Curriculum Inquiry to Strengthen Teacher Preparation for Supporting Multilingual Learners in Rural Settings

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Multilingual learners (MLs) represent a substantial, growing segment of the PreK–12 population, including in rural areas. Several forces contribute to the increase of ML students in rural schools (e.g., immigrant labor, refugee crises). As we undergo a major cultural shift from a society that was (misguidedly) viewed as monolingual to one that is now undoubtedly multilingual, many teacher education programs have not sufficiently transformed how they prepare educators for linguistic and cultural diversity. Rural teachers indicate that teacher preparation does not include effective strategies and resources instrumental to meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of MLs. Moreover, educators may hold deficit views about rural MLs that interfere with recognizing and harnessing linguistic capital and rural cultural wealth. This article reports on a faculty-led curriculum inquiry project at a large college of education in the rural southeast. An appreciative inquiry (AI) framework was used to investigate how courses incorporated ML-specific content and pedagogical knowledge. Through qualitative analysis of AI-guided curricular dialogues and course surveys we categorized the epistemologies, pedagogies, and resources currently used in courses. Findings revealed limited ML-specific content, but many faculty expressed a desire to expand content and deepen their knowledge of ML education. AI practices enable teacher educators to examine how ML content is shaped within and across courses that prepare teachers for rural, multilingual classrooms.

Teacher education and professional development (PD) are key elements in the preparation of effective teachers of multilingual learners (MLs) in rural communities. This article reports on a faculty-led curriculum inquiry project into how departmental courses incorporated pedagogical knowledge that supports teachers serving MLs across a range of communities, including rural settings. Serving as literacy/reading education professors at a large college of education in rural eastern North Carolina, this project was conducted in collaboration with colleagues to identify how faculty can prepare pre-service and in-service teacher education students for increasingly diverse and multilingual K–12 classrooms.

Research reports and demographic studies indicate that MLs represent a substantial segment of the school-age population across the US—5 million, or 10.3% of all students. This population continues to grow in nearly every state and across urban, suburban, and rural communities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Over the past two decades (school years 2000–2001 to 2019–2020), students identified as MLs increased an average of 35% nationwide (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2022). Although pinpointing the number of ML students remains difficult, particularly in rural schools (Coady, 2020), it stands to reason that in states with growing ML student populations and sizable shares of rural students, rural schools are serving more students who speak languages other than English. Furthermore, multiple forces contribute to increasing numbers of multilingual persons living, working, and going to school in rural communities (e.g., the agricultural industry's dependence on immigrant labor; ongoing worldwide refugee crises).

Our focal state, North Carolina, is among the top 10 priority states for rural education (Showalter et al., 2023). It ranks high for its shares of rural schools (42.1%, 18th among states) and rural students (34.5%, 7th among states). North Carolina is second only to Texas in the number of rural students (481,044 as of the 2021–2022 school year) and ranks third for the racial/ethnic heterogeneity of its rural student population (Showalter et al., 2023).

North Carolina ranks sixth in the nation in the number of migrant farmworkers, and 23.5% of these farmworkers are immigrants (North Carolina Department of Commerce [NC Commerce], 2023). Agricultural activity is a central driver of the rural eastern North Carolina economy. Local farmers raise livestock (mainly chickens and hogs), and the fertile sandy soil of the coastal plain produces many crops, including soybeans, cotton, tobacco, and sweet potatoes. Tobacco and sweet potatoes are two major agricultural outputs that require hand labor for

harvesting and processing (Farmer Advocacy Network, n.d.). North Carolina also ranks second in the country in animal processing (NC Commerce, n.d.). To varying degrees, these agricultural and agriculture-related economic activities depend on immigrant labor to operate successfully.

In North Carolina, the number of PreK–12 students classified as English Learners (ELs) statewide is steadily rising. During the 2022–2023 school year, the population increased 11.3% (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2022), followed by another 11.4% increase in 2023–2024 (NCDPI, 2023a). Of North Carolina's total student population of 1,504,424 (Brown, 2023), 10.8% are classified as ELs. Further, approximately 20% of the total student population reports speaking a primary language other than English in the home, though not all such students qualify for the EL designation by school districts (NCDPI, 2023b). Considerable linguistic diversity exists among students in North Carolina schools, with at least one language other than English spoken by students in every district and 389 distinct languages spoken by students across the state (NCDPI, 2023). The most common language by far is Spanish with 236,156 speakers, followed by Arabic (7,873), Telugu (5,675), Chinese (5,594), and Hindi/Urdu (4,367) (NCDPI, 2023b). These counts are aligned with the top five most spoken languages by ML students across the US (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2023).

As the ML population continues to expand nationwide and in North Carolina, the lived experiences of many educators correspond with this demographic shift. Rural teachers indicate that teacher preparation does not consistently include effective strategies and resources to meet the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of MLs (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; O'Neal et al., 2009). Moreover, educators may hold deficit views about rural MLs that interfere with recognizing and harnessing linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005) and rural cultural wealth (Crumb et al., 2023). Consequently, educators may be unaware of the linguistic and cultural strengths MLs bring to school, ill-equipped to support the holistic needs of MLs, and uncertain about how to welcome MLs and their families fully into school settings (Coady et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The growing recognition of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in education is essential for addressing the needs of diverse student populations, particularly multilingual learners (MLs) in rural settings (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, much of the research has been centered on urban contexts, leaving a significant gap in understanding how CRT can be adapted to rural environments (Moll et al., 2006; Crumb et al., 2023). This section explores the intersection of CRT, rural cultural wealth (RCW), and teacher preparation programs, emphasizing the contextually dependent pedagogical practices needed to effectively support rural MLs.

Culturally Responsive Teaching in Rural Contexts

Research in CRT emphasizes the importance of adapting pedagogical practices to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In rural contexts, this is further complicated by geographic isolation, limited resources, and cultural differences between teachers and their students (Crumb et al., 2023). Rural areas are often treated as homogeneous, but they possess unique cultural dynamics that influence teaching and learning, especially for MLs. The adaptation of CRT in rural settings must consider these factors to develop more relevant and inclusive educational environments for diverse learners (Coady et al., 2023)

Rural Cultural Wealth and Pedagogical Practices

Building on Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth (CCW), Crumb et al. (2023) introduced the concept of rural cultural wealth (RCW) to acknowledge the strengths of rural communities, including their traditions, cultural practices, and knowledge systems. These strengths can inform pedagogical practices in teacher preparation programs, ensuring that future educators are equipped to serve MLs in rural settings effectively (Azano & Stewart, 2015). The framework of RCW emphasizes rural resourcefulness, ingenuity, familism, and community unity, which can provide a foundation for culturally relevant teaching practices (Crumb et al., 2023). However, research on how to integrate RCW into teacher education programs remains limited.

Teacher Preparation Programs and Rural MLs

Effective teacher preparation programs are crucial in equipping educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the diverse needs of MLs in rural communities (Brown, 2023; O'Neal et. al., 2008). Studies reveal that many teacher preparation programs fail to fully address the unique cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical needs of rural MLs (Flores & Claeys, 2019; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). Scholars like Azano and Stewart (2015) and Reagan et. al. (2019) argue for the inclusion of coursework and field experiences that expose preservice teachers to rural cultural dynamics, ensuring they are prepared to teach in these distinct environments.

Place-Based Education and Cultural Competence

Place-based education, which integrates local contexts and community resources into curricula, offers an effective way to address the specific needs of rural MLs (Azano & Stewart, 2015). Research highlights the importance of place-conscious pedagogy, which recognizes that places are pedagogical and shape identities, opportunities, and educational experiences (Gruenewald, 2003). Teacher preparation programs that adopt a place-based approach encourage prospective educators to engage with the local cultural wealth of rural communities, ensuring that their teaching is relevant and responsive to students' lives (Reagan et al., 2019; Green & Reid, 2004).

Challenges and Considerations

Despite the potential of CRT and RCW in rural settings, significant challenges persist. Rural schools face obstacles such as limited resources, linguistic isolation, and cultural barriers that impede the effective implementation of CRT-infused teacher preparation programs (Coady, 2020). Furthermore, rural communities often remain marginalized in educational research and policy, with the focus traditionally centered on urban and suburban areas (Showalter et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to develop teacher preparation curricula that are not only culturally responsive but also attuned to the unique needs of rural MLs.

CRT and Rural Education

This project draws on conceptual frameworks of CRT, RCW, and place-based teacher education to explore how teacher preparation programs can better serve MLs in rural contexts. CRT emphasizes the integration of students' cultural assets into instructional practices, promoting equity and social justice in education (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In rural settings, RCW serves as a critical extension of CRT, highlighting the strengths of rural students and their communities. By leveraging rural resourcefulness, ingenuity, and community unity, teacher preparation programs can foster pedagogical practices that resonate with rural MLs and their communities (Crumb et al., 2023).

Additionally, the theoretical foundation of culturally sustaining pedagogy emphasizes the importance of maintaining linguistic and cultural practices while promoting academic success (Paris, 2012). Teacher candidates must engage in reflective practice, examining their biases and developing strategies to create inclusive and culturally responsive classrooms (Lucas & Villegas, 2010). Moreover, community engagement and immersion in rural cultural contexts are essential for fostering cultural competence and preparing educators to meet the diverse needs of rural MLs (Coady, 2019.

The integration of CRT, RCW, and place-based education provides a robust framework for addressing the unique needs of MLs in rural settings. By recognizing the cultural wealth of rural communities and incorporating it into teacher preparation programs, educators can develop more inclusive and responsive pedagogical practices. However, further research is needed to fully understand how these frameworks can be effectively implemented in rural teacher education and how they can be tailored to the specific needs of rural MLs. These frameworks underscore the importance of context in education and calls for more comprehensive efforts to prepare teachers to serve in rural schools.

Methods

In line with recent research and the criticality of emphasizing evaluation of the teacher preparation program and courses that aim to support MLs in rural community schools, we used appreciative inquiry (AI) (Stavros et al., 2015). Stavros and colleagues note, "AI is a theory and a practice of inquiry-and-

change that shifts the perspective of the organization development (OD) methods by suggesting that the very act of asking generative questions has profound impact in organizational systems" (p. 96). In our approach to implementing AI, we created inquiry-based matrices for faculty to input course material relevant to ML content in a teacher preparation program situated in a rural eastern region of North Carolina. Specifically, drawing on AI provided project managers with an opportunity to explore cultural and context-based pedagogical practices that may already exist in current teacher preparation courses, and it provided a space to envision how many of these courses could better meet the needs of preservice and inservice teachers who serve in local rural community schools. Stavros et al. (2015) explain that people in an organization discover the best possible future for the organization based on the inquiries and changes the organization values collectively. They help us understand that inquiry and change are not separate moments, that questions help us shape and focus attention on what is "there" to be noticed (Stavros et al., 2015, p. 96).

We explored how colleagues prepare practicing educators to support rural ML content in their courses. Through qualitative analysis of curricular dialogues and surveys, we categorized the epistemologies, pedagogies, and resources currently used in courses that support rural MLs. Using an asset-based inquiry approach to discover what is working well, then aspiring to improve our teacher preparation curricula, provides an opportunity for teacher educators, teacher preparation programs, and education researchers to resist deficit ideologies.

Context

The department of literacy is one of several departments within a large college of education. The literacy department consists of 14 full-time faculty members; the majority (12) are housed in an area of the education program that services multiple undergraduate majors, including elementary education, special education, and birth-kindergarten education. In addition, the department offers secondary subject matter licensure programs and several master's programs. Most of the courses offered in the college support preservice teachers who participate in several practicum experiences, serving in local rural community schools in rural eastern North Carolina.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Membership in a statewide ML committee (which includes faculty from public and private higher education institutions), working with a common interest in ML education, provided the opportunity to engage in an inquiry-based project that highlights information and practices about teacher preparation, in collaboration with the state Department of Public Instruction. To incorporate ideas for improving teacher preparation from the statewide group and carry out concrete actions at the local level, four faculty members from the ML committee formed a local ML working group at the institution where this project took place. They invited faculty with research and teaching interests in language acquisition and/or culturally relevant pedagogy to participate. Faculty from multiple departments within the college of education and across the university joined and attended meetings. In these meetings, the project began to inquire about ML content in teacher preparation courses.

This project involved multiple stages (Figure 1). To gain insight into what our courses already offered in terms of best practices to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of ML students, a survey was prepared. The inquiry-based survey explored topics central to pedagogy, content, theory, and materials used in current courses that serve undergraduate and graduate students in education. This survey served as the initial form of data collection, an entry point into exploring what faculty deemed as ML content in their education courses. After faculty reflected on existing content and course material, the survey asked about what they "dreamed" or aspired to incorporate into their existing courses. Both project managers reflexively reviewed the survey responses and determined that, while our institution is situated in a rural community context and many of our students graduate and take teaching positions in rural eastern North Carolina schools, the coursework may not prepare them to meet the unique needs of the students they will serve in their teaching careers
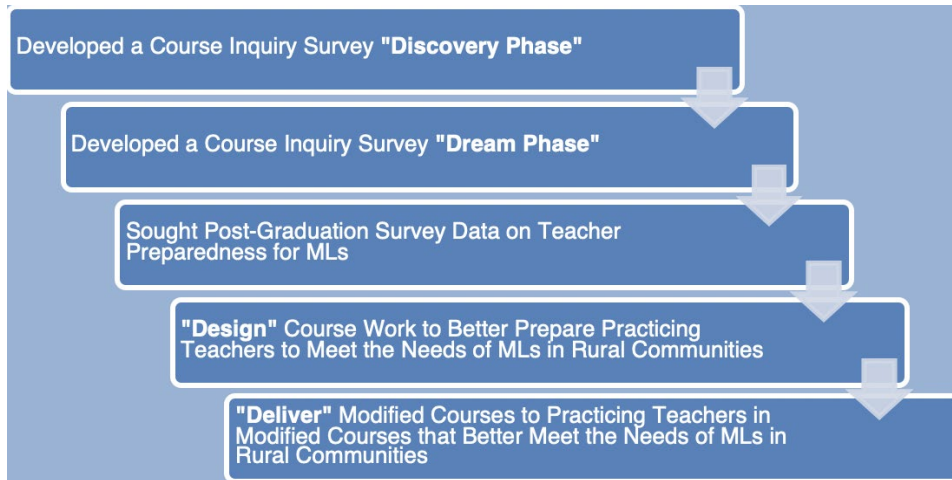
Figure 1: Curriculum Inquiry Project

These data were gathered before and during an online department meeting. The matrix (Figure 2), was placed in a shared Google document. Faculty members were emailed a week prior to the virtual meeting and asked to place their responses in the matrix according to the courses they teach. This activity provided an opportunity for faculty members to reflect on what they considered ML content and how (if at all) they addressed this material in their courses in advance of coming together for a group discussion. At the meeting, faculty first reviewed and/or added ML course content to the initial faculty survey. Next, faculty joined breakout groups, self-selecting from two choices: undergraduate or graduate. Each author joined one breakout group to facilitate the discussion and record notes (Figure 3). Faculty in the secondary subject area programs met with the authors for a breakout conversation a few weeks later. Meetings were limited to about 15 minutes due to scheduling constraints.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES			
	MATERIALS	**THEORETICAL MODELS**	**TEACHING PRACTICES**
Courses	Do you incorporate materials, texts, videos, PowerPoints, books, and/or literature that pertain to multilingual education? Please list them.	Do you include theoretical paradigms in your courses that include foundations related to multilingual education? (e.g., Vygotskian theory, Bakhtinian theory, funds of knowledge, multimodality, language acquisition, language socialization, language ideologies, etc.)	Do you include resources that inform or incorporate pedagogical practices that support multilingual instruction? (e.g., leveraging all communicative resources (such as gesture, facial expression, movement, artifacts, drawings/visual imagery)
UG Course 1…			
…UG Course 8			

Figure 2: Initial Faculty Survey

GROUP 1 — UNDERGRADUATE COURSES
DIRECTIONS: Thinking of what we might already be doing and directions we might want to move in, the two overarching guided questions for discussion in your break-out groups include:
1. Across our departmental courses and programs, how are we currently preparing our pre-service and in-service teachers for diverse classrooms that include an increasing population of multilingual learners (MLs)?
2. If we were to dream, what would we include in the future?

Figure 3: Dream Questions for Faculty Breakout Groups

Following these faculty meetings, the authors completed AI analysis of the data. AI emphasizes "what's working well," then takes that information to build on what the organization imagines in the future (Egan & Lancaster, 2005). Egan and Lancaster (2005) propose a 4-D model of AI analysis—discovery, dream, design, and destiny—and moving systematically through each cycle according to the topic. The discovery phase focuses on the positive aspects of the chosen topic. In the dream phase, the organization envisions its future based on the information gathered in the discovery phase. The design phase is a space in which agreed upon concepts and principles are created. The destiny, or delivery, phase discusses how to deliver the dream and design by holding on to the strengths and resources gathered at the dream phase. As this study is the pilot stage of a larger project, this analysis attended only to the discovery and dream phases. The design and delivery phases will be addressed in later analysis as we continue to cycle through the data and build in these areas over time.

Guided by this abbreviated AI model (Figure 4), we analyzed the matrix based on faculty-led responses. First, we examined the matrix and coded as "discovery" content all areas that faculty had indicated as ML course material already included in their courses. This course content included culturally and linguistically relevant ML material. Second, we examined responses to the two guided discussion questions, which we coded as "dream" content. The guided questions aligned with the affirmative topic and were intended to build on the ways in which faculty already incorporated ML content, while also providing a space for faculty to reflect and discuss what they might want to include in the future.

Final steps in this project included sharing the completed matrix and discussing our initial findings with our local ML working group. In addition, in 2022 and 2023, we conducted an exit survey of our undergraduate teacher preparation program graduates, in which we included a question about preparation to work with ML students. We received student responses from the college's assessment and data office and cross-referenced these data with the curricular data collected from faculty.
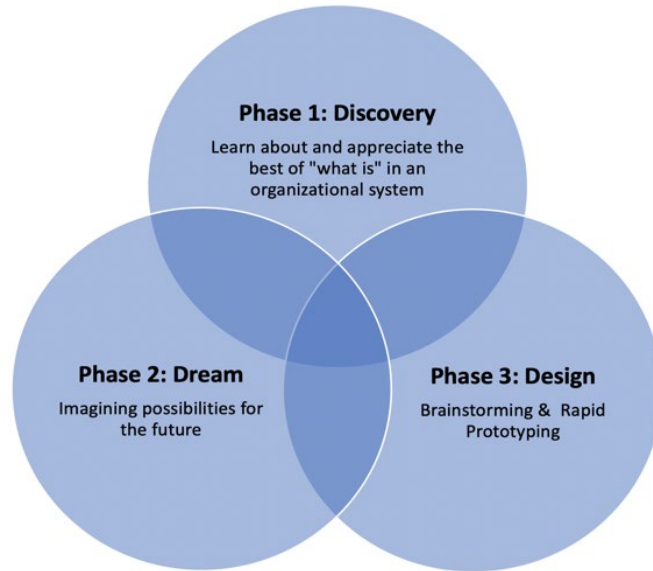
Figure 4: Adapted Appreciative Inquiry for Educator Preparation Programs (adapted from Stavros et al., 2015)

Findings

The analysis focused on the reading/literacy undergraduate courses that prepare future elementary and special education teachers. The faculty breakout group discussions, although brief, generated details not shared on the survey to distill faculty perspectives on their most salient materials, paradigms, and practices. The discussions opened a forum for sharing questions, concerns, and hopes that could not be captured on the survey, which led to further analysis of faculty discussion data for each level/program area.

Discovery: ML-Specific vs. ML-Related Content

Findings indicate that faculty members do incorporate content that supports ML education in multiple courses. Faculty members' interpretation of the survey questions varied, however. Most understood the survey to focus exclusively on course content that specifically addresses the needs and strengths of ML students and reported items accordingly, while others understood it to ask about broader course content, providing attention to the strengths and needs of students who are vulnerable learners in schools for a host of social, cultural, political, and cognitive reasons, including students of color, students who have experienced trauma, and students diagnosed with disabilities, as well as students learning English as an additional language. Faculty members' different interpretations of the

survey questions required us to demarcate ML-*specific* content from ML-*related* content in our analyses (Table 1). ML-specific content was defined as materials, paradigms, and practices specifically designed to teach culturally and linguistically responsive literacy to students in an ML context.

Given that many of our preservice teachers serve MLs in rural community school classrooms, many faculty members indicated pedagogical practices that align with integrating CRT. For instance, some faculty indicated that they employ video technology integration and language development into their course content to illustrate the immersion of dual language classrooms so teachers can build on vocabulary development and model and scaffold language opportunities for rural MLs. Videos on immersion of dual language classrooms demonstrate how teachers build on students' home language to increase English language development in oral language, vocabulary, and phonics. Some faculty indicated that they incorporate course readings on strategies that teachers can use to help rural MLs connect their home language and English, such as oral and written cognates (for English and Spanish conversion, given the high number of Spanish speaking MLs in the area) and small group activities for students to build oral language skills.

Moreover, the survey indicated that faculty require their students reflect on their ML knowledge by participating in interactive discussion boards that pose a question specific to the MLs with whom they

are working in their practica or current classrooms. Education students are required to interact with one another about the practices they use and how they adapt strategies or instruction to meet the specific needs of the students in their classroom.

ML-related course content was defined as materials, paradigms, and practices that either are effective for teaching literacy to general populations of students or address issues that could be considered adjacent, but not exclusive, to ML education, such as social justice, antiracism, and social-emotional learning. Most faculty members reported only ML-specific content or ML-related content for the courses they teach, and a few reported both types of content. ML content integration ranged from moderate to very little/none, and this continuum was distributed across the eight undergraduate courses. In three courses, faculty reported the use of materials (readings, videos, and assignments) that build knowledge and practices specifically aimed to support the literacy learning of ML students. In another three courses, faculty reported limited ML content, typically one optional or required reading on how to support ML

students with literacy learning. In two courses, faculty reported multiple readings, videos, and other class materials, but data analysis revealed that these resources largely or entirely represented ML-related content rather than ML-specific content.

In the matrix shared with the local ML working group, reported curricular elements (materials, paradigms, and practices) were categorized as either ML-specific content or ML-related content, and the materials category was further divided into videos, readings, miscellaneous materials, and assignments. Notably, courses in both categories contained far more readings than videos, miscellaneous materials, and assignments. On the initial survey, faculty named paradigms occasionally and practices rarely. The most reported paradigm was Vygotskian theory, followed by culturally responsive pedagogy, and funds of knowledge. Practices were limited to providing visual aids and concrete materials or manipulatives. Representative examples of ML-specific content and ML-related materials are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Examples of ML-Specific and ML-Related Course Materials

ML-*specific* course materials	Examples
Video	Disciplinary literacy instruction in K–3 dual language classrooms (SEAL program)
Reading	"Reading 101 for English Language Learners" (Robertson & Breiseth, n.d.)
Miscellaneous materials	Concepts of print exploration with non-Roman scripts (in-class activity)
Assignment	Write a discussion post about adapting newly learned literacy instructional practices with MLs
ML-*related* course materials	Examples
Video	Integrating social-emotional learning and literacy
Reading	*Culturally responsive disciplinary literacy strategies* (Cullen, 2016)
Miscellaneous materials	Equity Literacy website (review the Read and Resources tabs)
Assignment	Complete inquiry project on one literacy instructional practice from a DEI lens

Discovery: Student Exit Data

In 2022, the college's assessment and data office added a question to its annual student exit survey that asked undergraduate graduates of education degree programs how prepared they felt to support English language learners (ELLs). Sixty percent of graduates responded (Table 2), and 62.9% of respondents reported they felt prepared or well prepared to teach ELLs. Since 37.1% indicated feeling unprepared or somewhat prepared, room for improvement remained. The survey was repeated in 2023, and

although the response rate fell to 52%, students' total self-reported sense of preparation to support ELLs was comparable to 2022 (Table 3). Under the total counts are the two degree programs our department primarily serves—elementary and special education-general curriculum—as well as the two secondary education degree programs housed in our department, English education and history education. Below the shaded bar are the degree programs in which our department has less influence, as graduates only take one course in our department.

Table 2
Spring 2022 Exit Survey Results

Spring 2022 Exit Survey **# Surveyed:** 290 **# Responded:** 175 (60.3%)	Total	Not Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared	Well Prepared
Total Count	175.0	9.7% (17)	27.4% (48)	36.0% (63)	26.9% (47)
Elementary education	80.0	6.3% (5)	28.8% (23)	38.8% (31)	26.3% (21)
Special education - general curriculum	13.0	7.7% (1)	23.1% (3)	30.8% (4)	38.5% (5)
Secondary English education	6.0	33.3% (2)	66.7% (4)	0.0	0.0
Secondary history education	10.0	30% (3)	20% (2)	30% (3)	20% (2)
Birth-kindergarten education	15.0	0.0	13.3% (2)	40% (6)	46.7% (7)
Middle grades education	8.0	12.5% (1)	25% (2)	50% (4)	12.5% (1)
Secondary mathematics education	5.0	0.0	40% (2)	60% (3)	0.0
Secondary science education	2.0	50% (1)	0.0	0.0	50% (1)
Special education - adapted curriculum	9.0	11.1% (1)	55.6% (5)	11.1% (1)	27.8 % (2)

The heading row contains: "Please indicate your level of preparedness to support ELLs"

Table 3
Spring 2023 Exit Survey Results

Spring 2023 Exit Survey **# Surveyed:** 249 **# Responded:** 130 (52.2%)	Total	Not Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared	Well Prepared
Total count	130.0	9.2% (13)	26.2% (34)	38.5% (50)	26.2% (43)
Elementary education	50.0	10% (5)	30% (15)	36% (18)	24% (12)
Special education - general curriculum	11.0	0.0	0.0	54.5% (5)	35.5% (6)
Secondary English education	4.0	0.0	75% (3)	25% (1)	0.0
Secondary history education	7.0	28.6% (2)	28.6% (2)	42.9% (3)	0.0
Birth-kindergarten education	14.0	0.0	21.4% (3)	35.7% (5)	42.9% (6)
Middle grades education	6.0	16.7% (1)	33.3% (2)	16.7% (1)	33.3% (2)
Secondary mathematics education	4.0	0.0	25% (1)	50% (2)	25% (1)
Secondary science education	1.0	0.0	0.0	100% (1)	0.0
Special education - adapted curriculum	14.0	0.0	21.4% (3)	35.7% (5)	42.9 % (6)

The heading row contains: "Please indicate your level of preparedness to support ELLs"

Dreams: Expand ML Course Content and Continue Collegial Conversations & Learning

After identifying course elements related to ML education, faculty members were asked to respond to the prompt, "If we were to dream, what would we like to include in the future?" This question generated a range of aspirations for supporting ML education, which varied by breakout group. Faculty members in the undergraduate group primarily desired additions to course content: more representation of ML students in course activities, assignments, and texts; inclusion of pedagogical practices that align with bilingual models of ML education (e.g., awareness of assessment in L1 compared to L2; using dual language texts for lesson planning, reading aloud, and

shared reading instruction); greater emphasis on ML vocabulary development; and more attention to distinguishing literacy instructional practices that work well for general populations of students, including MLs, from those practices specifically geared toward MLs. Similarly, the secondary education breakout group expressed a vision for concrete additions to course content, including at least one course objective to support ML students in every course and one or more modules per course that explicitly address ML education, including how to leverage MLs' strengths in early fieldwork courses and how to assess what students already know about supporting MLs.

In the graduate-level and secondary-level breakout groups, several faculty members indicated that they have not had a great deal of professional preparation or experience with ML education. They expressed hope for PD in which faculty members can learn more about effective ML education, including the suggestion of coordinating with the college's diversity committee to invite guest speakers. Faculty in the graduate group wished for additional collegial conversations to address several questions raised in the discovery phase of the discussion: How much focus should ML students' literacy learning receive in a master's program in reading/literacy, and what should we prioritize given the program is not a master's in bilingual education or ESL? To what degree do concepts and theories of linguistic and cultural diversity introduced in the first course spiral across the entire master's program? How well does our master's course sequence address aspects of literacy and language learning that impact ML education (e.g., the reciprocal relationship between oral and written language, translanguaging, the educational harm of language ideologies)?

In summary, findings indicated that most, but not all, courses contain some ML-specific content, and when present, the degree of integration throughout each semester-long course was moderate to limited. Many faculty expressed a desire to expand this content and deepen their own knowledge of ML education.

Discussion

This project provided an opportunity for faculty to reflect on and view coursework with consideration of ML elements critical for preparation of preservice and inservice teachers in rural schools in eastern North Carolina. Although individual faculty members defined ML course content differently, they also illuminated significant areas of cultural wealth that the faculty brings to their coursework that impact pedagogy. For instance, faculty breakout sessions were spaces where faculty members could engage in collegial conversations that revealed a range of current practices, questions and uncertainties, and dreams for the future of all programs—undergraduate, graduate, elementary, and secondary. This project revealed additional areas in which teacher preparation program faculty would benefit from more, longer, and ongoing conversations. Findings indicated that faculty include both ML-specific content and ML-related content in their courses, with fewer items in paradigms and practices than in materials. With more conversation, more responses in these areas may have been revealed.

A possible reason that some faculty members interpreted the survey questions as asking about ML-related content could have been that they did not want their courses to appear to be lacking—responses were collected on a shared matrix that was visible to all colleagues. Furthermore, most literacy/reading education undergraduate courses were not intentionally designed to address the needs of ML students (with the exception of a course on literacy learning and diversity), nor have faculty members and administrators formally expected that some or all courses integrate ML education into their objectives and materials. Thus, it is understandable that we found uneven attention to supporting ML students. The purpose of these faculty-led collegial conversations was to use AI to find out what was currently taking place in our curriculum, know and value the existing learning opportunities for our preservice and inservice teachers, and dream together about future directions to collectively strengthen educator preparation to work with MLs.

This curriculum inquiry project had a few limitations. We only requested that faculty members contribute to the survey through email and a department meeting. Providing an opportunity for further insight on their responses may have added to a more in depth understanding of exactly how the practices and materials were used in their courses. Additionally, a practicum inquiry component could have been added to the survey since most practica occur in rural eastern North Carolina classroom settings that serve rural MLs.

As we continue to develop the dream phase and move toward the design phase of this AI project, we consider the knowledge, understandings, and

practices for ML education we have seen in faculty responses and still others we desire to see. We noted attention to issues of primary and secondary language acquisition, the foundational role of oral language for learning to read and write, and models of bilingual and EL education. We aspire to expand inclusion of these aspects of ML education in course revisions, as well as expand attention to eliciting conversations with MLs through props, realia, rich disciplinary content, and personalization of conversation. Additionally, we hope to expand attention to the affective/relational issues related to educating MLs, including strategies for getting to know students and their families, such as learning about where they come from and making them feel welcome and supported in school (Coady et al., 2023).

AI practices enable teacher educators to examine how ML content is shaped within and across courses that prepare teachers for rural, ML classrooms. ML-supporting practices need to be embedded across teacher preparation program curricula. For instance, Wong (2023) argues for improving university teacher preparation programs by including translanguaging practices, which can positively impact teacher candidates' pedagogical knowledge and professional identities. Wong found that intentional, strategic course design that reflected the asset-based principles of pedagogical translanguaging and alignment with candidates' field experience improved their pedagogical knowledge for supporting MLs, providing a possible model for our future collegial collaborations and curriculum revisions.

Conclusion

This project provided an opportunity to start these conversations throughout teacher preparation courses. As we embarked on this journey to collect ML-related inquiry-based insights, it provided a steppingstone into what ML inclusion could look like across teacher preparation programs. Part of what we dream about with this work is using more inquiry-based material to gather insights across higher education institutions and programs that are invested in building on coursework that aligns with meeting the increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse needs of our students. Our next steps are to move into the design and destiny phases of this project within our department and, ultimately, to replicate this work, using AI, across program curricula so that all teachers feel prepared to serve culturally and linguistically diverse students. Curricula that are reflective of culturally responsive conceptual frameworks allow teacher educators to better prepare preservice and inservice teachers to serve diverse students and challenge the dominant cultural and monolinguistic views found in mainstream U.S. schools.

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