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Laying the Foundation (LtF): A Framework for Integrating Performative Modalities in Social Justice School Leadership Programs

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Leadership coach participating in a pinning ceremony for Cohort 16 student at End of Program celebration



Detailed view of PLI Leadership Survival Kit provided to each graduate, a final metaphor to support resilience and reflection

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Authors' Note

When we set out to describe and frame PLI's integration of performative modalities 18 months ago, we aspired to lay a foundation to memorialize all of the efforts to date with full expectation that our work would be refined, shaped, and influenced in the future. What we did not know was that the COVID-19 pandemic was imminent. In the past month, PLI, all public schools, and all universities in California have sharply pivoted from largely in-person experiences to distance learning. While it is too early to assess the full impact, the work we describe in this paper continues to serve as a constant source of inspiration and guidance during this time of great change. New questions we are asking ourselves include: *What assumptions do video conferencing platforms make about collaboration? How can authentic performance assessment be embedded within distance learning? How do we build community and social solidarity while remaining physically distant?* Before the pandemic, we treated technology as an enhancement to PLI praxis, which almost exclusively occurred within the traditional in-person classroom format. Now, distance learning has forced us to center technology as the primary context for PLI praxis, illuminating how issues of digital competency, technology tools, and digital learning were dormant. We find ourselves testing the strength of our conceptual frameworks with considerations for the transversal impacts of the digital space on leading for equity, an issue foreshadowed by our Advisory Committee in March, 2020 (see the Final Thoughts section for more details). Our journey continues.



About the Artwork (Written by Cohort 14)

The 2013 George Zimmerman not guilty verdict occurred during summer coursework for Cohort 14. The cohort discussed the implications of the case in depth and the impact such decisions have on students and their communities. In response to the case, a cohort member, Tonia, brought in a poster created with Kazoo Studios, which had an outline of a young person in a hoodie with an Angela Davis quote noting that the Trayvon Martin incident was simply the latest in a long history of racially motivated killings of black men without any legal consequences.

To keep this point in the public frame and discourse, the poster became a part of the PLI information board within Tolman Hall. During the fall semester, the poster was defaced with hateful language. The comments written on the poster described the desire for more killings of black people, and equated black-on-black crime with racially motivated killings of black men. After the incident, the poster was removed and time was provided in class to discuss a coordinated response. In that discussion, Cohort 14 expressed a desire to use art as a method of responding.

Rebecca Cheung's leadership created the opportunity for ArtCorps to lead the students in identifying how to respond through art. The ArtCorps training focused on using art-based tools and innovative approaches for more effective collaboration and dialogue around systemic issues in our communities and schools.

Some PLI Cohort 14 students, as well as some of the PLI staff, attended a 12-hour ArtCorps training, where they planned a professional development for the entire cohort to participate in the artistic response. The piece displayed here represents their creative efforts.

The work was unveiled at Cohort 14's commencement ceremony in front of faculty, family, and friends who supported them through this leadership journey and into their next leadership position—which will present more challenges that will require courageous, creative, and innovative responses.

Why an Arts-Based Response?

As a result of the student-led class discussion, the cohort expressed a desire to use art as a method of responding to the hate language. The arts have a unique power to inspire, educate, and organize individuals and communities. Art inspires by cultivating the imagination, opening the heart, supporting healing, and generating new possibilities and responses. Art educates by calling attention to critical issues in creative and powerful ways, communicating messages with more clarity and efficiency, generating dialogue and critical thinking, and transcending barriers of language and identity. Art organizes by promoting collaborations and shared decision-making, strengthening relationships and building trust, giving voice to marginalized communities, attracting media attention, and mobilizing people to action.

The Value of Creative Leadership

Numerous studies and reports place creativity as one of the most important skills needed for the 21st century. The complexity of social challenges in the urban environment demands strong leaders with a highly developed creative capacity. Research shows that creativity supports leaders to more effectively:

- Challenge the status quo
- Articulate ideas clearly
- Examine alternative ways of solving problems
- Adapt to rapidly changing context
- Take risks and experiment with different approaches
- Focus on future possibilities
- Inspire and motivate others

Introduction

This framework lays the foundation for integrating performative modalities in social justice leadership preparation as a strategy for teaching future leaders how to understand and address the conditions necessary for truly transformative teaching and learning in schools. It is situated at the intersection of several theoretical and contextual spaces within social justice leadership, leadership preparation, and the defunding of the arts in California. Through systematic engagement across these three spaces, a distinct and novel approach at the UC Berkeley Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) has emerged and is receiving increased recognition. This document is an attempt to describe and frame PLI's integration of performative modalities through conceptual frameworks and living examples. We lay this foundation to memorialize all of the efforts to date with full expectation that our work will continue to be refined, shaped, and influenced in the future.

Theoretical and Contextual Spaces

First, this work is born out of the theories of social justice leadership, an emerging field that focuses on those who intentionally center issues of justice and equity in their daily work as educational leaders. Dantley and Tillman (2010) focus on three components of social justice: leadership for social justice, moral transformative leadership (or leaders as public intellectuals), and social justice praxis. They summarize five specific characteristics that may be applied to all of these various definitions:

1. A consciousness of the broader social, cultural, and political contexts of schools;
2. The critique of the marginalizing behaviors and predispositions of schools and their leadership;
3. A commitment to the more genuine enactment of democratic principles in schools;
4. A moral obligation to articulate a counter-hegemonic vision or narrative of hope regarding education;
5. A determination to move from rhetoric to civil rights activism. (p. 23)

More narrowly, this framework is situated within the field of social justice leadership preparation. Historically, leadership preparation has focused on individualistic assumptions of leadership behavior. Traditionally, preparation of educational leaders focuses on the application of concepts from private sector management, reflecting a concern with efficiency and an emphasis on rationalizing educational organizations. Angus (1996) considers the main features of this conventional approach to be the rational model, positivistic methodology, and the dominance of administrative-technical concerns (p. 980). Drawing constructs from the behavioral sciences, this line of traditional scholarship and training attended to *who* does leadership, produced studies of *great men*, and identified effective leadership *traits* (Black & Murtadha, 2007, p. 2). With the emergence of the human relations movement and an embracing of motivation theory, such approaches were modified to include consideration of what leaders *do* (Hanson, 2003; Morgan, 1997).

Since the 1990s, the field of leadership studies has transitioned from using trait theories of leadership to implementing a social constructionist paradigm (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Additionally, a focus on leading learning resulted in a new research trajectory that shifted the conversation to specific ways educational leaders exercise a powerful influence on student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Murphy, 2002). Finally, due to educational inequalities such as significant and ongoing differences in students' opportunity to learn, unequal leadership capacity, wide-ranging teacher expectations, varied curriculum rigor, uneven organizational ability to conceptualize and enact vision, and increasing school and societal segregation and inequality (Anyon, 2005; Lipman, 2004), greater numbers of university-based programs began focusing their efforts toward preparing future leaders for cultural competence,

equity pedagogy, and social justice leadership (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Marshall & Ward, 2004) that takes into account local educational contexts.

This shift has motivated leadership education programs to move away from leadership identification and individual human capital development in favor of a more systematic approach that focuses on developing social capital, fostering organizational contexts that support leadership development, and advancing interrelationships (Day, 2002; Komives et al., 2006). Researchers have described the current achievement gap as an opportunity gap that has serious implications when it comes to schools and access to rich curriculum, instruction, and social interaction. Principals must understand how pretexts (formal and informal experiences students bring with them to the school setting) and in-school and out-of-school contexts impact instruction and frame what they can do about them to improve educational opportunity for a diverse student population.

Unfortunately, vulnerable student populations and historically underserved students of color continue to face barriers to access and opportunity. Reasons why their access is compromised include practices such as disproportionate placement of minority students into special education, and tracking to remedial classes (Theoharis & Brooks, 2012; Carter and Welner, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Oakes, 1985). Compared to White students, African American and Latino students are more likely to be retained, suspended, and expelled, and more likely to drop out of school (Howard, 2010). The scores of African American and Latino students are regularly considerably lower than White students' scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests in reading, writing, math, and science. The causes of the discrepancies between White, middle-class students and students from other cultures are varied. One of those causes is deficit thinking about students of color and low socio-economic status (SES). A lack of knowledge about other cultures can lead to a number of cultural clashes between mainstream educators and students of color and low SES.

Educational leaders have a responsibility to ensure that all students have equal access to high-quality instruction. For example, an increasing number of researchers have demonstrated that students who are typically disengaged in school are more likely to participate in arts and arts-integrated classes than in classes where the arts are absent, and students who receive arts-integrated instruction have higher attendance than those who do not (Barry & Meisiek, 2010; Ingram & Meath, 2007; Walker et al., 2011).

To curtail this outcome of unequal access and opportunity, researchers are now advocating that cultural responsiveness should be the imperative for the 21st century, where the overarching goal is to foster an ethos that values human rights, diversity, and equity, and ultimately facilitates successful learning for all members of the school community. Drago-Severson et al. (2011) note that most university leadership



Cohort 15 quilt in response to the shooting of Michael Brown

preparation in K–12 educational leadership programs “focuses on management skills (e.g., planning and financing), which are necessary but insufficient to help aspiring leaders meet anticipated leadership demands” (p. 84). Drago-Severson et al. argue that rather than take a management approach to leadership education, “programs need to teach about relational learning, collaborative leadership, and reflective practice” (p. 84). As a result, research in social justice leadership preparation over the last decade has also pointed toward the need to combine critical perspectives with praxis and personal transformation rather than an exclusively intellectual endeavor.

This framework is also situated in a third space: the California context, where since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, arts education has been slowly yet systematically defunded. A study conducted over 30 years since the passage of Proposition 13 found that 65% of elementary classroom teachers were not familiar with the visual and performing arts standards, and while most secondary teachers reported being familiar with the standards, only 48% said they had attended a professional development session on incorporating them into instruction (Guha et al., 2008). At this point, the State of California currently does not even offer a single subject teaching credential in either dance or theater, although they are in the development stage (Agee, 2015).

Henriksen and Mishra (2015) have established that creativity and experience with the arts support exemplary teaching practice. Despite this and despite the fact that the arts are legally considered core curriculum in the state of California, there is little institutional support for the arts in California public education. Furthermore, because administrators in California are required to have a minimum of five years of teaching experience, these policies have trickle-down effects.

Administrators at all levels—state, county, district, and school—are key players in building and sustaining creative schools; therefore, it is critical that they be prepared to do so. However, they are sorely lacking in preparation for administering successful arts programming. Administrative services credentials may be obtained through completion of an administrator preparation program, or by achieving a passing score on the California Preliminary Administrative Credential Examination. No coursework aligned to the arts is included in these preparation programs, no arts-related material is covered on the examination, and none of the innovative and creative strategies necessary to build a creative school community are addressed in either pathway to administrative credentialing. (Agee, 2015)

In addition to arts education, research supports the role of creativity within the context of effective learning and the promotion of innovation. There is a substantial body of work related to how classrooms support and develop creativity in student learning as well as the negative impacts of recent accountability policies on creativity development (Mullen, 2019). Much of it has been done in a cross-disciplinary setting in conjunction with and outside of the discipline of arts education. At this point, there is clear evidence that creativity is a talent that can be developed (Renzulli, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1996; Treffinger et al., 2013). However, Kettler et al. (2018) note that “although teachers’ perceptions of creativity have been widely studied, very little research has considered the role of educational leadership in creative education” (p. 256).

The third aspect of the California context worth noting is the ever-increasing plurality and diversity of its residents. For several decades, California has been the most diverse state in the United States. As the largest state in the nation, it has become a majority-minority state:

No race or ethnic group constitutes a majority of the state’s population: 39% of state residents are Latino, 38% are white, 14% Asian American, 6% African American, 3% multiracial, and less

than 1% American Indian or Pacific Islander, according to the 2015 American Community Survey. In 2015 Latinos surpassed whites as the state's single largest ethnic group. (Johnson, 2020)

Over 10 million immigrants live in California and 19% of all students in California public schools are English Learners (California Department of Education, 2019). However, despite this diversity, 62% of all public school teachers are white (California Department of Education, 2019), and they serve children who are 74% students of color. Questions we asked ourselves during this project include: What are the intersections of social justice leadership preparation, arts education, and creativity? How does the California context shape the Principal Leadership Institute curriculum? How can aspiring social justice leaders best be prepared to address issues of opportunity and access when they enter the workforce? What is the role of leadership preparation in addressing issues of opportunity and access? What kind of preparation is needed to effectively educate the most diverse student populations in the nation?

Signature Pedagogy

"For me, PLI was equal parts professional and personal development. The program's rigorous content was made ever richer by the intentional focus on personal identity, interpersonal relationships, and embodying leadership. We received feedback both on our mastery of content knowledge and on our ability to transmit it, as a principal might, through our varied interactions with others. In this way, I not only learned the skills of an equity-centered school leader, but also received ongoing practice with feedback on my attempts to embody such a leader."

—Cohort 10 alumna

"The experiences we are giving them helps transform students into the leaders they need to be. We're focused on the process. Other arts education and arts-centered approaches focus on the end product. Whether you call it developing a craft, the habits of mind, or ways of thinking, it's a focus on the process, actually a lifelong artistic process."

—Program Director (co-author)

Social justice leadership preparation programs struggle to describe, document, and research innovative praxis in the field. Without frameworks, investigation and documentation are difficult to accomplish. As more educational leaders explore new ways to *look in the mirror* in order to assess and improve educational leadership preparation at the national and state level (Adams & Copeland, 2005; Davis et al., 2005; Bottoms et al., 2005; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2005; and the work of the UCEA/TEA-SIG Task Force on Educational Leadership Preparation), there is a sense of urgency as many state- and national-level policy actors, urban districts, foundations, and educational leadership faculty question how best to prepare leaders, particularly given existing shortages of highly qualified principals and superintendents and the complex demands of leading school reform efforts (Black & Murtadha, p. 3).

Since the 1980s and into the 1990s, a body of research emerged from the effective schools movement that guided the development and application of standards-based frameworks for educational leadership programs and future educational leaders in the states. Such a framework therefore necessitates the

articulation of the conditions, resources, and pedagogical strategies used. These conversations within and around the field of educational leadership have led PLI to envision its own version of a *signature pedagogy* for educational social justice leadership preparation as praxis, grounded in performative inquiry modalities. A signature pedagogy acknowledges leadership work as an ethical and moral craft that draws from conceptual and abstract knowledge, engages in ongoing critical-reflective inquiry, and is committed to student learning (Schwandt, 2001, p. 45).

How does a leadership preparation program design powerful learning experiences for future leaders? What does pedagogy look and feel like? We believe that this paper and the work of PLI in general can contribute a specific approach to consistently designing powerful learning experiences within leadership preparation. Furthermore, we believe that the signature pedagogy of PLI is an example of how one preparation program can design powerful learning experiences that provide transformational learning for aspiring leaders. The concept of developing powerful learning experiences (PLEs) in exemplary leadership preparation has emerged through the work of the University Council for Educational Administration, one of the leading research associations that focuses on educational leadership. According to Young (2015, p. 401), in an analysis of recent programs that received the UCEA Exemplary Educational Leadership Preparation Program (EELP) Award, PLEs reflect the following nine characteristics:

1. They are authentic, meaningful, relevant, problem-finding activities.
2. They involve sensemaking around critical problems of practice.
3. They involve exploration, critique, and deconstruction from an equity perspective.
4. They require collaboration and interdependence.
5. They develop confidence in leadership.
6. They place both the professor and the student in a learning situation.
7. They empower learners and make them responsible for their own learning.
8. They shift the perspective from classroom to school, district, or state level.
9. They have a reflective component.

Specifically, researchers posit that PLEs help to “transform the ways candidates identify and understand leadership and provide an ontological toolkit from which to draw in their leadership contexts” (Cunningham et al., 2019, p. 92). In what ways does the PLI pedagogy overlap with Young’s concept of powerful learning experiences? In what ways is it distinctive?

For over 20 years,¹ the Berkeley Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) has been innovating new strategies and methodologies for integrating performative modalities into social justice leadership preparation by engaging with practicing artists, incorporating creative and arts-based teaching strategies, designing performance assessment events, forming partnerships with arts education organizations, using and applying research on creative and arts-based pedagogy, and networking with other educator preparation programs. In 2019, California policymakers fully implemented the first state performance assessment for administrators in their efforts to elevate the quality of leaders. PLI has been incorporating the use of performance assessment over its entire history. However, the epistemologies of state performance assessments and PLI are quite distinct. More specifically, PLI’s orientation to performance assessment assumes an epistemology of practice, rather than an epistemology of possession (Cook & Brown, 1999). The implication of an epistemology of practice results in performance

¹ A report describing the 20-year impact of PLI is available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QBdUsB_tyOHvNWIFPR_4i9tTaiVcGKjg/view.

assessment designs that account for the organizational complexity of practice and knowledge generation rather than summative assessments that rely heavily on writing after-the-fact summaries.²

In our literature review process, we were able to identify origins of our innovations related to integrating performative modalities in the arts, creativity, inclusive cultural and community practices, as well as social justice. For example, performative inquiry recognizes the arts as an action site of research and learning; it is a pedagogical research strategy that incorporates arts, inquiry, and reflection to evoke and make meaning of emergent issues or situations encountered within performative spaces of encounter (Fels, 1998; 2010; 2011). Shapiro (2010) notes that “artmaking is a powerful means by which



Cohort 19 cohort circle altar. OUSD strike flag provided by student

educational leaders can express emotion and gain insight into their social justice work in schools” (p. 245). Greene (1995) suggests that art making can help educational leaders to recover “their imaginations and it may be the recovery of the imagination that lessens the social paralysis we see around us and restores the sense that something can be done in the name of what is decent and humane” (p. 35). Finally, Spehler and Slattery (1999) suggest that the arts are vital in leadership for social justice work in schools because of their ability to “develop voice, sustain passion and evoke

response” (p. 3). Researchers have also examined the role of arts and creativity in resilience, inclusion, civic engagement, and community building amid adverse conditions, stating that “a community of courage is fundamental for leaders to create an environment of physical and emotional safety and to sustain school-wide commitment to a vision of equity and justice in the face of funding cuts, high turnover or reductions in staffing, bureaucratic processes that seem unfathomable, and inevitable disappointments when struggling to support all students well” (Byrne-Jimenez & Yoon, 2019, p. 117). While none of these theories were able to fully categorize our work, we realized that they played important roles in grounding our own conceptualization. For example, in our development of the framework, the PLI Head Lecturer commented, “It isn’t art we’re using, but habits of mind, creative thinking, collaboration that we use. Most arts-integration approaches center on the visual arts, which is inherently an individualistic activity, not the performing arts (dance, theater), which is inherently collaborative. Historically, educational leadership practice is isolationist and individualistic. Use of the arts allows us to teach students how to be flexible, collaborative, and adaptable.”

Ultimately, the PLI signature pedagogy extends the concept of PLEs further by using elements of the arts and creativity, in combination with critical theory and community and cultural practices, to create a new and different type of leadership preparation experience that involves personal development in addition to intellectual development. As the PLI is a graduate-level program within an institute of higher education, text and visuals are foundational and vital modalities that also must be utilized. The PLI Domains of Praxis (discussed in detail later) articulate the signature pedagogy in more detail. By creating a transformational learning experience, PLI provides access and an experiential base for aspiring social justice leaders to deeply interrogate issues of equity in schools.

² A full description of PLI’s performance assessment practices is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GBunA4MqLsZhLoIX646MyuW1IG0OuFc2/view>.

The PLI Leadership Preparation Landscape

While this paper focuses on the development of a signature pedagogy that integrates performative modalities through the PLI Domains of Praxis, we would be remiss if we did not first acknowledge and articulate the conditions, resources, standards, and infrastructure needed to support this work. Figure 1 visualizes the broader landscape for supporting robust leadership preparation. By landscape, we mean the systems, structures, and conditions for doing the work.

The first layer of the Landscape (bottom row) consists of the staffing, resources, and supportive conditions necessary to do the work. These include physical space, funding, partnerships, and instructor profile. These essential elements are critical to the sustainability and implementation of the model. Note that the supportive conditions include a need for the cultivation of innovation.

The second layer of the Landscape is the research basis of the program. Sample categories include performance assessment, problem-based learning, distributive leadership, culturally relevant strategies, adult learning theory, and social justice leadership theory.

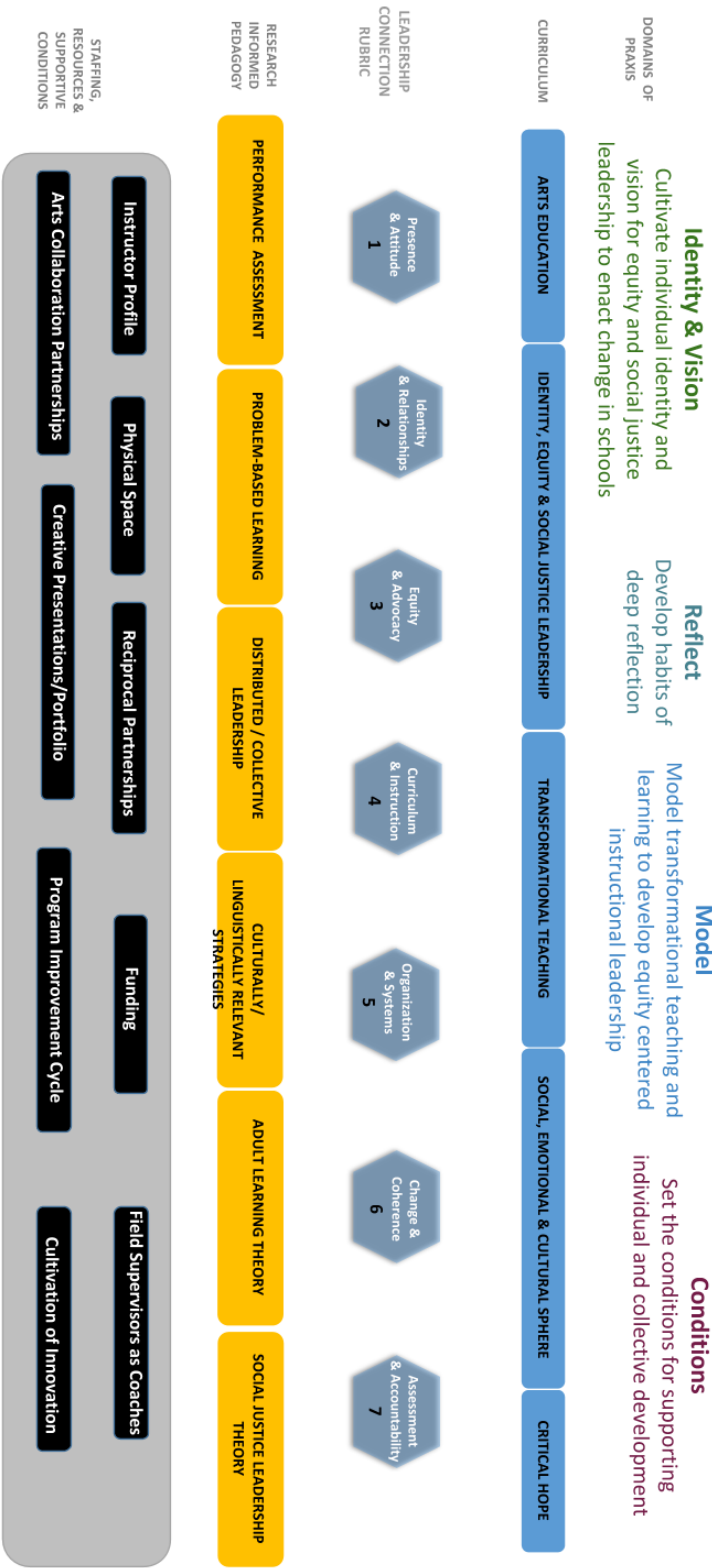
The Leadership Connection Rubric provides the third layer to the Landscape, as it guides PLI's research-informed pedagogy by connecting the theory to measurable leadership competencies, dispositions, and actions. In essence, the Rubric provides the "translation" of the theory into discrete descriptors and indicators at the leader level.³

The fourth layer consists of the curriculum and content of the courses in the preparation program. The courses are informed by the first three layers of the Landscape and integrate the intended outcomes with the research base through supportive conditions.

Finally, the PLI Domains of Praxis (see Figure 2) enhance the leadership preparation curriculum by integrating performative modalities into student experiences within the courses to promote cognitive disequilibrium for the purposes of growth. Praxis is defined in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (Freire, 1970, pp. 125–126). Through praxis, Freire asserts that oppressed people can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and, with teacher-students and students-teachers, struggle for liberation. Without the underlayment of the broader landscape, it would be difficult to implement the Domains of Praxis program-wide. For example, without reciprocal partnerships as a resource for PLI, the program's imagination about transformational teaching may not have been activated to the same extent. Or, without instructors who had backgrounds in performative modalities, it might have taken longer to arrive at this work.

³ A complete description and copy of the Leadership Connection Rubric is available at <https://gse.berkeley.edu/academics/professional-programs/principal-leadership-institute/leadership-connection-rubric>

Figure 1: PI Social Justice Leadership Preparation Landscape



Framework for PLI Domains of Praxis

“I think that as a program, the emphasis on being relevant to and responsive to diversity is embedded. I think there also is a focus on being proactive. I think in many instances programs don’t necessarily engage students at the level of reflection, where they’re constantly evolving in terms of their own perceptions of what’s happening in their environment. And I think also the modeling cultural consonance and professional learning, I can see how that is always used as a tool for being responsive to the immediate environment so that you are adapting and adjusting as you go along. I think the equity stance that the program promotes is more directly related to being a transformative leader, and also being a leader who is receptive and assessing the environment on a regular basis.”

—PLI coach

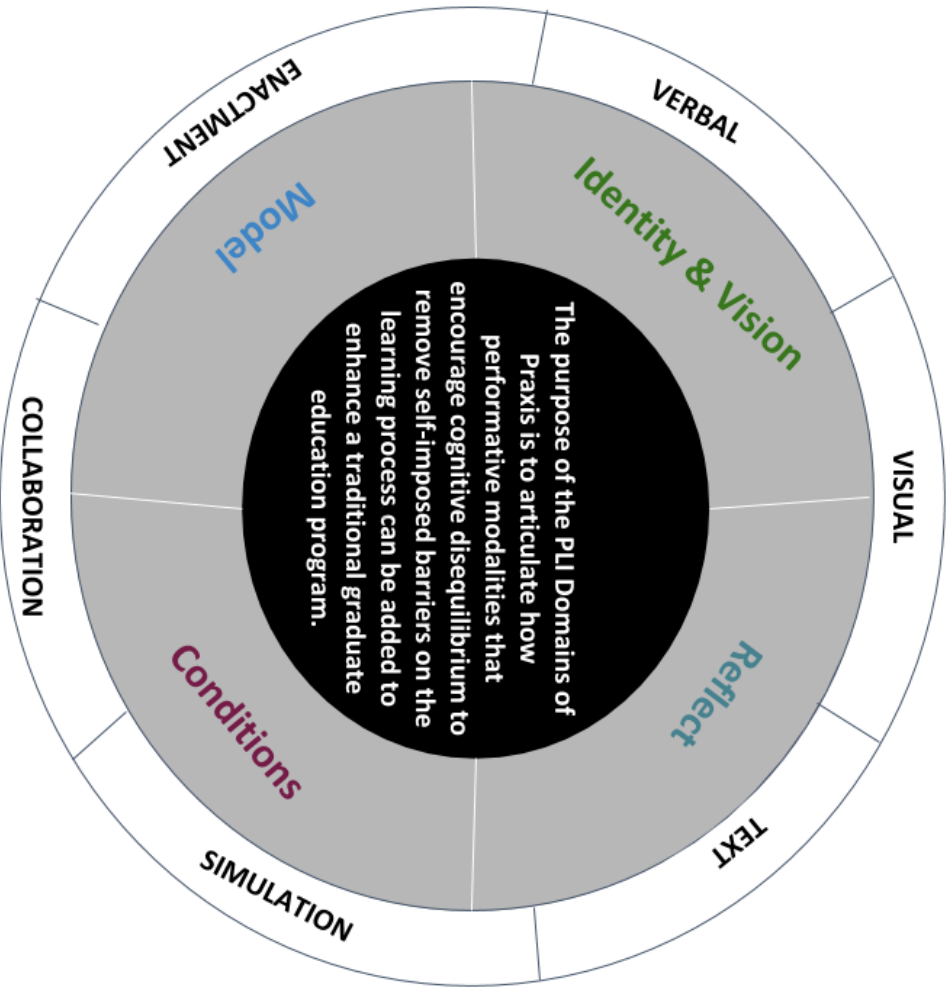
We began by describing the PLI signature pedagogy that extends the concept of PLEs further by using elements of the arts and creativity, in combination with critical theory and community and cultural practices, to create a new and different type of leadership preparation experience that involves personal development in addition to intellectual development. Text and visuals are foundational and vital modalities that are also incorporated. The PLI Domains of Praxis articulate the signature pedagogy in more detail. By creating a transformational learning experience, PLI provides access and an experiential base for aspiring social justice leaders to deeply interrogate issues of equity in schools.

Borrowing from Freire’s (1970) conception of praxis, we have created a framework for the PLI Domains of Praxis as an approach to integrating enactment modalities within the context of a leadership preparation program situated in an institute of higher education. The underpinnings of PLI’s social justice leadership preparation approach are anchored in Marshall and Oliva’s (2010) definition:

With recognition that social justice in education entails such wide, deep, and entangling contexts, clearly, educators cannot take on such challenges without wider, broader, and more powerful societal support. . . . This is not management science. It is leadership steeped in values and a sense of mission to transform society. Social justice leadership for schools is more akin to the proselytizing, spiritual leadership, and pastoral care of the ministry than the impersonal, albeit efficient, business management. (p. 326)

This type of preparation requires intentionally designed learning sequences that promote participatory and public opportunities for students to embrace cognitive disequilibrium for the purposes of developing a critical awareness of their own condition and struggle for liberation within the context of leadership. Here, we build on the work of Farmer (2008), who asserts that “graduate level leadership programs striving to develop transformational leaders must challenge indigenous paradigms by implementing exercises, activities and dialogues specifically designed to create cognitive disequilibrium” (p. 3). Farmer defines cognitive disequilibrium as “a state of mind in which preconceived notions are challenged by new ideas with such a cataclysmic collision that the aforementioned preconceived notions can be simultaneously transformed and reframed into new perspectives” (p. 3). Specifically, Farmer asserts that cognitive disequilibrium

Figure 2: PLI Domains of Praxis



Identity & Vision

Cultivate individual identity and vision for equity and social justice leadership to enact change in schools

Model

Model transformational teaching and learning to develop equity centered instructional leadership

Conditions

Set the conditions for supporting individual and collective development

Reflect

Develop habits of deep reflection

“facilitates the removal of self-imposed barriers in the learning process and helps leadership students exorcise internalized fallacies. The emancipation from such self-imposed barriers facilitated by the cognitive disequilibrium process ameliorates students’ global views and enhances their promise as transformational leaders” (p. 2). Figure 2 provides an overview.

As stated in the center of Figure 2, the purpose of the PLI Domains of Praxis is to articulate how performative modalities can be added to enhance a traditional graduate education program. By supporting students to develop social justice leadership through performative modalities in combination with conventional modalities (verbal, visual, and text), the Domains encourage cognitive disequilibrium to remove self-imposed barriers on the learning process. The four domains are:

- **CONDITIONS:** Set the conditions for supportive individual and collective development;
- **IDENTITY & VISION:** Cultivate individual identity and vision for equity and social justice leadership to enact change in schools;
- **MODEL:** Model transformational teaching and learning to develop equity-centered instructional leadership;
- **REFLECT:** Develop habits of deep reflection.

To enact the PLI Domains of Praxis, six modalities are used in different combinations depending on the focus: Verbal, Visual, Text, Enactment, Collaboration, and Simulation. These modalities are to be “intentionally orchestrated through coursework and other forms of student engagement within the framework of a professional learning community as part of the cognitive disequilibrium process” (Farmer, 2008, p. 10). Common ways of engaging the verbal modality include listening and speaking. For the visual modality, we include diagrams, charting, and observing. Through the text modality, we include course-based readings as well as writing. Through the enactment modality, we include presentations



Cohort 16 Theater of the Oppressed activity

and other authentic public opportunities to engage in coursework and in fieldwork. With the collaboration modality, we seek to capture work done with others—classmates, peers, students, and families. And finally, through the simulation modality, we specifically focus on private interactive opportunities that are intended to mimic authentic real-world contexts.

Through an internal validation process, we gathered feedback about our signature pedagogy from a variety of stakeholders including current students, recent alumni, instructors, and coaches who provide fieldwork support. Our initial findings

support the idea that integrating performative modalities in social justice leadership preparation shows promise as a method of engaging students in meaningful praxis that allows students to make connections between their lived experiences as practicing educators and the theoretical concepts in their courses. One student from Cohort 19 described it this way:

When I initially read the “Utilizing Cognitive Disequilibrium” article by Farmer, I thought that it was an interesting idea. But then when I experienced the Theater of the Oppressed it helped me to better understand the abstract concept of cognitive disequilibrium and understand its importance for pushing teacher practice. Being asked to step outside of our comfort zones and try the acting exercises helped me to understand that “cognitive disequilibrium is a state of mind in which preconceived notions are challenged by new ideas with such a cataclysmic

collision that the aforementioned preconceived notions can be simultaneously transformed and reframed into new perspective” (Farmer, 2010).

In my work, I pushed our professional development planning team to consider ways in which we can push our teachers into cognitive disequilibrium to make space for new mindsets, beliefs, and frameworks. When we read an article that was counter to most people’s conceptions of mathematics education, we specifically named that we wanted our participants to experience cognitive disequilibrium so that the cataclysmic collision could make space for new ideas. Without the experience of the Theater of the Oppressed, I don’t think I would have understood the importance of cognitive disequilibrium.



Cohort 16 Teach Love, Not Hate social media campaign

An alumna from Cohort 16 described a similar process of transferring PLI learning experiences to her everyday work in schools. She said, “I can take the best practices that I experienced in PLI and activities that stuck with me, and put it into practice. I can create an activity for others based on what allowed me to process something in a different way.” Furthermore, she went on to describe how being a part of an



Cohort 19 student’s visualization of PLI

inclusive learning environment developed her capacity to be more inclusive in her professional development planning by stating, “In my leadership, I can take the best practices that I’ve experienced and activities that I’ve been engaged with that I know allows someone who learns differently from me to process in a way that’s helpful for them.” Coaches we interviewed also resonated with the impact of experiencing more inclusive education. One described it this way: “In one sense, [the Domains of Praxis] cause students to approach content from a variety of perspectives, and I think that that tends to promote a more equity-centered vision. It is more equitable in the sense that the students themselves have various ways of learning and expressing themselves, so if there is some variety in the opportunities, it’s more equitable for the participation of everyone.”

PLI Domains of Praxis in Action

To illuminate our intended meaning and to document our current practice using the Domains, the internal team did several rounds of brainstorming to create a comprehensive list of

examples from the current PLI curriculum. Through this process we came to a few important conclusions. First, every example was multimodal, engaging more than one Domain as the primary focus. Second, the examples were easily categorized into three leveled categories: shared teaching

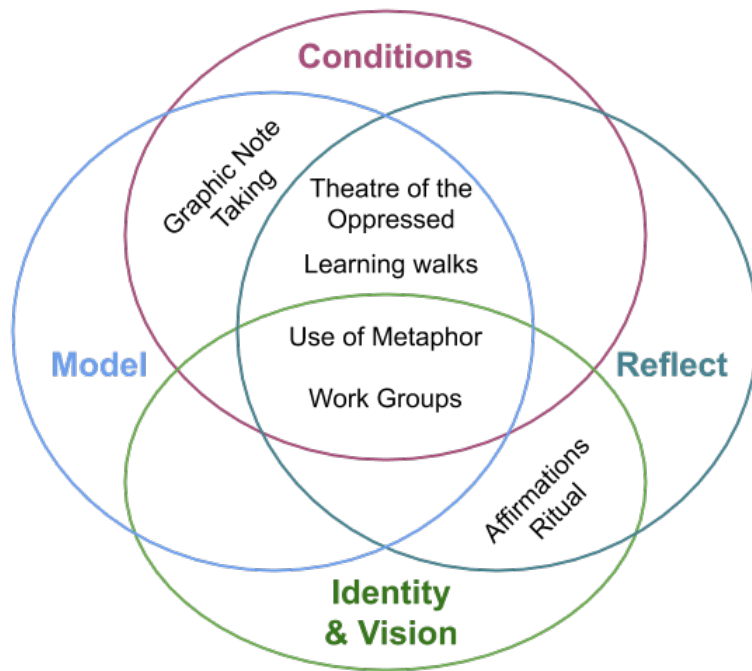
strategies, assignments, and program-wide events. Third, the tables below may be interpreted as standalone and separate ideas. As a result, we also encourage the reader to consider the overall impact that occurs when each individual experience is sequenced and orchestrated into a program. In other words, analysis at the individual experience level is limited in its ability to capture the cumulative effect. One obvious challenge we have in this paper is the limitation of using the written form to describe performative modalities and related experiences. Thus, we have embedded photo documentation to complement the narrative. Finally, determining a print-based graphical representation of the overlapping multimodal nature of the Domains was a challenge. In Appendix A, we provide the original tables created. In the section below, we have chosen to use Venn diagrams to convey the multimodal nature in a graphic format using specific examples. While this document does not provide an in-depth explanation of each example, we hope that this section conveys the overall intent and approach to using the Domains.



Cohort 17 on a learning walk during Orientation

Figure 3 is a 2D diagram of the multimodal nature of shared teaching strategies across the Domains of Praxis. The use of these shared teaching strategies by multiple instructors across courses creates coherence for students throughout their program experience. By mapping examples into Figure 3, we attempt to illustrate strategies classified by their primary domains. A complete list is available in Appendix A. In Figure 3, graphic note-taking exemplifies a way to integrate the Model and Conditions Domains, because students engage in different forms of graphic note-taking to support, summarize, and analyze course content and discussions. By using the Affirmations Ritual, the program addresses the Reflection and Identity & Vision Domains, and provides an ongoing strategy for developing resilience through risk-taking. The Theater of the Oppressed activities and Learning Walks fit into the overlapping space of three domains, Conditions, Model, and Reflect, as they involve physical movement and embodiment. Finally, the use of metaphor and work group design

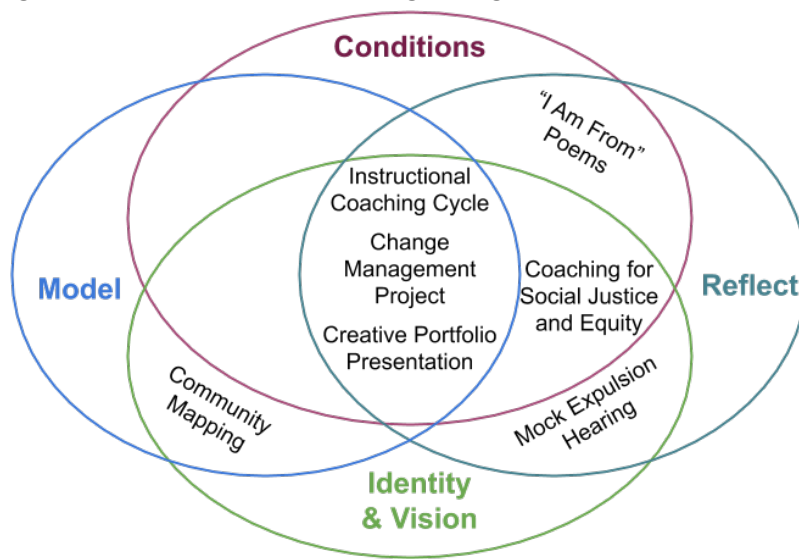
involve all four Domains. Metaphoric thinking is added incrementally to include students with less experience and confidence. Work groups are engineered for difference rather than similarities to maximize learning. Of course, individual instructors also have specific strategies they use in their classes. For example, Head Lecturer Tom Green writes and performs a song about the content of his course every fall. However, we did not put this on the list because it does not occur in any other class.

Figure 3: Domains of Praxis Through Shared Teaching Strategies

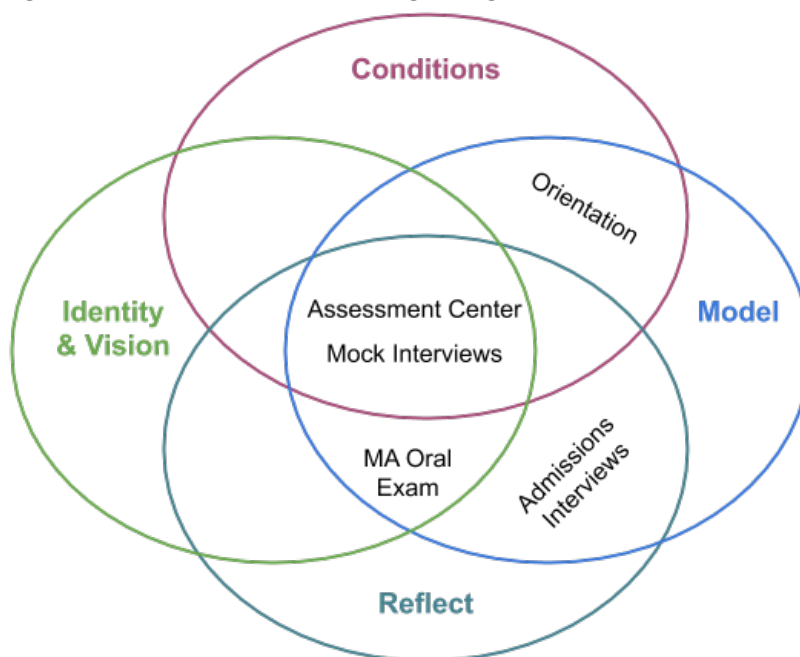
Specific course-embedded, in some cases multi course-embedded, teaching and learning sequence and assignment examples are visualized in Figure 4 (a full accounting is available in Appendix A). The “I Am From” poems are an early assignment used in the Pre-Seminars, focusing on the Conditions and Reflect Domains. The Community Mapping project connects to the Model and Identity & Vision Domains, culminating with individual presentations to an audience of alumni, coaches, and guests. In the Legal and Policy course, students conduct a Mock Expulsion Hearing simulation with a panel and witnesses that focuses on the Reflect and Identity & Vision Domains. PLI’s Coaching for Social Justice and Equity model intersects with three Domains: Conditions, Reflect, and Identity & Vision. Each student receives on-site support through a coach trained in the model. The Instructional Coaching Cycle assignment, Change Management Project, and Creative Portfolio Presentation integrate across all four Domains. In particular, the Change Management Project (CMP) and Instructional Coaching Cycle assignments are good examples of learning sequences that extend over many months. For example, for the CMP, students identify an equity gap using evidence, determine a theory of action that is research-informed, and conduct cycles of action research as they lead changes with a group of adults in schools. Finally, the Creative Portfolio Presentation presents an opportunity for students to creatively enact their leadership metaphors in lieu of traditional presentations. Ranging from paintings to videos to dance, students integrate their personal passions to describe their leadership development journeys.



Shenny Diaz, Cohort 19, Creative Presentation entitled "Leadership Is Like Setting Up a Tent"

Figure 4: Domains of Praxis Through Assignments

Examples of program-wide events are visualized in Figure 5 (a complete list is available in Appendix A). These are distinguished from course-based assignments and teaching strategies because they involve the integration of many components and staff of the program. For example, Admissions Interviews involve faculty, instructors, program leaders, and coaches. The multi-day Orientation intersects primarily with the Conditions and Model Domains and involves the Graduate School of Education's Student Services Office, PLI administrative staff, and program leaders. The MA Oral Exam is an individual student examination that intersects with the Model, Reflect, and Identity & Vision Domains by involving senate faculty, program leadership, and coaches. The Mock Interviews and Assessment Center activities involve all four Domains as well as instructors and coaches. Local district representatives and partners provide constructive feedback and support during the Mock Interviews.

Figure 5: Domains of Praxis through Program-Wide Events

Going Deep: Exploring Issues of Transformational Teaching and Learning Through AileyCamp

“A lot of the work of teaching is about witnessing learning. AileyCamp is about transformational learning in an artistic area. PLI is about transformative teaching and learning in public schools, and so by combining the two of those organizations, PLI students have a chance to take the transformations that AileyCamp is making with students in their program and translate that into everyday K-12 schooling during the regular school year.”

—Program Director (co-author)

The AileyCamp learning sequence is an illustrative example of how to use the Domains. The AileyCamp partnership and related learning sequence provide a specific example of the multimodal nature of the Domains of Praxis. The program sets the conditions for supportive individual and collective development by celebrating risk-taking and by partnering with an on-campus organization in the field of dance, a field of art that is less common and more daunting than other disciplines (Conditions). The sequence of activities allows students to cultivate their individual identities and visions for equity and social justice leadership to enact change in schools by providing an opportunity to witness a program that is culturally relevant and rigorous for low-income students of color (Identity & Vision). The sequence models how to plan and organize transformational teaching and learning to develop equity-centered instructional leadership in leaders through participatory learning, collaboration, integration of theory, and observation (Model). Finally, the multiple opportunities for both verbal and written reflection are critical to the learning process (Reflect). A description of the learning sequence is provided in the rest of the section.



Cohort 19 performance of I've Been 'Buked in "Pilgrim of Sorrow," Alvin Ailey's Revelations

In the first summer of the PLI program, students engage in courses focused on issues related to transformational teaching and learning as well as social justice leadership. The program has developed a partnership with AileyCamp, a nationally acclaimed summer program conceived by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and based at UC Berkeley, as a space for understanding visions of socially just instruction. AileyCamp uses dance as a vehicle for developing self-esteem, creative expression, and critical thinking skills among sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students ages 11–14.

The Applying Theories of Transformation to AileyCamp assignment has three goals:

1. To broaden student conceptions of socially just schools and pedagogy;
2. To identify the theories of transformation and innovation underpinning schools;
3. To identify how teaching and learning is different in schools of transformation and innovation.



Cohort 19 students at AileyCamp Open House

Over the course of the summer, students have multiple chances to interact with AileyCamp through activities integrated into PLI summer coursework. In chronological order, they are:

An Introduction to AileyCamp: This three-hour session includes an overview of the history of Alvin Ailey and the historical significance of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater Company, a 30-minute dance class using the choreography of Ailey taught by the Director of AileyCamp, and a 45-minute discussion that connects the theories to the experience.

Participation in AileyCamp Open House: Students participate in the Open House with parents, donors, and community members. They have a chance to observe all five aspects of the program: personal development, jazz dance, ballet, modern dance, and creative communication.

AileyCamp Alumni Interviews: Students design interview protocols and interview alumni campers about their experience with the camp.

Observation of AileyCamp Dress Rehearsal: Students observe the Dress Rehearsal of AileyCamp. The last day of camp culminates in a two-hour performance on the stage in the Zellerbach Auditorium in the evening.

Instructor Question and Answer Session: Students have the opportunity to ask questions of the instructors of AileyCamp.

Assigned Readings: In and outside of the AileyCamp activities, students are assigned readings that help them interrogate issues of transformational learning from multiple perspectives.

Optional Activities: Students are welcome to attend additional AileyCamp activities on their own time, including the AileyCamp Fashion Show, the AileyCamp Talent Show, and the AileyCamp Final Performance.

In addition to observation, PLI students are asked to write an academic paper that integrates the readings, class discussions, and personal notes from observing and interacting with AileyCamp. Specifically, the paper is expected to have four parts:

Part One: Understanding the Program—What is the program? Whom does it serve? What is the context?

Part Two: Theories of Transformation—What issues of access and equity are explicitly addressed?

Sub questions may include: What are the issues of access and equity the program aspires to improve? How are these issues related to the course readings and discussions?

How does AileyCamp explicitly address issues of access and equity?

Part Three: Pedagogies of Transformation—How are the issues of access and equity addressed? Why are they addressed in this manner? How do the politics of care intersect with the program?

Sub questions may include: What does learning look like? Where does learning happen? How is knowledge transmitted? How is learning assessed? Who decides what should be learned? What are the norms, culture, or procedures?

Part Four: Leadership Reflections—How did this assignment challenge me as a social justice leader?

Sub questions may include: How does analyzing AileyCamp challenge or expand your notions of school transformation and innovation? How did AileyCamp and this course as a whole affect the way you will approach your work as an educator in the future?

In the spirit of reciprocity, highlights from the final papers are anonymized and provided to AileyCamp to support their fundraising. Cal Performances has fundraised approximately \$400,000 to provide AileyCamp at no cost, and the highlights have helped them to advocate for donor support. Table 1 captures selected quotes obtained from the final papers.

Table 1: Impact of AileyCamp Assignment

“Just the fact that we actually got to participate in dance, and then interview dance teachers and observe, and just directly experience how that program created an equitable learning environment and promoted equitable outcomes for the participants. That was just such an engaging way to see that happening, rather than like reading about AileyCamp in a book, or just reading about how to create positive outcomes for students of color.”

—Cohort 16 student

“Dance at AileyCamp is not the end goal—empowered children, and eventually adults, are the end goal. Dance, then, is a tool that enables the campers to develop their sense of self, tap into many forms of expression, and begin to heal from the trauma of layered oppressions.”

—Cohort 17 student

“The successful, transformative nature of AileyCamp reminds me that allies are necessary to even begin the work of empowering our marginalized youth. Specifically, as a leader, an explicit and shared vision will have to be established collectively with allies to address underlying systemic inequities that continue to pose a barrier to what our students deserve: an educational system that believes in their abilities and addresses their needs.”

—Cohort 15 student

“AileyCamp profoundly impacted my practice. It helped expand my vision of what summer programs that impact academics look like. Before I had a narrow vision that in order to increase academic performance, we needed to engage students in academics. But AileyCamp helped me realize that in order to increase academic performance, we need to immerse students in an experience that allows them to feel self-love and confidence while taking pride in collectively working hard toward a goal. AileyCamp also helped me experience first hand an afro-centric program. One that always held a strengths-based lens towards students and emphasized love. AileyCamp also helped me realize the importance of having students work collectively toward a long term goal/performance. It helped affirm how important it is to celebrate learning with performances. It made me think about the other ways schools can authentically and joyfully celebrate learning.”

—Cohort 19 student

This elaborated example provides a richer description of the Domains of Praxis in action. While the planning and design process is not highlighted from the instructor standpoint, the learning sequence begins to illuminate the kinds of resources needed to implement a powerful learning experience such

as exploring issues of transformational teaching and learning through AileyCamp. Over the years, the instructors and Program Director who teach this sequence have read and analyzed the final papers to determine the impact of the partnership. The most prominent themes include understanding the power of the arts in a culturally relevant and transformational education, connections to social justice leadership and education, and the power of trusting relationships between students and teachers. As one student in Cohort 15 noted, “Clearly the arts are incredibly important and should be valiantly fought for in schools. That being said, I believe that the lessons for leadership that exist within AileyCamp transcend the arts and can be applied to schooling in general.”

Final Thoughts

For PLI, we hope that this paper memorializes the evolution of our work after 20 years. Furthermore, we intend for it to support efforts toward continuous improvement. With the Domains of Praxis, we can open up new and continuing dialogue within our programs and instructors by informing existing work and design with consistent frames. As one instructor noted, this paper catalyzes questions such as “How can this document be used by other instructors in terms of the perpetuity of the program? Should we have professional development, planning retreats, syllabi review, and other protocols designed around the Domains?” As the Program Director (co-author) noted, “There can be some systematizing that comes out of having this framework. Will it affect recruitment, admissions, and onboarding of new instructors?” In addition to these questions, we offer thoughts about how the model can be further developed and studied for the purposes of continued refinement and improvement. How can the PLI Domains of Praxis be validated more deeply? What kinds of support do instructors need to incorporate performative modalities? How does this type of leadership preparation manifest in distinctive types of leadership in graduates?

As stated in the introduction, we also expect that the work of the Domains of Praxis will continue to evolve, especially as new and emerging technology becomes accessible. Questions that came up during this process included: What will be the role of social media related to the Domains of Praxis in the future? How will globalization influence PLI’s work? How will more affordable video technology impact praxis?

For the field of leadership preparation, we aspire to lay the foundation for future use, study, and integration of performative modalities in social justice leadership preparation as well as deep interrogation of the supportive landscape. What are the impacts of our signature pedagogy on actual leadership practice in the field? What additional levels of support and design are needed to ensure access to high-quality leadership preparation for the field at large?

By providing the Domains of Praxis and Social Justice Leadership Preparation Landscape, we have detailed a framework that can be used to inspire and catalyze ideas in our peer institutions. We aspire to promote a much-needed conversation about the “how” of social justice leader preparation. In other words, what is the process or theoretical base for designing powerful learning experiences? Finally, we also present a model for the process of program design and improvement in leadership preparation. In total, this 18-month project consisted of an Internal Design Team supported by an Advisory Committee composed of members from three countries, five institutions of higher education, multiple areas of expertise (leadership preparation, teacher education, and arts education to name a few), practicing educators, and graduates. In addition, key leaders and instructors within PLI have given substantial input in two cycles. Most importantly, the validation process involved current students, recent graduates, instructors, and coaches. By incorporating a comprehensive set of constituencies, we benefit from diverse opinions and differing points of view. Furthermore, consensus was clearly identifiable.

We asked the Advisory Group (full list of members on Acknowledgements page, p. 2) to weigh in on the implications for policymakers and researchers. The Advisory Group wondered how policymakers can both clarify what we collectively understand to be equity and create policies that begin to describe equity in a more profound way. How can there be more rigorous standards for praxis in leadership preparation? What are the connections between teacher education and leadership preparation? How can preparation programs learn from each other? What changes need to be made in hiring practices for leadership preparation to cultivate this type of work? For researchers, Advisory Group members wondered how the application of performative modalities in leadership preparation programs would manifest itself in the everyday practice of leaders. For example, how do teachers who are being led by program graduates feel the impact or effects? What are the obstacles that leaders face in implementing equity-centered practices? How can leaders transform policies toward equity in new ways? How are leaders de-incentivized or punished? What type of subversive action is required? How can performative modalities inform leadership development beyond preparation? Finally, the Advisory Group raised the issue of digital competencies and technology. How will technology impact perspectives and practice in PLI? What are the transversal impacts of the digital space on leading for equity?

Finally, for our students, graduates, and the K-12 education practitioners for whom we exist, we will continue to seek regular feedback on how our preparation supports the development of social justice and equity leaders. A few alumni describe the impact of our program on their daily practice in these ways:

“I think based on what I’ve heard from other colleagues who went through different programs, one thing that really stood out to me on the top of my head that makes PLI stand out from others is that it really felt like a community of school leaders and teacher leaders, whereas the other programs felt more like it’s just a program, that people do the work and then they leave. But PLI feels more . . . like a community that really sustains us and pushes us to have hard conversations with ourselves, with each other.

That again not only are we ourselves a community within the program, but the value of understanding the community that we work in more deeply as school leaders. And I think that it speaks to yet another major difference between PLI and other programs, is that I feel like I am able to name it and see it right away because of my experience through PLI, that the program helped strengthen that lens.”

—PLI alumna, Cohort 17

“I was able to stay engaged, because it was always something, a different way of getting involved with the curriculum and with the content. And I think because of that, it just allowed me to process what I was learning, even though it was a lot very quickly, in a way that actually stuck with me, rather than feeling overwhelmed.

Just the fact that it provided a lot of examples of what arts integration . . . the arts integration that was a part of PLI, and then how much of that I took and have been using, I used this past year, in the teacher leadership program that I was coordinating.”

—PLI alumna, Cohort 16

“Being in PLI, I felt that their strength was, it was very explicit and intentional in addressing how important the arts are in education and how valuable the arts-oriented social justice educator is important in our schools, and especially schools where . . . my experience has mostly been in urban school settings, predominantly working with students of color, and so to me I think in order for us to really see how the arts allow our students to be better learners is very valuable.”

—PLI alumnus, Cohort 16

Ultimately, our goal is to revolutionize leadership preparation in service of more equitable outcomes for vulnerable and historically underserved youth. Integrating performative modalities as a signature pedagogy is the strategy we have chosen. What will others choose?

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Appendix A

Table Format of Figures 3, 4, 5

Domains of Praxis Through Shared Teaching Strategies for Figure 3

SHARED TEACHING STRATEGIES	CONDITIONS	IDENTITY & VISION	MODEL	REFLECT
Equitable Participation Strategies	✓		✓	
Graphic Note-Taking	✓		✓	
Ways of Being	✓	✓		✓
PLI Affirmations Ritual	✓	✓		✓
Cohort Circle Ritual	✓		✓	✓
PLI Talking Stick	✓		✓	✓
Theater of the Oppressed Strategies	✓		✓	✓
Learning Walks	✓		✓	✓
Four Square Feedback Process	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teach Ins	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use of Metaphor	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓

Domains of Praxis Through Assignments for Figure 4

ASSIGNMENTS	CONDITIONS	IDENTITY & VISION	MODEL	REFLECT
"I Am From" Poems	✓			✓
Coaching for Social Justice and Equity Model	✓	✓		✓
Community Mapping		✓	✓	
Mock Expulsion Hearing		✓		✓
Autobiography of Schooling	✓	✓	✓	✓
Identity Autobiography	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reflective Narratives	✓	✓	✓	✓

Exploring Transformational Teaching and Learning Through AileyCamp	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hard Conversations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vision Statement	✓	✓	✓	✓
Instructional Coaching Cycle	✓	✓	✓	✓
Change Management Project	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mock School Board Presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creative Portfolio Presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓

Domains of Praxis Through Program-Wide Events for Figure 5

PROGRAM-WIDE EVENTS	CONDITIONS	IDENTITY & VISION	REFLECT	MODEL
Orientation	✓			✓
MA Oral Exam		✓	✓	✓
Admissions Interviews			✓	✓
Cross-Cohort Reception	✓	✓	✓	✓
End of First Summer Celebration: Picnic and Learning Walk at Botanical Garden	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assessment Center (Fall and Spring)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mock Interviews	✓	✓	✓	✓
Portfolio Presentations	✓	✓	✓	✓
End of Program Celebration	✓	✓	✓	✓

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