administrators: 76% are white, 12% African American, 12% Latinx; 65% are female, and 35% are male. Likewise, student demographics mirror the school's: 60% African American; 30% Latinx; 10% White and 80% male/20% female. Adult participants' experience in teaching and/or leading ranged from over 35 years to first year teachers and administrators. While data collection remains ongoing, the full data corpus at this point includes field notes (~350) of participant observation in classrooms, leadership and staff meetings, hallways, cafeterias, auditoriums, full day shadowing of key participants, a student magic club formed by my research assistant, my co-teaching experience in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English class, formal (~25) and informal interviews (~200) of officially consented study participants (N=22), school wide administrative data, emails (~3800), documents (including lesson and unit plans, newspaper articles, meeting minutes, etc.) (~1500), video of the co-teaching classroom (~24 hours), research and teaching memos (~40), photographs, and surveys of teachers, staff, students, and families.

Through participating in the daily life of the school, I developed focused research questions and identified data sources in an iterative way, following emerging themes based on

ongoing analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Geertz, 1995; Heath & Street, 2008). I used constructivist grounded theory practices (Charmaz, 2014) as an initial data analysis strategy to develop patterns and themes that are representative of the meaning-perspectives of participants. Analyses are triangulated by using multiple data sources, including survey data and administrative records (attendance, discipline, achievement scores) gathered as part of the school's regular accountability practices, which provided information from a variety of perspectives as well as representing varied ways of making sense of the EPO's implementation process, meanings, and outcomes. Once more specific themes emerged, I used focus groups with participants to ensure my initial thinking was aligned with their experiences. I aligned the ethnographic analyses with the four trustworthiness criteria for high-quality qualitative research: dependability, transferability, confirmability, and credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

### **Context of the research**

A key question that ethnographers answer is how they came to “enter” the community within which they do research. How I came to be a part of the East EPO begins over 10 years ago when I began a University/community collaboration with Northeast Area Development (NEAD) and its executive director, George Moses. Through our ethnography of NEAD's initiatives in the Beechwood neighborhood of Rochester, I developed long lasting, trusting relationships with area residents. While I do live in the city, I do not live in this neighborhood; however, I became a member of the community nonetheless. Over the course of this work, I came to know Van White, the current president of the Rochester City School Board. We first met at a research team meeting at NEAD and saw each other frequently at NEAD Freedom School

events. After a few years, he asked me to co-lead an RCSD task force on curriculum. I gladly agreed. This work resulted in a report to the Board which then implemented many of our recommendations. Mr. White came to trust me and my dedication to RCSD. This trust led him to call me one Saturday afternoon in February 2014 to ask whether the University would be willing to serve as the EPO for East. I then facilitated the connections with Warner's Dean Raffaella Borasi and professor Steve Uebbing. The partnership took off from that point. I was a part of initial conversations and quickly decided I was "all in", even to the point of enrolling my high school aged son at East. Knowing how ground-breaking this partnership would be, developing research that would be able to tell this story was a natural next step.

A more formal narrative of the partnership goes something like this: The University of Rochester, New York State Department of Education (NYSED), and East High School within the Rochester City School District (RCSD) embarked on a bold endeavor: to transform a comprehensive, public, open enrollment urban high school in danger of closing into a model of urban education. The RCSD Board president approached the University in February 2014 about partnering to turn around the school so it would not be closed, converted to a charter school, restructured, or taken over by the state University system. University personnel engaged in several conversations with the school board, the University's Warner School dean, faculty with expertise in running schools, and with the University president that resulted in the University submitting a letter of intent to serve as an Educational Partnership Organization (EPO), a newly established legal status in New York State (Education Law 211e, 2014). A leadership team comprised of University faculty and school administrators gathered comprehensive input from a wide variety of stakeholders to develop a full proposal. They met with community agencies, Rochester's Mayor, parents, community members, teachers, administrators, and students. More

than 2000 stakeholders over the course of six months provided extensive input, including from approximately 1200 students across grades 7-12 at the school in September 2014. We documented answers to questions about what students would like to see at East, what they thought needed changing, what classes they would like to take, and how we can better involve their families.

EPO partnerships are innovative reform efforts in that the school and its partnership organization become a “district within a district” with its own superintendent and unprecedented control over all processes and practices of the “district.” While University/school partnerships are not new (Goodlad, 1991), EPO legal status adds interesting complexities for researchers. Significant differences from other University-assisted autonomous school partnerships (Mehan, Worrell, Heckman, Quartz, 2007) occurred in our case: 1) intensive involvement of students, families, staff, and community in writing the EPO proposal; 2) four renegotiated union contracts to change working conditions and professional learning expectations; 3) unanimous school board support and NYSED approval of partnership and budget; 4) partnering with a high-poverty, comprehensive high school with no exclusive admissions criteria (e.g. not a charter or magnet school); 5) control over hiring (we replaced 60% of the staff); 6) unprecedented control over curriculum and instruction, budget, and school policies, including disciplinary practices; 7) distributed leadership with a unique leadership structure.

After analyzing data gathered from a year and a half of meetings, interviews, and focus groups, we developed a full proposal that was submitted to the state in December 2014. The University was approved to serve as the Educational Partnership Organization (EPO beginning July 1, 2015. We opened the doors to approximately 1400 students in grades 6-12 September 8, 2015.

## **Preliminary findings**

The first round of grounded theory analysis produced the initial themes of *all in, classroom practice, leadership, and building relationships*. These were produced through several rounds of coding beginning with open or in-vivo coding, followed by focused and axial coding. After the themes were of sufficient detail, I presented them to two focus groups (member checking) from among my participants: one administrator group and one teacher group. Revisions to the themes were made after these discussions to more accurately represent the meaning perspectives of the participants.

## **Five current analytic threads**

### *Distributed leadership*

We know from research that leadership needs to be grounded in activity rather than focused on individuals (Spillane et al., 2001). Some research has identified structures for capacity building and implementation for both district and building leaders (Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2007, 2011). Hargreaves (2009) argues that distributed leadership is a critical component of what he calls “the fourth way” of change in which the goal is sustainability in a collaborative social democracy. We know less about how the day-to-day processes of constructing distributed leadership impact culture change and produce sustainability.

For the analyses presented in this thread<sup>1</sup>, we began by focusing specifically on culture change based on initial results from climate surveys that we administered in January 2016. With

---

<sup>1</sup> [Larson, J., DeAngelis, K., & Nelms, S. \(2017, May\). \*Doing justice: The role of distributed leadership in transforming urban schooling\*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX.](#)

permission, the surveys were adapted from the widely-used Consortium on Chicago School Research's (CCSR) *My Voice, My School* instruments. Analyses of the first-year survey results from teachers (N=132) revealed mixed perceptions among teachers both within and across school levels (i.e., Lower School serving grades 6-8 and Upper School serving grades 9-12) related to the Consortium theme of effective leadership, which included items related to both formal leaders' and teachers' support and/or influence. This finding of mixed perceptions led to the development of a qualitative, open-ended survey we collaboratively constructed with the administrative staff and teacher union representatives to better understand teachers' and staff members' perceptions and ideas for moving forward. The 8-question open-ended survey was given on the last day of the 2015-16 school year for full staff (N=191). Through qualitative analyses, we developed key themes regarding the opportunities and challenges associated with early implementation of distributed leadership in the school. We triangulated the data with the larger ethnographic data corpus and through member checking with teachers and administrators. This analysis led to the development of actions (see appendix B) that administrators focused on implementing during the summer of 2016. We revised the climate survey to include specific suggestions from teachers and actions administrators developed and implemented in the 2016-17 school year. The second iteration of the climate survey was given in January 2017.

Results of our analyses found that power produced generative frictions that animated change in understandings of leadership in general and distributed leadership in particular. Building on previous research, we argue that what power produced at East are generative frictions (Larson et al, in press). Social and power relations involved in generative frictions are not binaries, nor are they oppositional. These identified processes are in relation to each other

and are mutually constitutive and fluid. The social and power relations we find at the end of year one will not be the same as we find in year two, for example. Frictions produce energy and change, which in turn produces more frictions. They are generative in that they animate transformative change that results from the ongoing negotiation of frictions.

We have identified generative frictions related to distributed leadership: 1) empowerment/compliance; resistance/all in; old culture/new culture, which further includes multiple other generative frictions such as: a) taking responsibility/assigning blame; b) new ideas/status quo; c) trusting relationships/betrayal; d) experiential knowledge/unknown knowledge. The overarching theme that ties all these frictions together is building trusting relationships; without these relationships, distributed leadership cannot take hold.

Traditionally schools are led by a principal with an ideology that is forced on staff/or one who has no ideology and who let things happen without much guidance. In this model, one person assigns tasks, tells people what to do and they do it. At East, leadership is about identifying the moral fabric of the school and finding ways to support that (Uebbing & Ford, 2011). Leaders are the people who are held accountable for how these things occur. The moral fabric must be co-constructed with the full community; our mission vision work was an attempt to identify the moral fabric of East.

To develop capacity with distributed leadership, the Superintendent did not give a single pathway toward accountability in year one on purpose. He did this to observe the leadership team's capacity to take initiative. They had all read and committed to the EPO, which made them aware of what we want to do as a school. The goal was for them to figure it out. Following the status quo or old culture of the school, leaders wanted a responsibility chart which Nelms did not

provide. Each leader was assigned to content or to an area, not a “job”, which he conceived as bounded autonomy.

In our emerging model, leadership in the context of justice work means that justice is the moral fabric. Equity and access is in everything we do, especially for students. Everyone – leadership, teachers, and staff - is accountable for this moral fabric. Our challenge has been to ensure that we don’t let a focus on the individual take over. This work is not about one person’s need, it’s about the good of the whole community. At East, leaders must follow because they are leaders.

The most prominent theme we have found is the need for trusting relationships. Why is trust important? To make the kind of profound culture change we are attempting, we must build a context where it is safe to let go – to not be afraid to take risks. We are working against the cultural model of a hero who saves the day. The hero is not the University, nor is it Nelms. We are working against the fear of letting competence work, make mistakes, and rethinking. Additionally, we seek to let students authentically lead, which is something that has not happened at East but that is an explicit goal of the EPO.

To accomplish this, we are building spaces for people to think about their own thinking, to be more thoughtful, and to construct a shared language around justice, equity, and accountability. In this way, the moral fabric grows organically in the everyday practice of the school and builds trusting relationships.

Building theory from these analyses, we (Larson, Nelms, and DeAngelis) have developed an emerging model of how generative frictions animate change in everyday interactions. When trusting relationships are constructed, people engage in risk taking (making a leadership decision, trying a new pedagogy, taking leadership in an emerging idea). How the risk is experienced in

terms of success/failure shapes whether confusion or coherence is constructed. This is an iterative, fluid cycle of experiences.

### *Challenges of participatory ethnography*

Preliminary analyses in this thread<sup>2&3</sup> illustrate that power produced generative frictions that animated change in understandings of the ethnography and produced resistance to the research simultaneously. Building on previous research, I argue that what power produces are generative frictions that appear at first glance to be oppositional (Larson et al, in press). However, social and power relations involved in generative frictions are not binaries, nor are they oppositional. While I recognize power can be intentionally oppositional and chaotic, I focus instead on how these processes are in relation to each other and are mutually constitutive and fluid and, thus, produce dissensus (Ziarek, 2001). Frictions, or dissensus, produce energy and change, which in turn produces more frictions. They are generative in that they animate transformative change, which results from the ongoing negotiation of frictions.

Practices around using research, research-based practices, and “data” common at this school prior to the ethnography focused almost exclusively on presentation of data analyzed by someone else. School wide data on academic achievement, for example, was delivered to administration by teachers, followed by a presentation of those data in a meeting or professional learning experience with little opportunity for discussion or interpretation. Working with teachers to analyze, interpret, and use data to inform their practice did not occur on a systematic

---

<sup>2</sup> Larson, J. & Gallegos Greenwich, J. (2017, February) “So what is it you do here?” *Unpacking participatory ethnography in urban schools*. Paper presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Ethnography in Education Forum. Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>3</sup> Larson, J. (2017, May). *What we don't say out loud: Opportunities and challenges of participatory ethnography in urban schools*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX.

basis. Data were almost exclusively statistical. What ethnographers would call data was termed “anecdotal” and often dismissed. With my introduction as a University researcher doing participatory ethnography, conceptions of what counts as research were challenged. Generative frictions were produced around roles, for example, as my complex roles as researcher, University faculty member, initiative leader, and parent of a student at the school became more apparent the longer I was in the building and subsequently challenged as “not objective.” Generative frictions identified in the analysis thus far include: researcher role/role confusion; discourses of research/discourses of practice; heartbreaking work/soul-filling work; building trusting relationships/exit strategy.

#### *Culture change in University/school partnerships<sup>4</sup>*

This thread explores the role of comprehensive transformation of educational infrastructure and practices on changing school culture. Educational researchers know what essential supports are needed to improve school culture or climate (Roderick, Easton, & Sebring, 2009), but we know less about how specifically to make those changes and what those changes mean to the school community. These analyses examine the impact of comprehensive reform on the initiative’s goal to change from a culture of underachievement and negativity toward a culture of collaboration and excellence. The first layer of analyses delineates the factors that go into the construction of school culture that impact learning.

---

<sup>4</sup> [Larson, J. & Nelms, S. \(May, 2017\). \*Collaborating for equity: Comprehensive school reform in an innovative University/school partnership\*. In symposium “Partnerships for school reform in urban education: Models, Dynamics, and Challenges” presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX.](#)

### *Critical literacy in practice*<sup>5</sup>

After observing in one 9<sup>th</sup> grade English class for a few months, I began co-teaching that section of the class with the two English teachers and one ESL teacher in that room. We focused our curriculum on critical literacy in which students would develop a justice project with an action that required an audience external to the classroom and East. Challenges emerged around finding time to plan, realizing how under taught the students were (e.g. never having done revision in the 8 years prior), and negotiating space to implement the critical literacy unit outside of the common core unit the other English 9 teachers were doing. However, we did accomplish the unit which culminated in students posting their final projects to their website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/youthdoingjustice/products-service>

One of the goals in the co-teaching partnership was to focus on shifting discourse structures across all activities so that we developed a more authentic community of learners, rather than teacher-directed known answer questions. When I looked at a purposeful sample of 8 classroom discourse protocols (Gutiérrez, 1993) of separate classroom activities from across all the classrooms in the larger study, I found that recitation remained the dominant discourse structure (Figure 6).

---

<sup>5</sup> [Larson, J., Fitta, J., Domiano, E., & Bethmann, C. \(2017, May\). \*Learning from each other: Justice work with 9<sup>th</sup> grade English I students\*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX.](#)

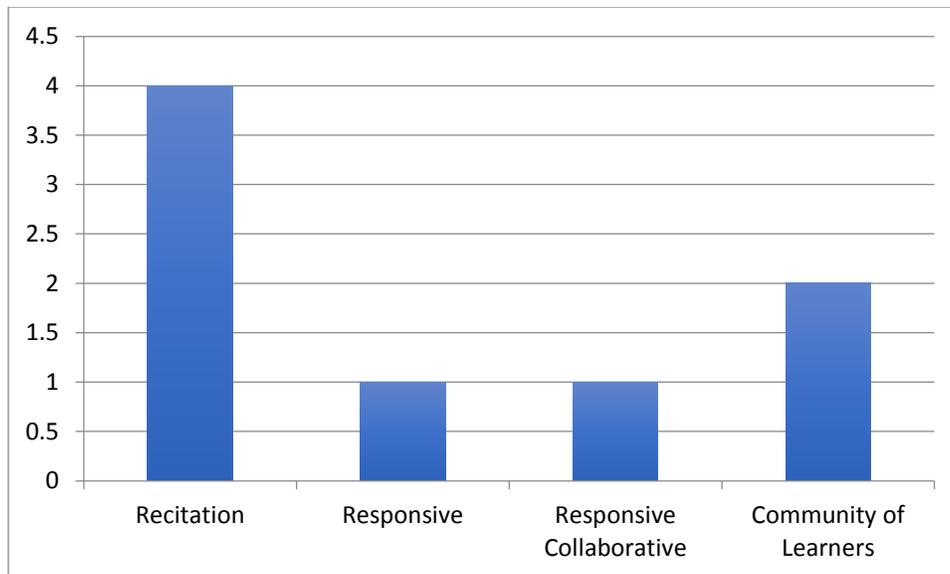


Figure 6: Purposeful sample of classroom discourse structures (n 8)

To shift this pattern, we did several things. One, we re-arranged the classroom so that desks were in a U or semi-circle and we all sat with the students in the desks. We also planned activities specifically with open-ended questions for which there was no correct answer. Recitation did occur, but it was greatly reduced and was used primarily to check whether students understood instructions. Both actions shifted power relations in significant ways. There were many times we slipped to recitation dominant instruction with long segments of teacher talk as we tried to move to more student-centered interactions. It took a lot of scaffolding for students to move past trying to do what we wanted. It took all of us a while to move beyond teachers deciding who gets the floor so that whole class discussion was more responsive-collaborative. Changing this hegemonic discourse structure remains an ongoing project as we move into teaching a second iteration of the critical literacy unit in spring 2017.

### *Sarcasm as pedagogy of love*

This manuscript in progress<sup>6</sup> examines the role of sarcasm as a complex ironic speech act in teaching English in high school. Using humor and sarcasm is often discouraged in teacher education programs or in professional learning workshops. However, we found that this teacher's use of sarcasm served key functions in developing authentic, trusting relationships and in fulfilling the teacher's instructional goal of building critical thinking in his students.

### **Going forward**

As I move forward in this partnership, the research will continue. It remains a challenge to analyze and write about the research in authentic ways with very busy teachers and administrators. Writing with students is an unrealized goal so far. However, this is an important goal that I will continue to pursue. Disseminating what we have learned will continue through presentations at research conferences and through publishing in research and practice journals. I am working on three book projects: 1) a co-authored book with Shaun Nelms about the project as a whole; 2) an edited volume with chapters co-authored by participants; and, 3) a book on distributed leadership authored principally by Shaun Nelms with my support and drawing on data from the research. I am scheduled to co-teach English 9 again in spring 2017 so we can refine and improve the critical literacy unit. Lastly, I have developed an elective course with 8 10<sup>th</sup> grade students on hip hop education that has been accepted for the 2017-18 school year. I will teach the class but, with my help, the curriculum will be student designed and implemented.

---

<sup>6</sup> Larson, J. & Morris, T. (in progress). Sarcasm as pedagogy: Using ironic speech acts in urban high school English. To be submitted to *English Journal*.

## **Conclusion**

Working alongside teachers and administrators in their daily work was and continues to be a privilege for which I shall always be grateful. In a very real sense, specifically in the co-teaching work, I was given the keys to the car. The true privilege was that the teachers trusted me and were willing to take risks to change their practice despite the stakes. If anything went wrong, they would suffer the consequences. What I tried to remember was the moral compass that drives my work and the work of critical literacy and participatory ethnography: that this was not about me and that this work could do no harm – not to the teachers or administrators, and not to the students. It was an opportunity to stop talking and start doing that mirrored the EPO partnership overall. The University was charged with implementing what we have been saying should be done for decades, mostly to each other. This partnership meant leaving the tower and, for me personally, working alongside teachers, administrators, and students in an authentic Freirean manner.

## References

Bruns, A. (2008). *Blogs, Second Life, and beyond: From production to produsage*. New York: Lang.

Charmaz, K. (2014) *Constructing grounded theory*. Second Edition. London: Sage.

Darrouzet, C., Wild, H. & Wilkinson, S. (2009). Participatory ethnography at work: Practicing in the puzzle palaces of a large, complex health organization, pp. 61 – 94. M. Cefkin (ed.). *Ethnography and the corporate encounter: Reflections on research in and out of corporations*. New York: Berghahn.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*, Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Education Law 211e (2014).

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/documents/AdditionalFeaturesofEducationalPartnershipOrganization030414.pdf> Accessed June 25, 2015.

Elmore, R. F. (2000). *Building a new structure for school leadership*. Washington, DC: Albert Shanker Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.shankerinstitute.org/publications/elmore-building/>

Erickson, F. (2006) “Studying side by side: Collaborative action ethnography in educational research.” In *Innovations in educational ethnography: Theory, methods and results* edited by George Spindler and Lori Hammond, 235-257. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Foucault, M. (1990/1978). *The history of sexuality: An introduction*. New York: Vintage.

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Fullan, M. (2011). *Choosing the wrong drivers for whole system reform*. (Seminar series paper No. 204). Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: Centre for Strategic Education. Retrieved from <http://www.michaelfullan.com/media/13436787590.html>
- Freire, P. (1971). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin.
- Geertz, C. (1995). *After the fact: Two countries, four decades, one anthropologist*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Goodlad, John. "School-University Partnerships." *The Education Digest*, vol. 56, no. 8, 1991, pp. 58-61.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y., (2000). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research, 2nd edition* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gutierrez, K. D. (1993). How talk, context, and script shape contexts for learning: A cross-case comparison of journal sharing. *Linguistics and Education*, 5(3-4), 335-365.
- Gutiérrez, K. and Penuel, W. (2014). "Relevance to practice as a criterion for rigor." *Educational Researcher* 43(1): 19-23.
- Hargreaves, A. (2009). The fourth way of change: Towards an age of inspiration and accountability. In A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan (eds.). *Change Wars*, pp. 11 - 44. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Heath, S.B. & Street, B. (2008). *On ethnography: Approaches to language and literacy research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kinloch, V., Larson, J., Faulstich Orellana, M., & Lewis, C. (2016). Literacy, Equity, and Imagination: Researching With/In Communities. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, 1-19. DOI: 10.1177/2381336916661541

- Larson, J, Moses, G., Moses, R., Gallegos Greenwich., & Smith, W. (in press). We are “all the way live”: Reading community. In J. Larson & G. Moses (Eds.). (in press). *Community literacies as shared resources for transformation*. New York: Routledge.
- Larson, J. & Marsh, J. (2015). *Making Literacy Real: Theories and practices for learning and teaching*. Second Edition. London: Sage.
- Larson, J. (2014). *Radical equality in education: Starting over in US Schooling*. New York: Routledge.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (2016). *Designing Qualitative Research, Sixth Edition*. London: Sage.
- Mehan, Hugh, et al. *University-assisted Schools: From laboratory schools to engaged scholarship*. A University of California Policy Brief, 2007.
- Rancièrè, J. (1991). *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Roderick, M., Easton, J. Q., & Sebring, P. B. (2009). *The Consortium on Chicago School Research: A New Model for the Role of Research in Supporting Urban School Reform*. Consortium on Chicago School Research. 1313 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637.
- Spillane, J., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. (2001). Investigating School Leadership Practice: A Distributed Perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 30(3): 23-28.
- Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. CUP: Cambridge.
- Uebbing, S. & Ford, M. (2011). *The Life Cycle of Leadership: Surviving and Thriving in Today's Schools*. Oxford, OH: Leaning Forward.

Ziarek, E.P. (2001). *An ethics of dissensus: Postmodernity, feminism, and the politics of radical democracy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

## Appendix A List of presentations and manuscripts in progress

[Larson, J., DeAngelis, K., & Nelms, S. \(2017, May\). \*Doing justice: The role of distributed leadership in transforming urban schooling\*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX.](#)

The purpose of this paper is to explore initial opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of distributed leadership as one of multiple changes in a unique University/school partnership's comprehensive reform initiative. Data are drawn from a long-term ethnography and mixed methods social design experiment of this initiative, including survey and school data. We have identified generative frictions related to distributed leadership that the paper will discuss: 1) empowerment/compliance; resistance/all in, which further includes multiple other generative frictions such as: a) taking responsibility/assigning blame; b) old culture/new culture; c) new ideas/status quo; d) trusting relationships/betrayal; e) experiential knowledge/unknown knowledge. Implementation of distributed leadership occurred in everyday interactions as these frictions were negotiated.

[Larson, J., Fitta, J., Domiano, E., & Bethmann, C. \(2017, May\). \*Learning from each other: Justice work with 9<sup>th</sup> grade English I students\*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX.](#)

AND

Larson, J., Fitta, J., Domiano, E., & Bethmann, C. (2016, December). *Learning from each other: Justice work with 9<sup>th</sup> grade English I students*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Literacy Research Association. Nashville, TN.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how critical literacy informed the teaching and learning of teacher-students and students-teachers (Freire, 1971) in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade English I class. Data are drawn from a larger, ongoing ethnography of a novel partnership between an urban high school labeled as “persistently failing” and a research university that has been approved as an Educational Partnership Organization (EPO). Using an analytics of power lens, we found that power produced generative frictions that animated culture change in general and changes in power relations in this classroom in particular. This study contributes to research on critical literacy by illustrating how critical literacy can be implemented under intense scrutiny and constraining curricular mandates.

Larson, J. (2017, May). *What we don't say out loud: Opportunities and challenges of participatory ethnography in urban schools*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX.

This paper explores the complexities of participatory ethnography when that research is committed to equal power relations, co-authorship, and co-production. Data for this paper are drawn from a larger, ongoing participatory ethnography of a unique University/school partnership. Results of the analyses found that power produced generative frictions that animated changes in understanding of the research and simultaneously produced resistance to the research.

This paper contributes to recent moves in educational research toward public scholarship and engaged research that works alongside participants. The paper discusses how such research might be done by describing the generative frictions that were produced in participatory ethnography in an urban high school under intense scrutiny by the state department of education and the general public.

[Larson, J. & Nelms, S. \(May, 2017\). \*Collaborating for equity: Comprehensive school reform in an innovative University/school partnership\*. In symposium “Partnerships for school reform in urban education: Models, Dynamics, and Challenges” presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX.](#)

This symposium engages the 2017 AERA conference theme of “Knowledge to Action: Achieving the Promise of Equal Educational Opportunity” by sharing research on four high-schools whose creation or reform aims to narrow the achievement gap for socially marginalized youth in inner-city contexts. The session takes up the call for using “relevance to practice as a criterion for rigor” in educational research (Gutierrez & Penuel, 2014) by exploring and assessing concrete educational interventions. All four sites – the UCLA Community School; East High in Rochester, New York; James Lyng High School in Montreal, Quebec; and the High School for Recording Arts in St. Paul, Minnesota – are supported by, or built around, partnerships with universities and/or community organizations.

Larson, J. & Gallego Greenwich, J. (2017, February) “*So what is it you do here?*”

*Unpacking participatory ethnography in urban schools*. Paper presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Ethnography in Education Forum. Philadelphia, PA.

This is a “work-in-progress” paper presented to experienced ethnographers. We will describe the processes of attempting to conduct participatory ethnography at East, focusing specifically on the complex roles we negotiated during the study.

Basile, A., Hart, D., & Larson, J. (2016, November). *Implementing writing workshop at the secondary level: Ideals, Realities, & Flexibility*. Presented at the annual meeting of the New York State Reading Association. Rochester, NY.

In this presentation, we described the EPO and the process involved in deciding to use Atwell’s Workshop curriculum for literacy classes in grades 6-9. Participants did a gallery walk of artifacts from two classrooms. Basile and Hart shared goals, challenges, and changes they made to a standing room only audience.

Larson, J., Fitta, J., & Morris, T. (2016, May). *Expanding teachers’ classroom discourse repertoires*. Paper presented at the Working Conference on Discourse Analysis in Educational Research. Columbus, Ohio.

This presentation focused on classroom discourse structures and the work we did to shift from teacher-led to more conversational and collaborative discourse in English classrooms at East.

## MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

Larson, J. & Morris, T. (in progress). Sarcasm as pedagogy of love: Using ironic speech acts in urban high school English. To be submitted to *English Journal*.

This manuscript examines the role of sarcasm in teaching English in high school. Using humor and sarcasm is often discouraged in teacher education programs or in professional learning workshops. However, we found that this teacher's use of sarcasm served key functions in developing authentic, trusting relationships and in fulfilling the teacher's instructional goal of building critical thinking in his students.

## Appendix B: Theme to action chart

*Process:* The annual climate survey data were analyzed by Chicago Consortium School Reform identified themes. The theme of “effective leadership” was used to develop the end of year survey questions. Responses to those questions were divided by question and coded by sub-groups (admins and RTA) who developed themes with ideas for related structures and actions that could be taken. Dr. Larson and Dr. Nelms coded the full data set, merging the sub-group analyses into major categories that crossed all questions. Themes were composed using participant language (in vivo codes). Themes were aligned with structures/actions that were developed summer 2016 for fall implementation. Administration has documented actions taken. The next step is for teachers to record what actions they have taken to address identified needs.

### THEME TO ACTION RECORD

Theme	Actions taken by Administration	Actions taken by teachers	Alignment to mission
<p><b>Communication</b> We need clear, consistent, open, and honest communication between administration and staff without fear of reprisal. Regular and ongoing communication needs to include positive affirmations and recognition of successes as well as coaching-oriented feedback on what needs improving that builds rather than destroys. Communication should be a continuous dialogue, should emphasize active listening, should have a restorative focus, and should be face-to-face more than via email. We need clarity of expectations, transparency, and equitable treatment to be valued in communication practices. The communication loop needs to include all parties and come full circle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Google tracking system for scholar referral set up (summer 2016)</li> <li>• Principal bulletins (ongoing)</li> <li>• New committee structure with leaders (communicators) assigned (summer 2016)</li> <li>• Added teacher leader (TL) meetings; TLs can get info out to departments within one day; often this is PL info</li> <li>• all coaches’ CPT minutes and agendas posted on SharePoint</li> <li>• Committees to post minutes and agendas on SharePoint</li> <li>• The Lower School Lighthouse committee has developed a year-long plan</li> <li>• Spanish translators are present at community events, CSE meetings, and parent teacher conferences</li> <li>• IDCPT has been restructured, including the use of a common, consistent agenda template 6-12 with time embedded for communication, celebrations, and input (opportunities for brainstorming/discussion and for staff to provide input/feedback).</li> <li>• Expectation of 24-48 hour response time was made explicit</li> <li>• Increased presence of admin at CPT to increase face to face time</li> <li>• Increased classroom visits with feedback oriented toward “medals and missions”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consistency</b> Staff want consistent policies regarding student behavior that include consistent rules and expectations, and enforcement of consequences, both restorative and disciplinary. We need improved communication about</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Google tracking system for scholar referral set up (summer 2016)</li> <li>• Code of conduct approved (October 2016)</li> <li>• Cool down room and ATS continued</li> <li>• CARE Rooms created at US and staffed by Social Workers all day,</li> <li>• Cell phone and tardy policies approved (August 2016)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

<p>what happens so that all parties are included when closing a restorative or disciplinary loop, and consistent follow through. Evaluations of staff performance need clear, consistent expectations that are equitably delivered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School wide norms adopted and implemented (summer 2016)</li> <li>• PL on restorative practices (summer 2016)</li> <li>• Trauma Informed Care PL being done in IDCPT (Interdisciplinary Collaborative Planning Time)</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Build Trusting Relationships</b> Building trusting relationships is the key to developing a positive working environment for staff and scholars. We need time and space to know each other and to know scholars so we can work together for a common purpose. To do this, we need recognition for the work we do, open communication, empathy, and transparency. We need better communication with families and to provide avenues for increased parent involvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family groups have developed friendly competitions (October 2016)</li> <li>• Staff bios in principal bulletins (summer 2016)</li> <li>• FACE calendar revised to try to bring in more parents (October 2016)</li> <li>• ICE CREAM Truck first Friday of full week of School.</li> <li>• Lunch on Superintendent’s Conference Day September 6<sup>th</sup>.</li> <li>• Staff Painting with a Twist on October 6<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Lighthouse/Visionaries are hosting scholar led information events for DC trip.</li> <li>• Lighthouse/Visionaries are sponsoring a “Dance for a Cause” event.</li> <li>• Lighthouse/visionaries committees have taken on planning for staff appreciation events throughout the year</li> <li>• IDCPT has been restructured, including the use of a common, consistent agenda template 6-12 with time embedded for celebrations and team building activities (often simple circle questions to get teams sharing about themselves)</li> <li>• Encouragement/organization of Family Group block parties during Spirit Week</li> </ul>	<p>•</p>	<p>•</p>
<p><b>Voice (teacher and student)</b> Teachers need their voice to be included in decision-making and problem solving. Space needs to be built for teachers to use their insight and expertise to innovate. Teachers need to be included in restorative conversations with students. Students need opportunities to give input on the curriculum and into designing activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Lounge created</li> <li>• The large majority of teachers now have teacher leaders who can carry their interests to Coaches CPT (every other day) and through that avenue as well as through their representative to PL Committee. See Five Year plan for PL.</li> <li>• The committee structure/system has been made more explicit and functional with shared leadership and open invitations and communication about committee actions. This provides concrete avenues for staff voice, input, and influence.</li> <li>• IDCPT has been restructured, including the use of a common, consistent agenda template 6-12 with time embedded for staff to be included in decision-making and problem solving</li> <li>• Teachers led PD on Supt. Conf Day September and October.</li> </ul>	<p>•</p>	<p>•</p>
<p><b>Culture</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book study on trauma</li> </ul>	<p>•</p>	<p>•</p>

<p>Staff identified that we need to work toward developing a culture of respect and a common philosophy. There remain tensions that perpetuate a culture of distrust: separation between veteran and new teachers, “old” East/”new” East tensions, lack of authentic representation of all voices, and continued negative talk (gossip, back biting) that focuses on petty issues instead of focusing on scholars.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lighthouse committee/Visionaries have instituted celebration events (Spirit week, pep rally, block parties, homecoming parade, scholar appreciation days, a school beautification project, and East staff appreciation events).</li> <li>• Restructure IDCPT</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Feelings and Emotions</b> Staff need to feel valued and supported in the work they do and to feel like equal partners. Staff currently feel disconnected, not considered as having something valuable to contribute, without voice, and that there is a top-down feeling at the school. Staff need a safe environment to implement new ideas and to have open communication without fear of reprisal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The committee system and open communication about committee actions provide concrete avenues for staff voice, input, and influence.</li> </ul>	•	•
<p><b>Collaboration</b> Staff would like to increase collaboration around instruction that includes opportunities to share strengths and practices in collaborative, professional conversations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above.</li> <li>• October 7 Superintendent’s Conference Day focused on assessments with collaborative time for both interdisciplinary and content teams.</li> </ul>	•	•
<p><b>Increased Presence</b> The school needs adults to be omnipresent in hallways and classrooms. Administration needs to visit classrooms regularly and often, and to consistently respond when called for support. Administration and SSOs need to be accessible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are expected to greet students every period (summer 2016)</li> <li>• Admins more visible (ongoing)</li> <li>• Regular hall sweeps (ongoing)</li> <li>• Leadership team is following up on classroom walk throughs.</li> </ul>	•	•
<p><b>Time</b> All staff need more time. Categories identified require time and space to accomplish. <i>Building trusting relationships</i> requires time to get to know people, time and space for restorative conversations; <i>communication</i> requires time to co-plan, to discuss scholars and develop plans; <i>consistency</i> requires time with administrators; <i>collaboration</i> requires time for learning walks and peer collaboration, to research curriculum and plan lessons, for lead teachers to do walk throughs, and time to visit other classrooms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily planning time is 72 minutes per day. Planning time with those who teach the same thing occurs every other day for 72 minutes. Time with those who teach the same students occurs for grades 6-9, 72 minutes every other day. Grades 10-12 have that same amount of time to collaborate with cross grade level colleagues.</li> </ul>	•	•

<p><b>Useful Administrator Feedback</b> Teachers define useful feedback from administrators as being a balance between positive comments and constructive suggestions for improvement. Feedback would be continuous and solution-based with specific, detailed goals and objectives that are based on clear evidence and reflective of current research. Conversations would be timely, in person, reflective, not punitive, and would begin with active listening. Individualized implementation plans include concrete and practical actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admins are participating in CPT (September 2016)</li> <li>• Administrators lead IDCPT</li> <li>• Because administrators do not have time for the intensive coaching described in this section, a robust teacher leader system was built into the original model for year one and then expanded for year two. Teacher leaders receive extensive PL on coaching. All classroom teachers now participate in coaching cycles, which is ongoing, reflective, practical, and subject-specific.</li> <li>• Administration continues to support this through increased classroom visits with feedback provided</li> </ul>	•	•
<p><b>Professional Learning</b> Teachers would like a stronger bridge with the Professional Learning Committee. They proposed a lengthy list of professional learning topics they would like to see offered. Furthermore, they would like more opportunities to lead professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher PL requests communicated to PL committee and to Warner center staff (August 2016)</li> <li>• Numerous teachers serving on PL committee</li> <li>• Teachers led PD on Supt. Conf Day September and October.</li> <li>• we will increase access to the PL five-year plan.</li> <li>• an area of need remaining includes quality PL for counselors, social workers, librarians, and consultant teachers.</li> <li>• WestEd survey on Summer 2016 PL conducted and results shared with PL committee and used to inform the plan for conference days this school year along with all other feedback from 2015-2016 and EPO-specific requirements related to PL</li> </ul>	•	•
<p><b>Coaching</b> Teachers either liked or disliked their coaching experience; there was no gray. Effective coaching focuses on what’s best for scholars, is timely, and collaborative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaches received PL in summer 2016 and developed coaching cycle plan</li> <li>• coaching at East has been expanded so coaches have more time; ENL was added.</li> </ul>	•	•
<p><b>Family Group</b> Attendance is a key concern for all staff. In addition to establishing a system of accountability for scholar attendance, staff would like more engaging activities that are collaborative, provide more opportunities for scholar input, are less academically focused, and create an atmosphere of fun and competition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some FGs are language specific (September 2016)</li> <li>• Equity fund developed to help fund FG activities summer 2016)</li> <li>• US FG moved to morning (summer 2016)</li> <li>• Co-parents established for all groups (summer 2016)</li> </ul>	•	•