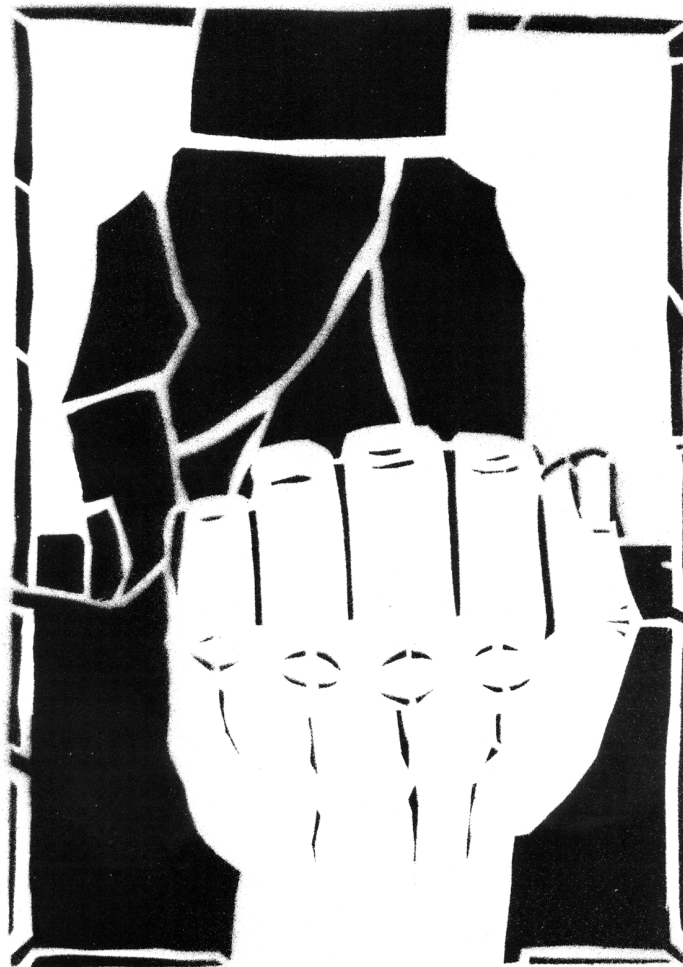


# RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

## A Conversational Reflection on the Co-Creation of the Principal Preparation Answerability Rubric (PPAR)

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UNITY BY COLIN MATTHES & COLIN MATTHES VIA JUST SEEDS OPEN ACCESS GRAPHICS COLLECTION

# Introduction

The purpose of this piece is to share how a graduate student, Malaika, and her advisor, Nate, practiced their radical teaching and learning within their localized educational contexts and relationality. We, Nate and Malaika, share this story as we conceptualize radical teaching and learning as critical educational policy praxis (Stewart, 2024). That is, we shared a dissatisfaction with superficial equity standards for principals, as they did not go far enough, and understood that we could take action to ensure principals are better prepared to serve Black, Brown, and Indigenous (BBI) students and teachers in our local context. We wanted to lean into the idea that a different education system is possible beyond what BBI students and teachers have been given. We materialized our co-imaginary into what we call the Principal Preparation Answerability Rubric (PPAR). We dream of the PPAR being used, extended, and contextualized by other radical educators as we all continue to navigate state principal preparation requirements.

Figure 1 shares our rubric so readers can visualize the product of this knowledge co-creation project. However, it is important to note that the rubric is still in the process of being fine-tuned. The rubric should not be understood as a traditionally tested and validated assessment tool ready for implementation. Similarly, readers should not

extract this tool and implement it without their own contextualized knowledge co-creation process. We offer the tool here as a testament to invite readers to see how the PPAR materialized from Malaika’s class-prompted literature review activities. This article’s focus is on the rubric co-creation process between Malaika and Nate as we hope to contribute to radical conceptualizations of rubrics used in principal preparation, teaching, and learning spaces.

Our piece shares the complexities, reflections, and reconciliations that took place as we co-constructed the tool. Our reflection is organized by the various decision-making practices we engaged in to solidify the PPAR. We found few rubric creators who have used relational or critical frameworks. This may be because educational rubrics have been imagined within the neoliberal accountability project where the tools are used for punitive improvement practices (Trujillo et al., 2021; Tuck, 2013). Instead, we mobilize rubric creation from our own Black radical imaginations and teachings. We hope readers find connection to our process and draw insights for strategies in radical rubric-creation practices within principal licensure pedagogical processes.

## Nate and Malaika’s Relationality

Our co-authoring of this article has been a relational practice where Nate and Malaika agreed to partnership

Categories	No Evidence	Developing Evidence	Present Evidence	Reflection and Recommendations
<b>Redistributing Power</b> The Redistributing Power category refers to principal preparation pedagogies acknowledging US education’s historical and current power imbalances and how a principal’s positionality attributes to or redresses that imbalance (Kohli et al., 2015; Warren & Jenkins, 2024). Additionally, my review activities found that Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers need principal preparation programs to produce leaders who utilize their power and privilege to uplift the needs and move beyond traditional power-hoarding distributions (Kohli et al., 2015). For instance, Daifary and Suquires (2022) have identified how educational administrators may “step outside traditional power relations and the chain of command” to protect, uplift, and share power with racialized and marginalized students (p. 157). Equitable power redistribution may take different forms such as; sharing power, relationship power, participatory decision-making, and co-designing pedagogical practices and policy (Kohli et al., 2015; Daifary & Sugrue, 2022; Ishimaru, 2019). Ultimately, embedding redistributive justice in principal preparation programs centers the demands and lived experiences of BBI students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of distributing power to students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of distributing power to explicitly Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions reference methods of distributing power to explicitly Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	
<b>Support and Professional Teaching and Learning</b> Principals’ capacity to provide Support and Professional Teaching and Learning for Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers centered on their emotional, physical, spiritual, communal, and professional needs. Principal preparation needs to prepare leaders to establish “home places” and hold space within their schools for BBI students and teachers to uplift their culture and collective empowerment (Bryan et al., 2023; Stewart et al., 2023). For instance, a professional development program held for Latinx educators was “necessary to support their relational, personal, political, and pedagogical growth” (Lincoln et al., 2022, pg.54). Notably, principal preparation programs need to provide critical professional development to students and teachers and embrace critical thinking, pedagogy, and practices within their schools (Kohli et al., 2015).	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of supporting and providing professional development for students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of supporting and providing professional development explicitly for Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions reference methods of supporting and providing professional development explicitly for Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	
<b>Defending Black, Brown, and Indigenous Knowledges</b> The Defending Black, Brown, and Indigenous Knowledges category moves beyond acknowledging academic performance records and tracking school demographic changes. Instead, the rubric category promotes reflection on preparation pedagogies’ capacity to support principals in defending Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers who are subjected to oppressive realities. The articles categorized here named a need for prospective principals to take into account their school and community historical context. Specifically, how white supremacy, settler colonialism, and anti-Blackness have operated and been perpetuated; thus, negatively affecting their Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers (Bryan et al., 2023). In turn, how principals are challenging racialized gaslighting that makes teachers and students feel invalidated. An example of this comes from Wilhelm and colleagues (2022) when they stated, “interventions to help educators identify and reduce implicit biases and to positively reframe perceptions of minority students may decrease differential instructional and disciplinary treatment of students to foster connectedness” and foster students and teachers’ self truths (p.513). Validating and defending Black, Brown, and Indigenous cultural context, in reflection and interaction, preparation programs leave their students with a much better chance of connecting, acting for and with those non-dominant groups (Wolfe & Steiner, 2023; Wilhelm et al., 2022; Bryan et al., 2023; Ishimaru, 2019).	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of endorsing historical and current contexts and lived experiences of students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of endorsing historical and current context and lived experiences of explicitly Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions reference methods of endorsing historical and current context and lived experiences of explicitly Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	
<b>Critical Self Reflection</b> Critical Self Reflection capsulizes the ability of principal preparation programs to model and encourage continuous critical self-examination of biases, racism, and anti-Blackness. Intentional acts against these oppressive norms of thinking is the only means to not falling willing to anti-Black and white supremacist positioning in our education system (Jenkins & Warren, 2024). In addition to themselves, principal preparation programs need to prepare principals to create space for staff and teachers to critically self-examine their own biases, racism, and anti-Blackness. Principal preparation programs may teach aspiring principals to use socially-just pedagogy in professional development, engage in conversation about systemic oppression, investigate how oppression may operate in their school, and/or join reading groups to build critical self reflection. Establishing a holistic approach to transformation will strengthen the united front school will own in the name of equity and inclusion.	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of critically self-reflecting for prospective principals.	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of critically self-reflecting for explicitly Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions reference methods of critically self-reflecting for prospective principals.	
<b>Authentic Relationship-Building</b> Authentic Relationship-Building with Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers is a core factor in building equitable school environments. When principal preparation programs advocate for creating collaborative, contextualized, and reciprocal relationships, it fosters a healthy and excellent learning environment for all students (Amiot et al., 2020). On the flip side, when school leadership’s main interaction with students and teachers (particularly those people who identify as Black, Brown, and/or Indigenous) is around disciplinary or formal intervention, positivity and authenticity are absent (Bryan et al., 2023). For example, Rivera-McCutchen (2021) examined how principals who have established authentic interpersonal relationships with teacher staff had the ability to confront moments of tension with more ease and camaraderie. Recognizing how problematic disciplinary interactions can be, principal preparation programs can supply prospective principals with the building blocks to foster equitable and healing relationships.	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of seeking authentic interpersonal relationships with students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions do not reference methods of seeking authentic interpersonal relationships with explicitly Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	Pedagogical decisions reference methods of seeking authentic interpersonal relationships with explicitly Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.	

FIGURE 1. PRINCIPAL PREPARATION ANSWERABILITY RUBRIC

stemming from a dual positionality. We are united in our bent toward justice and bring nuanced strategies in pursuit of Black liberation. We illuminated important negotiations and decisions made during the tool creation. As Malaika's advisor and course instructor, Nate wanted to affirm the already-present brilliance nested in the knowledge Malaika brings to their program. Malaika's personal experiences in Minnesota K-12 schools as a Black student and activist have rooted her passion promoting pro-Blackness, multicultural education, and dismantling systems of white supremacy in education. For example, Malaika's organizing experiences in solidarity with movements promoting Black power, LGBTQ+ protection, and gun restriction laws have informed this rubric co-creation. Through these movements, she has developed skills in mobilizing people and implementing strategies that promote unity, joy, and safety for those most marginalized by intersecting systems of oppression. Malaika's employment within a K-12 administrative licensure program has allowed her to use a critical lens when performing otherwise normative tasks. This project began when Malaika inquired how the administrative licensure program's reflections of their equity efforts matched the demands of Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers. This project, conceptualized in Nate's classes, provided an opportunity to critically evaluate programmatic course syllabi, pedagogy, and curriculum decisions through a critical lens. She aimed to demonstrate how K-12 administrative licensure programs can continue supporting equity-oriented school principals.

Malaika made the decision to create the PPAR as part of her authentic assessment for Nate's Educational Policy Perspectives course. This project offered strong alignment to Malaika's goals of exploring our administrative licensure program as Nate's assignment tasked students with focusing on real-world application. These requirements helped Malaika craft her MA thesis and became useful to her given her administrative assistant role in the principal licensure program. Nate encouraged Malaika's interests in exploring recent educational literature tracing what Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers have said they need and want from their educational leaders.

## Minnesota State Context

Minnesota state legislatures have codified program requirements for all educational administrative licenses, including school principals (Minnesota Administrative Rules, 2020). These rules require principals to "demonstrate competence in equity and culturally responsive school leadership" (p. 2). However, these rules appear to be surface-level DEI or political propaganda aimed at progressive signaling. Educational policy actors' attempts at virtue signaling often result in public-facing DEI initiatives that sound excellent but lack resource distribution and critical dispositions to achieve their goals (Farrell, 2022; Gibbs & Cameron, 2020; Gibson, 2022; Stewart & Goddard, 2024). For example, while principal licensure programs have begun to revise introductory courses using Dr. Gholdy Muhammad's work (2023;

2020), it is unclear what standards and accountability measures ensure that critical DEI is appropriately instilled. For instance, Minnesota's standards for DEI competencies lack resource allocation and state-level accountability if the university is accredited (BOSA, n.p.). Currently, the rubric cannot address this resource maldistribution, but we argue that our radical co-imagined rubric might push our localized settings to embrace a more critical stance.

Some DEI competency languages seem coded within oppressive logics. The Minnesota Administrative Rules (2020) have used the terms "fair" or "fairly" several times in the equity section. Fairness, meaning all people receive the same treatment, contradicts equity, where people receive what is owed given historical and ongoing oppression. A fairness framework has led to surface level reflections in licensure program design. For instance, principal educators have included DEI components at the beginning of the program in the two required introductory courses. Yet, more critical and radical stances would embed conversations of equity, justice, and belonging throughout the pre-service principals' entire course load and field experiences. The embedded approach would treat DEI as a process rather than a set of competences that can be met with a few courses. More critical DEI frameworks would focus on differences between fairness and equity, particularly for those marginalized by educational systems (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Horsford et al., 2019). Convoluted equity and fairness at the systems level may dilute educational DEI initiatives, perpetuating inequities (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014). We argued a tool to critically assess principal preparation pedagogical practices' ability to meet critical DEI aims may be needed or could be useful to programs.

## Black, Brown, and Indigenous Students and Teachers

Our rubric invites reflection on what Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and families have said they want and need in relational research literature, classrooms, community spaces, and to us directly. Educational policy actors have constructed the principal role to establish school climates (Wolfe & Steiner, 2023), promote local-level equity (Kohli et al., 2015), build relationships with families (Bryan et al., 2023), and support teachers (Farinde et al., 2016). Therefore, educational leaders have the influence to protect Black, Brown, and Indigenous students. Harris and Kruger (2023) describe how Black girls' protection from over-sexualization and harassment reflects leaders' prioritization of their safety. Moreover, school-level educational leaders can set up school environments in ways that prioritize Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Khalifa et al., 2019). Still, there seems to be a disconnect between having the ability to support Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers, and following state-mandated Equity and Inclusion standards. Generally, principal preparation programs have not been held answerable to what Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers have said they want from their school principals. This lack of answerability ignores the extensive knowledge co-

creation informing what marginalized and racialized students need and deserve. We constructed the PPAR for principal educators and licensure staff to assess their pedagogical practices, ensuring pre-service principals develop the skills and knowledge to support Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers.

## A Conversational Reflection on Rubric Co-Creation Process

We selected a reflective format that allowed us to articulate the non-hierarchical, mentor-mentee, and advisor-advisee relationship between Nate's and Malaika's roles as teachers and learners. Below, we invite readers to engage with Malaika's decision justifications related to various components when designers construct an evaluation tool. This writing style aims to emulate the negotiated process we navigated. Additionally, readers will examine Nate's guidance in learning from Malaika's brilliance while simultaneously offering his own expertise. These decision descriptions should be read as a conversation between egalitarian teachers and learners committed to negotiation in the pursuit of equity. The reflective format will follow a sequence of Nate's guiding questions, Malaika's thoughts, and their negotiations. Additionally, we organized the conversational reflection into ideas related to the PPAR's (a) focus, (b) scope, (c) format, (d) categories, (e) levels of evidence, (f) utility, (g) interpretation, (h) radical teaching, and (i) agitation.

### Focus

**Nate:** May I ask why you decided to not focus solely on Black students and teachers given much of the literature you pulled focused on Black students' and teachers' experiences? I know you have read about my frustration stemming from some policy actors' discomfort when focusing solely on Black people's experiences (Stewart et al., 2023). White supremacist critiques may not be enough to illuminate how Black teachers and students experience anti-Blackness in education systems. Again, I am interested in understanding why you chose to utilize a Black, Brown, and Indigenous framework as opposed to one that solely centers on us, Black people?

**Malaika:** I acknowledge your observation and agree with your statements. It was important to me to acknowledge and act upon how Black-focused knowledge co-creation can be unfairly critiqued. I wanted to find a way to stay conscious of anti-Blackness while fulfilling the call I saw in Minnesota contexts. The call I saw was the need for an evaluation tool for principal preparation program courses that would support school leaders and program evaluators within the diverse Minnesota context. I remember you telling me how Twin Cities' school districts serve the most racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods seen within the region and nation (Deer et al., 2021). The tool provided could be incorporated within Minnesota's diverse array of school systems and may inspire other acts to co-create radical rubrics and extensions. Possible additional rubrics and extensions may include highlighting specific

racialized groups and their needs from their school leaders. These tools could be applied for local contexts and act as further resources for principal educators and program evaluators as well.

**Nate:** I hear your willingness to center on how anti-Blackness moves in educational spaces and communities. Your addition of specific reflective language on anti-Blackness in the tool's category description and our agreement about specifying the racialized group's contributive knowledge meets our joint aims. I think the PPAR is well-situated in combating anti-Blackness and promoting critical self-reflection within the scope of Minnesota student contexts.

### Scope

**Nate:** Why focus solely on principals? As you know, our program prepares superintendents and special education leaders as well.

**Malaika:** From my experience principals are powerful localized decision makers that provide supervision over the operation, climate, and well-being of their school. They have great influence on the achievement of teachers and students both personal and academic/professional. I, as a student, had strong opinions toward my school principals growing up, whether that was positive or negative. Within my graduate courses, my peers and I have had discussions on the influence and experience with their respective principals. Whether principals understand this magnitude or not, they hold the capacity to have a great effect on their school environments.

Choosing to evaluate principal preparation courses made the most sense within my employment context as well. The principal preparation program within which I work sees principals graduate at the highest frequency compared to the other licenses. This means that there would be a larger amount of data to analyze for my graduate course requirements.

**Nate:** How did you come to your decision to center on students' and teachers' voices?

**Malaika:** From my experience, students and teachers have been the beating heart on frontline equity and DEI initiatives. As a current graduate student and scholar activist, I am driven by my passion to protect students' needs and demands from their school systems. In addition to students, I wanted to hold space for teachers within my evaluation tool as well because of their immense influence on student activism.

I believe that one of the most important relationships in educational settings is between students and teachers. Teachers act as guides for students to build their identity, expand on their abundance of knowledge, and help them find what feeds their intellect. While students are understanding themselves within their historical and societal context, teachers must be provided culturally relevant development and held accountable to transformational teaching standards, which are fulfilled by the function of their principal. Principals that model

authentic and culturally sensitive relationships in school buildings will assist in setting the tone for instruction within their buildings. For example, a principal who takes time to learn the histories and values of the students within their building will display to students the value of their identity in that environment and promote pride in that sense of self. These aspects had led me to navigate principal preparation courses utilizing a tool composed of narratives about those whom principals serve: students and teachers.

Lastly, in your course discussions, when my classmates, who were working as teachers in schools, were describing their experiences with their principals, they brought up themes of principals using their power and privilege to fulfill their own agenda. Though I do not share this perspective with my fellow classmates, I merged their perspective with my own as a former student and concluded that with the hierarchy of education school spaces, the character and disposition regarding DEI of principals have practical ripple effects throughout buildings. In my graduate classes, including those with you, we would further our discussions by dreaming of ways to build our power within our educational spaces. This dreaming was incredibly helpful in the inspiration for what would turn out to be the PPAR.

## Format

**Nate:** I wonder how we plan to format the tool? There are many ways to organize the knowledge into groups while thinking about tool utility. Let your purpose and aims guide this decision.

**Malaika:** I started with thinking about the tool's aim to see if there is evidence within principal preparation programs showing they are providing their preservice principals with means of supporting Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and teachers through their pedagogical decisions. You recommended investigating various evaluation methods and how current principals (and their preparation programs) are assessed. I found limited literature providing a critical reflection on the ways in which principles are reviewed/evaluated. I remember you sent me an article examining Critical Race Digital Literacy (CRDL) within librarians' mis/disinformation literacy lesson plans (Chomintra, 2024). I thought this article brilliantly presented a tool which critically explored coursework of educators, specifically librarians, which held similar aims to our future tool creation activities.

Additionally, I found a poster presentation at an educational research conference that evaluated the coachability of principals within a principal preparation program (LAUSD, 2022). The utilization of a rubric within the LAUSD principal professional development tool further affirmed how a rubric could be a well-suited evaluation tool and format I could use for the evaluation of our principal program's pedagogical materials.

## Categories

**Nate:** Now that we have decided on a rubric, it is important to start to set the selected article authors' knowledges in conversation with one another. What has been your process to synthesize ideas across sources?

**Malaika:** I began developing the five themes within a spreadsheet. First, I listed critiques, recommendations, really any commentary regarding principals from BBI students and teachers. As I collected these sources, themes were easily formed from the most mentioned experiences and reflections. I had internal negotiations relating to how descriptive and narrow each theme would be. For example, I determined a theme would not be included if it didn't hold as an argument within at least 5 of the rubric articles I found. I included articles in the rubric centered on the voices of BBI students and teachers. Therefore, I integrated article authors who provided clear objectives for principal support into categories that reflected similar themes. All rubric categories hold strong evidence and arguments; however, the category which held the least evidence compared to the other categories was redistributing power. I do not believe this reflects a lack of importance but points to the influence of white supremacists' historical and ongoing power-hoarding activities.

Lastly, I processed how each category interacts and affects the themes within educational settings. For example, day-to-day interactions between students and principals, between teachers and principal, in administrative meetings, and how power dynamics influence those interactions. I reviewed literature repeatedly to realign myself with the narratives of the BBI students and teachers as I shaped the themes.

## Levels of Evidence

**Nate:** Too often, rubrics can be used to signal to educators their deficits. More insidiously, educational rubrics can have major negative impacts on well-being, livelihoods, political situatedness of the educators being evaluated. For instance, policy actors create procedures where teacher observation rubrics contribute to decisions about pay and/or continued employment. How are you thinking about creating your tool to refuse to engage in potential punitive uses?

**Malaika:** I really appreciate your suggestion in providing a rubric created to refuse treating pre-service principals based on their shortcomings. I created the rubric with the understanding that equity is a continuous movement with endless opportunities for action. Pre-service principals, their educators, and evaluators can align their course work, programmatic decisions, or curriculum to the PPAR and explore categories that can be better supported. Furthermore, pre-service principals can be better equipped to uphold BBI students and teachers in their communities when they have a guiding framework to get there. For example, the PPAR's "levels of evidence" were created to encourage self-reflection on principal preparation materials. My decision to include "levels of evidence" sets itself apart from dominant Eurocentric and western narrative evaluation of standards that may treat

equity as a finite destination. This component of the rubric can also be seen as an additional reinforcement of how rubric users can hold themselves accountable to BBIs students and teachers, by separating itself from dominant grading scales that have been historically harmful to BBI communities.

## Utility

**Nate:** What should the tool evaluate? I see you want to focus on syllabi, but could we broaden the utilization to other pedagogical aspects of principal preparation?

**Malaika:** One would use the PPAR rubric to discover evidence of ways principal preparation courses are providing pre-service principals with the understanding of how to support BBI students and teachers. I want to specifically examine pedagogical practices of principal educators, not the behaviors of principals themselves. Although, I hope that pedagogical practices rendered answerable to our rubric would lead to BBI-centered behaviors. At the beginning of understanding how the PPAR could be potentially used it was first solely going to evaluate course syllabi. I was not completely satisfied with that due to the limitations of using a single aspect of pedagogical decisions. From my understanding, course syllabi only outlined the details of a course and its outcomes, which in turn would leave large gaps in my analysis. Tool users would benefit from additional documentation providing more detail and adequately evaluating the course contexts. My optimism for the tool's usage grew when you (Nate) proposed including other course documents such as reflections, project artifacts, activities, and lesson plans. This proposition excited me because it would allow me to perform a more contextual and comprehensive analysis and speak more holistically about principal preparation pedagogies and how they can help principals serve BBI teachers and students.

## Interpretation

**Nate:** One important decision to make about our tool is how we intend it to be used in practical, educational evaluation spaces. How do we intend to have the tool be used during interpretation stages?

**Malaika:** This tool was intended to interrogate the principal preparation program's equity efforts within the program where I work. Originally, it was to be performed by an evaluator from outside of the program because I was worried about actors' willingness to listen. At this point and time, I have moved forward with my plan to use the tool to complete my Master's degree thesis. For that project, I am using students' pre-assessments, evaluation grids, and student reflection papers completed during their field observation experience. I am reading materials line-by-line and when coming across language that reflects the PPAR, I have been coding the sections containing the language that tracks onto one or more of the rubric categories. When applicable, I provide additional notes, commenting on how I think our program could continue to improve in that given section.

As you (Nate) and I further discussed possibilities, we found ourselves drawing upon tactics of co-reflecting and co-developing because you mentioned how this is a more relational practice. Once we found ourselves wanting to provide readers with an example of how to use the PPAR, it only seemed fit for you (as the instructor of the course and co-creator) and I (outside evaluator and co-creator) to both evaluate your course syllabus and provide analysis through our respective lenses. Additionally, you mentioned that you would offer a syllabus you have used in a course where you instruct educational leaders (including principals). The pilot allowed us to see how open dialogue about feedback can be pivotal to produce meaningful course reviews. We were able to consider how a dialogue between the evaluator (myself) and the person being evaluated (Nate) would improve the chances that the instructor would actualize rubric co-learnings. Additionally, we agreed that providing a short explanation/reflection throughout the review of course materials from each party, evaluator, and evaluatee, would allow for the program to better understand how different pedagogical strategies might show up in courses. I wanted future evaluation and interpretation procedures to include principal preparation course instructors and program evaluators promoting co-reflection, resulting in positive collaborating, and maximizing the discovery of evidence within the rubric categories.

## Radical Teaching

**Nate:** How is our tool-creation process one example of radical teaching and learning?

**Malaika:** Radical teaching components are included throughout the development and overall usage of the PPAR. First, grounding the evaluation process of principals in leading with BBI students and teachers breaks down the hierarchical framing of principalship and uplifts historically racialized communities' needs and holds principals answerable to those needs. This results in building power and capacity within BBI communities and is a key aspect in disrupting settler colonial structures. Secondly, the PPAR merges theory and practice, an important radical teaching component, allowing for principals to align their service more closely to the lived experiences of racialized and marginalized people left out of decision-making spaces. Likewise, the enabling of students' and teachers' perspectives are activated through the specific category of distributing power. This category is defined as promoting and pursuing different ways that students' and teacher's perspectives can be centered within school decision making, policy creation, and overall school operation. Finally, you mentioned the importance of open-source and free modalities in disseminating the tool. I agree and want to make sure that paywalls and academic gatekeeping mechanisms do not halt access to our imagined rubric.

## Agitation

**Nate:** Dominant policy actors will have issues with a radical teaching tool that exposes racialized harm,

especially in a state that is known for being progressive and signaling post-racial attitudes. So called equity champions will get defensive and may gaslight tool users. How may we think about navigating these agitators?

**Malaika:** I agree. I have seen patterns where leaders measure their DEI efforts solely within the limits which are determined by the state or local policymakers. These efforts may originate from DEI frameworks but, when in the implementation stage, fail to produce radical change. Supplementary to that, I have witnessed leaders be presented with radical teaching resources but refuse to act beyond the status quo. This leads to frustration and discouragement, and encourages complacency. I find it important when facing opposition and when utilizing the rubric to acknowledge two aspects: the critical process of school leaders' unlearning and relearning, and the need for leaders to take intentional action against systems of oppression, which state and local systems still find themselves in. I am not sure I have an answer, but your (Nate) support was validating and kept my motivation to present my tool with confidence. Within my experience of presenting radical racialized equity efforts, I have been met with discouraging messages. I have been told I am doing "the most" and questioned why I would want to do so much work. I have even been told that this process is "not valid." Your faith in my abilities as a researcher and scholar activist were key factors throughout the entire rubric process.

## Implications for Critical DEI and Radical Teaching

There are several important practical implications regarding the convergence of the PPAR with radical teaching. First, critically-situated actors may center on their relationships while engaged in tool co-creation practices. It was our mutual disgruntledness with state equity standards that mobilized us toward a critical DEI praxis of rubric creation. The mutual dissatisfaction brought us together in affirmation and action. Nate's action was to encourage Malaika to center on her imagination in exploring the educational futures Black, Brown, and Indigenous teachers and students deserve. Malaika's action involved learning about evaluation, reading and writing, and sharing her lived experiences. We reciprocally benefited from these actions as dual teachers and learners. In turn, refusing to engage stringent hierarchical mentor-mentee or advisor-advisee relationships which can translate to dismantle other socially-constructed hierarchies (i.e, researcher/subject, evaluator/evaluatee, teacher/learner).

Our negotiated decision to keep the tool's Black, Brown, and Indigenous focus as opposed to focus solely on Black teachers and students was perhaps the most significant co-learning related to critical DEI frameworks and radical teaching. This co-learning holds important practical implications as critically-situated collaborators engage in radical tool co-creation. We agreed on a resolution where Malaika would indicate the specific racialized and/or ethnic groups each article spoke to and

address some of the homogenization that can take place within broad "people of color" labels. In future co-authorship, we plan to share our tool-creation process in simultaneously speaking to solidarities and perceived tensions across racialized groups, the specificity of Black experiences, and how to navigate state-deemed aims with dreams of radical futures. These negotiations were the result of Nate and Malaika's relationship-building activities within the tool development stages. Thus, implicating how similarly-situated actors may illuminate radical knowledges in the practice of creating tools rooted in criticality.

Finally, we want to draw implications when mobilizing co-created and relational tools as radical teaching beyond the purview of superficial DEI frameworks. Reactionary educational policy actors will attempt to circumvent collective efforts to pursue radical futures. These agitations come in the form of racialized gaslighting, impracticality labels, defensiveness, and deflections. Thus, tool users and creators must stay ready by strategizing how to respond to agitators. This piece's scope was specific to tool creation and cannot speak to co-strategizations beyond how we navigated superficial DEI logics in Minnesota. Vulnerably, we may leave this discussion for future work as speaking to specific tensions could trigger unwanted interpersonal conflict between us and other actors. Yet, we want readers to know we found reprieve in demonstrating radical futures and creating a tool to get there -- despite reactionary policy actors projecting stuckness as the only educational reality. Our reprieve resided in exchanges of affirmation, celebrating each other's brilliance, negotiating tool-creation decisions, and collectively withstanding oppressive actors' tendency to tell us that we were doing something wrong. On the contrary, we rejected oppressive right-wrong binaries, and our connection allowed us to unapologetically render ourselves answerable to Black, Brown, and Indigenous teachers, students, and our childhood selves.

## Conclusion

Those educational actors attempting to move beyond superficial DEI frameworks may find connections to and divergences from our tool creation process. We encourage deep contextual work moving across temporal and spatial boundaries. The work can move across temporal boundaries in forecasting potential fights on the horizon given political shifts toward more state and federal agitators in power. Future work may consider where and how these types of pedagogical evaluation tools should be situated in the radical movements for educational justice. The work could move spatially in sharing principal and/or educational leader preparation strategies across states and nations. Our tool creation activities are one contribution among many to radical teaching strategies. We look forward to continuing to learn and evolve in the collective pursuit of the self-determined futures Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities have said they want and deserve.

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