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Contradictory and Missing Voices in English Education: An Invitation to English Faculty

Emily R. Smith, Betsy A. Bowen, and Faith A. Dohm

This article offers both a rationale and a proposal for the meaningful contribution of English faculty to the preparation of English teachers. We draw on data from teacher licensure tests and interviews with English and English Education faculty to underscore contradictions among the various voices in English education and to identify ways of bringing English faculty more meaningfully into the conversation. While analysis of our quantitative data suggests correlations between Praxis II exams and other measures of candidates' content knowledge and skills, analysis of interview transcripts and course documents reveals clear differences. We conclude with recommendations for involving English faculty in teacher preparation to balance out the contradictory and dominant voices in English education.

In the current debate about English teacher preparation we hear a clamor of competing voices: federal initiatives such as Race to the Top and No Child Left Behind (NCLB); licensure testing agencies such as Educational Testing Service (ETS) and edTPA; national accrediting bodies and organizations such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE); and teacher preparation programs. Everyone, it seems, has something to say about what English teachers need to know and be able to do. Everyone, that is, except English faculty. That is not because English faculty members do not care, nor because they do not understand the importance of teacher education. Rather, English faculty members have not known how to contribute to the preparation of teachers in ways that are both meaningful and consistent with their expertise.

English faculty have known about the importance of English to teacher preparation for years. Nearly 50 years ago, both the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) called for greater attention by English departments and faculty to the prepara-

tion of teachers (Hamilton, 1964; Viall, 1967) and reminded English faculty that “the English teachers in our schools are to a very large extent our own products” (Finch, 1965, p. 4). More recently, the 2001 MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching made clear that “the preparation of future teachers is central to the work that we do in our disciplines and of crucial importance for the future of our fields” (p. 230). Gray (1999) laid out the reasons for this importance quite clearly:

Why should faculties in English . . . accept the education of teachers as one of their responsibilities? The reasons are political, social, economic, and professional . . . English and the foreign languages are our subjects. We are in some measure responsible for how they exist in secondary schools and for making accessible the economic, social, and intellectual benefits they promise. (p. 8)

Miller (2006) even calls for re-envisioning English studies as literacy studies to embrace the utilitarian as well as humanistic goals of literacy studies, and to focus attention on “the most fundamental, expansive, and ignored area of college English studies: English education” (p. 153). Likewise, Miller and Jackson (2007) argue that “the greatest weakness in English majors is their limited attention to the needs of the many majors who plan to teach” (p. 684).

While we have known about the importance of English to teacher preparation for many years now, English as a field has not known what to do with that knowledge. Recently, Reid (2011) argued that “writing pedagogy preparation”—that is, the development of both high school English teachers and college composition instructors—could be the shared project that connects NCTE and CCCC. Yet, the work of connecting the two wings of teacher preparation—those who teach English content and those who teach pedagogy—is difficult, to say the least (Gray, 1999). Most English faculty understandably opt to leave the pedagogical preparation to schools of education, assuming “our” part as English faculty “is to provide the knowledge, the content, the stuff that those preparing to teach will somehow package and deliver to a younger audience, with the help of faculty members in the Ed School” (Marshall, 1999, p. 380).

This article offers both a rationale and a proposal for the meaningful contribution of English faculty to the preparation of English teachers, inside their own English courses. Our study grew out of our questions and concerns about the inconsistencies between how our country defines effective English teachers and how we define them in our NCATE-approved teacher preparation program. Specifically, we were concerned that English teacher candidates whom we had labeled competent—at times, exceptional—did not

always pass the Praxis II English Subject Assessment exams. What's more, we wondered what our teacher candidates' Praxis II scores really told us about their knowledge of English as a field of study and their readiness to teach it, and if the Praxis exams reflected assumptions similar to those of English faculty members about what it means to know and do English. We draw on data from teacher licensure tests and interviews with English and English Education faculty to underscore the contradictions among the various voices in English education and to identify ways of bringing English faculty more meaningfully into the conversation.

Defining Qualified English Teachers

The omission of English faculty from conversations about English education is particularly puzzling in the current educational climate, which places considerable value on content knowledge in the definition of a “qualified” English teacher. The 2001 NCLB legislation (reauthorized in 2010) legalized a definition of “highly qualified” teachers as those who hold a content-specific bachelor's degree in the subject area they teach and have passed the state proficiency test in that content area (NCLB, 2002). In most states, teacher candidates are denied certification if they fail the standardized tests of content knowledge, *even* if they successfully complete a nationally accredited teacher preparation program (Pence & Lucretia, 2003). Thus, the English major and knowledge of English content is *central* to our country's conception of teacher quality.

The NCLB legislation (among other teacher quality initiatives) builds on research that finds teachers' content expertise to be the single most important factor in student achievement (Ferguson, 1991, cited in Gere & Berebitsky, 2009; Ferguson & Ladd, 1996; Strauss & Sawyer, 1986). Although there is not consensus among educators about what constitutes “expertise” or “highly qualified,” nor even about who should be entrusted to develop such a definition, legislators, states, and many national programs (e.g., Teach for America) operate on the premise that content knowledge is the single most important factor in teacher quality. “In fact, for many legislators and other educational commentators today, a deep knowledge of the academic content supporting the field of the teacher's license is the *sine qua non* for defining teacher quality” (Stotsky, 2006, p 257). This increased emphasis on content knowledge can be seen in the growing requirement that teacher candidates major in a subject area rather than in education (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005), and in the widespread requirement that teacher candidates pass a standardized content knowledge test, but not necessarily a standardized test of pedagogy.

Though much value has been placed on subject matter knowledge, we still have little valid research documenting the impact of English teachers' subject matter knowledge on student achievement.

For example, of the 36 states that require English teacher candidates to pass the English Praxis II teacher certification exams, more than two thirds (25, or 69 percent) require candidates to pass a content knowledge test, whereas only 11 (30 percent) require candidates to take the Praxis exam on pedagogical knowledge and skills (www.ets.org/praxis). Knowledge of pedagogy or theories of learning and development, which are evaluated in teacher preparation programs through performance-based assessments, do not figure prominently in national assessments of teacher quality. Efforts to develop performance-based assessments for teacher candidates—led by teacher educators and researchers in California—may shift the balance in how we evaluate teacher candidates.

It was more than 20 years ago that Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1990) called for teacher educators and researchers to give more attention to the role of subject matter knowledge in learning to teach. Though much value has been placed on subject matter knowledge, we still have little valid research documenting the impact of English teachers' subject matter knowledge on student achievement. While some research supports the claim that teachers with content-specific degrees are more effective educators (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002), there are few quality studies that demonstrate the correlation between teacher content knowledge and student achievement (Floden & Meniketti, 2005), particularly for English teachers. Part of the problem with studying this link is the extreme variability in what constitutes the English major nationwide (Gere & Berebitsky, 2009; Stotsky, 2006), as well as the numerous contextual variables beyond teacher control that influence student achievement. What's more, NCTE's detailed analysis of the Praxis II tests in English concluded that the tests are not aligned with the NCTE standards and, thus, are not reliable indicators of candidates' content knowledge (McCracken & Gibbs, 2001).

Despite inconclusive data about the impact of teacher content knowledge on student achievement and debates about the adequacy of standardized tests to measure that content knowledge (Goodman, Arbona, & Dominguez de Rameriz, 2008; Selke, Mehigan, & Fiene, 2004), markers of subject matter knowledge are used as indicators of teacher quality in this country. As such, it behooves us in English and English Education to focus our attention on the content tests, as well as what our teacher candidates are learning from the content and pedagogy of college English courses. In what follows, we

describe the variety of methods and data sources we employed that led us to focus on the missing voice in English education: that of English faculty.

Methods

Modes of Inquiry and Data Sources

The findings in this article arose out of several modes of inquiry; as the study progressed, we needed varied methods to address our evolving questions. As a result, we included both quantitative and qualitative methods in our investigation. Our study began as teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Huberman, 1996), a “systematic and intentional inquiry” carried out by us as teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 7) to investigate a problem in our collaborative practice as an English education professor (Emily) and English professor (Betsy). Put simply, we wanted to understand why some of the best students in our NCATE-approved program did not pass the Praxis II exams, and what our teacher candidates’ Praxis II scores really told us about their knowledge of English and their readiness to teach it.

Our investigation was guided by two main questions: (1) What relationship, if any, is there between performance on the Praxis II English tests and other indicators of English teacher candidate performance? (2) How does the assessment of literary knowledge and skill in the Praxis II exams match or differ from that practiced in English literature and education courses?

Our initial questions led us to compare our candidates’ performance on the Praxis II content exams with other indicators of their preparation for teaching, such as their performance in their English courses and their overall GPA. As the study progressed, we dug more deeply into the conceptions of reading and writing present across the various voices in English preparation, including the Praxis II exams, English literature courses, and English education courses. Prior to conducting this study, we had reviewed practice test material provided by ETS; collected feedback from teacher candidates who had completed the exam; and led test preparation workshops for teacher candidates. Betsy had also taken the Praxis II multiple-choice exam (0041).

To address our questions, we carried out a quantitative analysis of Praxis II scores for the English teacher candidates who took the tests between 2000 and 2010. We examined the scores that our teacher candidates attained on their initial attempt at each test over this 10-year period in relation to a number of other measures of candidates’ knowledge and skills: namely, their GPA in English courses, their overall undergraduate GPA, and their math and verbal SAT scores.

The sample included 137 candidates (110 female, 27 male) who had completed either or both of the Praxis II 0041 ($n = 132$) and Praxis II 0042 ($n = 126$) tests. Undergraduate students (64 female, 16 male) comprised 58.4 percent of the sample; graduate students (46 female, 11 male), 41.6 percent. The ethnic distribution in the sample included 119 Caucasian (86.9 percent), 4 African American (2.9 percent), and 5 Hispanic (2.2 percent) candidates. Ten (7.3 percent) candidates did not identify their ethnicity. The mean 0041 test score for the sample was 178.61 ($SD = 12.49$, median 179.00), and the mean 0042 score for the sample was 163.95 ($SD = 10.79$, median = 165.00). During the period of this study, the passing score in Connecticut was 172 for the 0041 multiple choice exam and 160 for the 0042 essay exam.

At the time of the study, the two Praxis II exams required of secondary English teachers in Connecticut included a two-hour multiple-choice test (English Language, Literature, and Composition: Content Knowledge, 0041) and a two-hour essay exam (English Language, Literature, and Composition: Essays, 0042). The 0041 exam is comprised of 120 multiple-choice questions on the understanding of literary texts, the history and usage of English, literary devices and periods, and the teaching of language arts. Typical questions ask test-takers to identify the meaning of a stanza of poetry, distinguish restrictive and unrestrictive clauses, identify a literary device, or recognize features of phonics instruction. The 0042 exam requires four short essays: interpreting poetry; interpreting prose; analyzing an argument on an issue related to teaching English; and defending a position on an issue related to the study of English, with references to selected literary works. (See <http://www.ets.org/praxis> for more information on the Praxis II exams). At the time of the study, only one other state required the 0042 exam (Kentucky), while 28 states required the 0041 exam. Connecticut's passing score of 172 on the 0041 exam is at the high end of the pass-rate range among other states requiring this exam (150–172), with most requiring passing scores in the 150s or 160s. Since 2011 Connecticut has required only one exam: the English Language, Literature, and Composition: Content and Analysis, 0044. To keep our variables consistent, we limited our study to 0041 and 0042 scores. We examined all the initial scores that our teacher candidates had attained over the 10-year period from 2000 to 2010 in relation to a number of other measures of candidates' knowledge and skills: their GPA in English, their overall undergraduate GPA, and their math and verbal SAT scores.

In the second part of the study, we examined how our faculty members in English literature and English education viewed writing and literary analysis, and how their perspectives compared with the assumptions about writing and responding to literature that were evident in the Praxis II essay

exams. As English and English education faculty tend not to give multiple-choice exams, and generally use essays and essay exams to assess students' understanding of texts, we focused our interviews on the essay exam (0042) as a basis for comparing assumptions about writing and responding to literature. We developed interview questions based on our review of sample Praxis II essay tests and feedback from our candidates on taking this test. We conducted semi-structured interviews with six faculty members: four tenured faculty members of the English Department who taught courses in literary studies (three male, one female), and two female, non-tenure track faculty members in Education who taught writing and grammar education courses. Together, their teaching experience ranged from 7 to 47 years. All had some responsibility for preparing English teacher candidates. In these 45–60 minute semi-structured interviews respondents were asked about the goals, methods, and assignments of their courses and their reactions to sample Praxis II essay questions and rubrics. Transcripts from these interviews were a key data source. In addition, we analyzed the faculty members' course documents, including syllabi, assignments, and rubrics.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

There were two steps to the quantitative analyses. The first step consisted of bivariate (Pearson) correlations among the Praxis II scores (0041 and 0042), SAT verbal subtest, SAT math subtest, overall undergraduate GPA, and GPA in English courses. The purpose of this analysis was to evaluate the correlations among the available indicators of English teacher candidate academic performance.

The second analytic step was designed to identify what best predicts performance on the Praxis II tests. Two multiple regression analyses, one predicting scores on the Praxis II 0041 test and the other predicting scores on the Praxis II 0042 test, were conducted. Stepwise multiple regression using SAT verbal subtest score, SAT math subtest score, undergraduate GPA, and English GPA to predict each of the two Praxis II scores was used.

While one needs to be careful when choosing stepwise multiple regression as the analysis of choice, it is a reasonable analytic choice when the purpose of the analysis is entirely to predict and when the ratio of cases to groups exceeds 40:1 (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003), both of which are true for our analyses. We used stepwise multiple regression to identify, in an exploratory manner, which of the intercorrelated variables in our study were the best predictors of performance on the Praxis II tests (that is, which variables contributed the most variance to scores on the Praxis II tests).

Bivariate correlations may mask mediating relationships among predictors and, as shown in Table 1, there were significant bivariate correlations among our predictor variables (i.e., among SAT Verbal scores, SAT Math scores, overall undergraduate GPA, and English GPA). In stepwise multiple regression the correlations among the predictor variables are assessed and the predictors are selected for entry into the equation by the analytic program, with the predictor variable contributing the most variance to the criterion variable being selected for entry first. The stepwise nature of the analyses also allowed for the identification of the relative contribution of the other predictors in the analyses to scores on the Praxis II tests.

Qualitative analysis

Our qualitative analysis employed both the development of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The data collection and analysis were guided by both the initial research questions and those that arose during the study. It involved a reciprocal process of identifying and analyzing data as we drew on inferences and built theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Our qualitative analysis began with initial read-throughs of the interview transcripts and course documents (syllabi, assignments, and assessments from one course for each faculty member interviewed) to identify the faculty members' beliefs about writing and response to literature. We used the course documents to triangulate faculty's statements about their espoused pedagogical beliefs and practices. We also analyzed the Praxis II test questions to identify the knowledge and skills tapped in the various question types—essay and multiple choice. Patterns emerged that helped us to characterize the faculty's philosophies of teaching writing and literature as compared to the knowledge and skills required to complete the Praxis exams. We returned to the data to identify confirming and disconfirming evidence to support these patterns (Erickson, 1986) and to triangulate data from the interviews and teaching artifacts.

We drew on the combined insights from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses to develop theory about the contradictory indicators of English knowledge and skills for our teacher candidates, and to identify meaningful ways that English faculty could balance out the dominance of particular voices in the assessment of English teachers. In what follows, we share these findings and implications.

Findings

As others have found (e.g., Brown, Brown & Brown, 2008), our data indicate that performance on the Praxis II exams correlates with several other

measures of candidates' academic ability, including SAT-Verbal scores and English GPA. While the initial analysis of the quantitative data suggests that the Praxis II exams might closely align with other measures of candidates' content knowledge and skills, our more detailed analysis of the qualitative data reveals significant differences in the assumptions about literature and writing embedded in the Praxis II exams and our English and English Education courses. Thus, the correlations mask fundamental differences between the measures of literacy competence in each assessment.

Analysis of Praxis II Data

Bivariate Correlations

As shown in Table 1, there are several significant correlations among the academic performance indicators. SAT verbal scores correlated significantly with Praxis II 0041 multiple-choice test scores ($r = .697, p < .0001$) and with the Praxis II 0042 essay test scores ($r = .552, p < .01$). There was a significant correlation between candidates' overall undergraduate GPA and the scores on both the 0041 multiple-choice ($r = .433, p < .0001$) and 0042 essay ($r = .259, p < .01$) tests. Similarly, there was a significant correlation between the GPA in English and the scores on both the multiple-choice ($r = .419, p < .0001$) and essay ($r = .357, p < .0001$) tests. Only three correlation coefficients were not statistically significant; all three involved the SAT math subtest score. As shown in Table 1, while the math subtest score correlated significantly with the 0041 multiple-choice test score ($r = .473, p < .0001$), it did not correlate significantly with the 0042 essay test score ($r = .108, p > .05$).

Prediction of Praxis II 0041 Scores

Results for the two regression analyses are presented in Table 2. The regression analysis indicated that the best predictor of performance on the Praxis II 0041 multiple-choice test was the SAT verbal score. SAT verbal scores

Table 1. Pearson Correlations among the Predictor Variables

	SAT Math	Overall GPA	English GPA	Praxis 0041	Praxis 0042
SAT Verbal	.384 **	.381 **	.300 *	.697 ***	.352 *
SAT Math		.145	.154	.473 ***	.108
Overall GPA			.575 ***	.433 ***	.259 *
English GPA				.419 ***	.357 ***
Praxis 0041					.572 ***

* $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$ *** $p < .0001$

accounted for 52.9 percent of the variance in Praxis II 0041 scores. GPA in English courses contributed an additional 7.9 percent of the variance in Praxis II 0041 scores, and SAT math scores contributed an additional 4.6 percent. When the variance contributed by these three predictors was removed from the equation, overall GPA did not contribute significantly to the students' performance on the Praxis II 0041 test.

Prediction of Praxis II 0042 Scores

The regression analysis demonstrated that the best predictors of the essay exam (0042) performance differ from those that best predict the multiple-choice (0041) scores. The best predictor of Praxis II 0042 essay scores was the GPA in English courses, which explained 18.5 percent of the variance in Praxis II 0042 scores. Overall GPA explained an additional 6.7 percent of the variance in Praxis II 0042 scores. In this respect, our findings differ from those of Angrist and Guryan (2004), who found that “grades are not highly correlated with Praxis pass rates” (p. 242). Neither SAT verbal scores nor SAT math scores contributed significantly to the prediction equation once the variance explained by the English GPA and overall GPA had been removed from the equation.

Table 2. Results of the Stepwise Regression Analyses Predicting Praxis II 0041 and Praxis II 0042 Scores, in Decreasing Order of Variance Contribution

	Statistical Result	ΔR^2	β
Stepwise Regression 1: Prediction of Praxis II 0041 Multiple-Choice Test Scores			
SAT Verbal	$F(1, 72) = 80.76^{**}$	.529	.727
English GPA	$F(1, 71) = 14.19^{**}$	.079	.293
SAT Math	$F(1, 70) = 9.23^*$	.046	.235
Overall GPA	$F(1, 69) = 1.94$		.117
Stepwise Regression 2: Prediction of Praxis II 0042 Essay Test Scores			
English GPA	$F(1, 65) = 14.60^{**}$	.183	.428
Overall GPA	$F(1, 64) = 5.74^*$	.067	.289
SAT Verbal	$F(1, 63) = 2.38$		.186
SAT Math	$F(1, 62) = .085$		-.034

* $p < .01$ ** $p < .0001$

Analysis of Qualitative Data: Interviews and Course Documents

In short, the quantitative analyses revealed that performance on the Praxis II multiple-choice exam is most closely related to performance on the SAT-Verbal, and performance on the Praxis II essay exam is most closely related to test-takers' GPA in English. Had we stopped our analysis there, we might have assumed that there was a close match between what the Praxis II essay exam assessed and what faculty members who prepare our teacher candidates value and assess in their courses. However, analysis of the interviews with faculty in English and English Education revealed that this may not be the case. The correlations between Praxis II scores and other indicators may actually mask fundamental differences between the views of literature and writing that underlie the licensure exams and the views of faculty who prepare our teacher candidates. We recognize that, given the small sample size, we can make only provisional claims from our findings. Still, we believe that the disparities we uncovered between the assumptions embedded in the Praxis exams and those held by our faculty are both significant and worth further investigation.

The correlations between Praxis II scores and other indicators may actually mask fundamental differences between the views of literature and writing that underlie the licensure exams and the views of faculty who prepare our teacher candidates.

Themes from Interview Data

From the interview data, we identified six themes, or underlying assumptions, about what the faculty value in reading and writing about literature. The faculty members who prepare our teacher candidates uniformly said that

- › literature is embedded in its historical, political, and social contexts;
- › literary analysis involves multiple possible interpretations;
- › literary interpretation and argument develop out of discussion over time;
- › writing is a process of making and expressing meaning;
- › writing involves recursive thinking, writing, and revising; and
- › literary analysis and the study of writing should both cultivate intellectual independence.

Of these, the most striking and most frequently cited was the importance of being able to situate literary texts in the cultural and intellectual contexts

that produced them. For instance, when asked to identify the most important skill he sought to develop in an upper-level literature course, one English faculty member said, “What I’m mainly looking for throughout this course is the skill of being able to move between context and text, and to be able to understand these periods in that theoretical way.” Another English faculty member put his major goal this way: “[developing] a sense of literary history, a sense of literature being connected to British history . . . [to] take away critical analysis that is attuned to particular dominant modes of social discourse like the construction of nation, construction of other and a construction of gender.” Similarly, a faculty member specializing in African American literature identified her main goal, saying, “I want them to develop an understanding of African American literature as really centrally located in American literature and American history. So I really want them to get a complete context.”

Respondents reported that they believed that complex texts yield multiple possible interpretations and that the meaning that a reader takes (or makes) from a text evolves over time. Faculty members spoke of depth of analysis rather than accuracy. For instance, in describing what she most valued in an essay, one English faculty member said, “I guess that’s the main thing: that they are really thinking, engaging with the text and thinking about it and taking things beyond where we have gone in class.” Another English faculty member commented that good writers are “taking a risk . . . thinking about a challenge to the paradigm or a passage that expressed it even better than the one we did in class . . . or maybe just exploring another question. They’re being inquisitive.” Their comments suggest that multiple interpretations are not only possible, they are welcomed, and that few interpretations are indefensible. One English faculty member put it succinctly, saying, “I don’t *do* misinterpretation. I don’t think there is a right/wrong interpretation, unless it’s idiotic. I don’t deal in misinterpretation.”

Faculty Reactions to the Praxis II Exam

Although the six faculty members prepare our teacher candidates in English and education, most were unaware of what the Praxis II exams require. While they knew that the teacher candidates in their courses must pass the Praxis II exams for certification, only one reported having seen the exam before. When they saw sample questions from the Essay exam (0042), five of the six said that the exam reflected assumptions about literary analysis and writing that were at odds with their own.

Several respondents noted that four essays in two hours meant that test takers had little time to develop or revise ideas. One said, “A half an hour per

question sort of forces them to make a thesis before they have even thought about something. Four essays in two hours seems antithetical to the ways that I am teaching them to read and think and write.”

Several respondents also noted that questions in the Praxis II essay exam identified *for* the candidate the features to be discussed in an analysis of poetry or prose, directing test-takers, for instance, to analyze “diction and imagery” in a poem. English faculty, by contrast, considered defining a focus of analysis as a major part of the writer’s intellectual task. Furthermore, several commented that the features that the Praxis II focused on were not ones they considered in class. As one English faculty member noted, “It’s all formal. There’s no attention to the intellectual, historical, or social context—not even to literary history.” Another said, “So this is focusing on poetics and specific poetic techniques, recognizing and identifying them. I don’t do that kind of work in class. We do the analysis without necessarily basing it on terminology or technique.” Interestingly, two literature faculty members commented that the skills and knowledge being tested in the Praxis II exam seemed more like those students would have acquired in high school. One said, for instance, that the emphasis on literary formalism would make the textual analysis difficult for students “if they don’t remember those things from high school, about metrics and so forth.” Another said, in response to a sample question about characterization, “That doesn’t represent much of what I’m teaching because it’s a high school kind of essay. Characterization? I’m pretty sure that’s going to be much more commonly a subject in a high school than in a college English class today.”

Respondents were also asked to comment on the rubrics used to assess Praxis II essays, identifying whether the criteria were similar to those they used in assessing student work in English or English education courses. Five of the six reported substantial differences. For instance, a specialist in early modern British literature pointed out that his assumptions about literary analysis differed from the one implied by the rubric:

[My goal] is not necessarily, did you *get* the poem, but rather can you draw something from the poem that might be original, unexpected, creative. That always impresses me more than anything else. And that might be true here but that kind of language is certainly not what they use here. They talk about “accurate,” as in, “Do you understand the poem?” As [if] the poem says something, do you get it? As opposed to, Here’s a text, how can you interpret it? . . . It’s . . . limiting of the text and of the act of interpretation. It suggests that there is a right interpretation, and you get it or you don’t. As opposed to a text being an opportunity to develop interpretations, to develop creatively, look for connections, find interpretations.

We recognize that a two-hour standardized test inevitably differs in what it can assess and how it can do that from what a faculty member can do in a class. Yet, even given the constraints of a two-hour exam, the Praxis II essays exam seems to be considerably out of line with best practices in the field (e.g., writing as a recursive, meaning-making process) and with what our faculty expect on their essay exams. Four of the six courses included formal essays, and three included exams—potentially a point of similarity with the Praxis II essay exam. However, the Praxis II essay exam requires candidates to consider literary passages isolated from their historical, intellectual, or literary contexts—contexts that our faculty saw as essential to any understanding of a work. In addition, some questions require candidates to support a predetermined argument about a text or set of texts, such as “Choose TWO works from the list below and then write a well-organized essay in which you SUPPORT the statement” that “the writer’s primary function in society is to pass judgment on political issues, social conditions” (ETS, “Test at a Glance 0042”).

Findings from Course Documents

These assumptions about the nature of literary study and the role and process of writing were reflected in the faculty members’ course documents. Syllabi in all six courses listed informal written responses to texts as a main component of the course. This seemed consistent with what faculty members had said about writing, reading, and thinking in the interviews, where several commented that interpretations to texts are developed over time and through opportunities for exploration.

Analysis of the course documents revealed that opportunities for revision were quite different in the courses that prepare our teacher candidates and in the licensure exams that assess them. Four of the six courses we examined listed at least one “formal essay” or “long paper” on their syllabus. In all four of these, the syllabi listed opportunities for revision. These opportunities took varied forms: teacher comments on initial drafts, peer workshops on drafts, or opportunities to revise and resubmit graded drafts. This is a sharp contrast to the Praxis essay exam that, with four essays in two hours, offers little chance to reconsider and revise, and no chance to confer with peers.

In short, then, our research reveals that, despite the statistical correlations between Praxis II scores and other measures of candidates’ knowledge and skills, there are, in fact, major differences between the assumptions about what it means to understand a literary text and respond to it in writing that are expressed in the Praxis II essay exams and demonstrated by these English and education faculty members. These differences, combined with

the anomaly of taking a multiple-choice Praxis II test, give our candidates conflicting messages about what it means to “know” or “do” English. At best, they create confusion; at worst, they promote cynicism about testing and the profession, and reinforce the conceptions of English teaching that are at odds with best practices of the discipline. Most significantly, since Praxis II has a much stronger and more powerful voice in the conversation and assessment of English teachers than do English faculty, the pedagogical views and practices of English and English Education faculty can be silenced in the landscape of more dominating voices.

Discussion

Our findings confirm and extend previous research on the Praxis II, which criticizes the English Praxis II tests for promoting a decontextualized view of reading and writing. These tests assess isolated skills that “bear little relation to the practices people need to learn and use to participate fully in a literate society” (Luna, Solsken, & Kutz, 2000, p. 279). Like Zigo and Moore (2002), our findings indicate that the “nature and substance” of the questions on the English Praxis II tests promote “theoretical stances that are inconsistent with the theories that undergird the National Council of Teachers of English’s (NCTE) current professional standards” (p. 141).

Our findings raise questions about both the Praxis II multiple-choice exam and the essay exam. In the multiple-choice format exam (0041), the strongest correlation was with test-takers’ SAT verbal scores; similarly, the SAT verbal score was the best predictor of the multiple-choice score. In other words, an assessment that our teacher candidates take long before we begin teaching them, when they are just juniors or seniors in high school, tells us the most about how they are likely to do on a test “designed to assess whether an examinee has the broad base of knowledge and competencies necessary to be licensed as a beginning teacher of English in a secondary school” (ETS, “Test at a Glance”). It may seem odd that a test of subject matter knowledge correlates more strongly with an assessment of generic skill with language (the SAT-Verbal) than with students’ performance in courses in their major. Our finding is consistent with that of Angrist and Guryan (2004) who claim that “Praxis is not screening for the sort of academic qualifications measured by grades” (p. 244). However, we need to remember the purpose of the SATs. The SAT is used to predict performance in college. It, therefore, is not surprising that the SAT-Verbal score, which is designed to predict college GPA, was the best predictor of performance on the end of program Praxis test.

Thus, it may simply mean that teacher candidates’ skill and comfort

level with multiple-choice exams predict how well they will do in college, whether the performance measure is GPA, Praxis test score, or some other academic measure. On average and overall, candidates who do well on the SAT-Verbal do well in college and do well on the Praxis exams. (That interpretation seems even more likely given that the SAT Math score also correlates with performance on the Praxis multiple-choice exam.) We worry somewhat about the implications of this finding at a time when some state legislatures have proposed linking the accreditation of schools of education to high passing rates of their graduates on licensure exams. Our findings would suggest that one way to increase the passing rate would be to narrow the pool of students accepted into teacher preparation programs to those with high SAT-Verbal scores. Given criticism about the European American bias of most standardized tests (Albers, 2002; Hones, Aguilar, & Thao, 2009), and the lower pass rates of teachers of color on teaching tests, this move might further homogenize an already homogenous teaching force (Wakefield, 2003; Zuzovsky & Libman, 2006).

We were less surprised to find that the best predictors of performance on the Praxis II essay exam were teacher candidates' GPA in English courses (which explained 18.5 percent of the variance in Praxis II 0042 scores) and overall GPA (which explained another 6.7 percent). On their face, these results suggest some coherence between the skills and knowledge taught in this NCATE-approved program and those valued by the licensure exam. Certainly, as a profession, we might hope that we assess the knowledge and skills we teach, particularly in this high-stakes context.

Yet the responses of our faculty and the analysis of their course documents suggest that this coherence is illusory. In fact, the assumptions about writing, reading literary texts, and analysis embodied in the Praxis II essay exam are substantially different from those held by these college English and Education instructors. Most significantly, these college faculty members see literary texts as inextricably embedded in the literary, historical, social, and intellectual contexts in which they are created. Uniformly, these faculty members identified coming to an understanding of the relationship between text and context as an essential part of an English student's task.

The gap between what English and English Education faculty see as essential and what the Praxis II exams assess was revealed clearly in the respondents' reactions to sample questions from the Praxis II exams and sample rubrics for Praxis II essays. Respondents commented particularly on the emphasis that the Praxis II rubric placed on determining the "correct" interpretation of a text. In fact, the first criterion listed in the Praxis II rubric for literary analysis is "Analyzes the specified literary elements in the selec-

tion accurately and with some depth.” Our respondents, by contrast, spoke of seeking credible arguments, new insight into texts, going beyond what had been discussed in class, or “taking a risk.” It is possible that the instructors in this study do not, in fact, value the qualities they identified; all of us who teach may sometimes misunderstand or misrepresent what we profess to value. Still, the course documents, which describe opportunities for both low-risk informal writing and revision, suggest an approach to reading and writing about literature that allows for provisional insights about texts to develop over time and that values insight over accuracy.

We conclude, then, that our candidates are getting distinctly different messages about what it means to understand or interpret a literary text, and how we conceive the writing process, from the faculty members who instruct them and in what they will be called on to do on the licensure exam. These differences are significant for our candidates and, therefore, for our programs. Given the relatively small sample size and limited diversity of the sample, our findings are suggestive, rather than definitive. However, they still suggest some directions both for further research and for program development. In particular, they have implications for the role that English faculty play in the preparation of secondary English teachers.

Certainly, teachers and teacher educators are essential in determining standards for assessing teacher candidates, but so are content area experts—English faculty members—more generally.

Implications

Although English faculty members are largely responsible for the content knowledge teachers bring to their classroom, they are virtually absent from all discussions and decisions about English teacher preparation and assessment. While ETS describes the Praxis exams as being “developed by educators for educators” (ETS, Institutions, FAQ), English faculty appear to have little to no say in the high-stakes assessments used to assess candidates’ content knowledge. Instead, ETS consults what it describes as “a representative group of teachers and teacher educators [to determine what] a newly licensed or certified teacher should know to perform his or her job competently” (ETS, “Questions”). Certainly, teachers and teacher educators are essential in determining standards for assessing teacher candidates, but so are content area experts—English faculty members—more generally. And while *ETS Guidelines for Quality and Fairness* (2002) require test developers to “obtain substantive contributions from qualified persons who represent relevant perspectives, professional specialties, and population groups” (p. 36),

those perspectives and professional specialties seem to reflect neither current approaches to literary study practiced by college English faculty nor best practices articulated by NCTE and NCATE. Koziol, Stallworth, and Thompkins (2006) maintain that

if Praxis II is to be used as one assessment of teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge, then professional organizations such as NCTE must be involved in the routine revision of these examinations. . . . Only through stakeholders' continuous critique and revision will Praxis II remain current and be one valid and reliable method for assessing candidates' knowledge, dispositions, and abilities. (p. 380)

Moreover, English faculty receive no feedback on how their students perform on Praxis II assessments. They are rarely—if ever—held accountable for “the academic content of our teaching force” or teachers' performance on subject matter tests (Stotsky, 2006, p. 261). “We hold the wrong faculty accountable,” Stotsky writes, “for the most important things beginning teachers of core subjects from Grade 5 to 12 need to acquire—a deep knowledge of the subject they teach together with a beginning understanding of how to teach that particular subject” (p. 257). In the end, the assessment for English content knowledge (Praxis II) is largely disconnected from the English major and the faculty who teach it.

Though teacher licensure may take new forms in the coming decades, whether in response to the Common Core State Standards initiative or as a result of the Teacher Performance Assessments recently developed by Stanford University, the issue will remain: Who should determine what English teachers should know and how can all those who have responsibilities for this task be acknowledged and involved?

Whether we or the nation recognize it, however, English faculty *are* teaching and preparing prospective English teachers. College English courses do teach teacher candidates about teaching language, literature, and composition. As Marshall (1999) points out, “sitting in classrooms where literature is taught, we not only learn about literature, we also learn about teaching literature,” for “all teaching is about teaching . . . and . . . every class that enrolls prospective teachers is a class in teacher preparation” (pp. 380–381).

Given the importance of subject matter knowledge to teaching, and the central role English faculty play—consciously or not—in content knowledge *and* pedagogical content knowledge preparation, the time is right to support English faculty to play a more intentional role in teacher preparation. We are not arguing here for institutional realignments. Instead, we argue that more explicit teacher preparation work could easily occur inside English

courses, where it currently exists in the hidden curriculum and pedagogy of English courses. Such work would help to balance out the dominating voices in English teacher preparation to provide a more balanced view of what it means to know and do English.

We conclude, thus, with an invitation to English faculty to contribute meaningfully and consciously to teacher preparation. This involvement would validate the work English faculty are already doing to prepare teachers and actualize English faculty's essential role in the preparation of teachers.

English Faculty Involvement in English Education

There are a number of ways that English faculty already are and could be more involved in teacher preparation.

Supporting Reflection on Past Literacy Learning

Perhaps the least intrusive proposal asks English faculty to support English teacher candidates' reflection on what they have learned about teaching English as students in their prior high school and college English courses. English teacher candidates' apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) as English students is an important source of knowledge about teaching that needs critical analysis and reflection. For example, an English faculty member might ask, "What stands out to you about your prior English courses? What beliefs about teaching and learning English were implied by the way your English teacher facilitated your learning in the course?" Though such reflection could (and often does) occur in education courses, locating it in college English courses helps teacher candidates to make connections between the ways they have learned and engaged in reading and writing and their current experiences as English students. Moreover, it highlights English faculty's role in shaping candidates' beliefs about teaching English.

Analyzing the Praxis II Exam

The Praxis II exam is an important text for understanding how English as a field is conceptualized. English faculty can use the Praxis II exam as a vehicle for exploring the different ways in which English is defined, and how the conceptions of reading and writing presented in this exam compare to those presented in their English and English education courses. Such conversations can help teacher candidates to make sense of the variations among these views of English and to better manage the contradictions among them.

Serving as Readers and Consultants

English faculty might also serve as consultants or readers on English teacher candidates' curriculum development work. By and large, teacher candidates work primarily with teacher education faculty as they develop lesson and unit plans. English faculty might play a key role as readers or consultants as teacher candidates identify appropriate texts or content for a particular unit, make connections between text and context in English teaching, or determine how to teach particular linguistics features. In proposing this, we are not expecting college English faculty to develop expertise on developmentally appropriate texts or state standards; rather, we are tapping their rich knowledge of texts and assuming that the teacher candidates (with assistance from education faculty) will judge age-appropriateness of texts. English faculty might also observe teacher candidates' teaching videos as they reflect on their developing practice. Typically, such observations and reflections occur in education courses. However, English faculty could play an important role in helping the teacher candidates to focus on the content as well as the delivery of their lesson.

Making Pedagogy Explicit

Perhaps the most risky proposal, but also potentially the most beneficial one, is for English faculty to make their own pedagogical choices explicit to their college English students, linking pedagogy to content in the context of content learning. If the faculty in our study are typical, English faculty are thoughtful about the texts and methods they employ in their literature and writing courses. Sharing these choices with their English students helps the future English teachers in their classes to understand their implicit pedagogical choices and rationales. For example, an English faculty member might explain *why* he or she provides multiple opportunities for revision on their writing. Or, the faculty member might share how he or she went about selecting particular texts for the course. Making these choices explicit helps future English teachers to see and understand the pedagogical choices in their English courses. It might also encourage them to adopt an analytical stance as students of English, to reflect in the moment as literacy learners.

Taking a metacognitive approach to teaching, we would argue, is useful for all faculty members, whether or not they have future teachers in their classroom. It requires that we are able to explain the choices we make as educators, and it helps our students to understand what we do. This process encourages reflection on our practice, which we want to model for all students, regardless of their future profession.

Though these proposals are relatively simple and cost-free, they do present some issues and risks for faculty. To begin, we need to identify ways to validate and reward faculty for engaging in the type of pedagogical work that has typically been the province of teacher educators. Though we would argue that all faculty could and should make their pedagogical choices explicit to students, most do not see this as part of their charge. English faculty identify as English professors, not education professors, and talking about teaching may feel countercultural. What's more, they might not want to give up time on content for time on pedagogy. Secondly, there is risk involved for faculty who open up their pedagogy to their students, who may question their choices. Faculty, understandably, may not feel the need to justify their decisions to their students and might feel uncomfortable having their students regularly analyzing their teaching moves. Over time, however, we see these proposals as doable and worth the potential risks. As a first step, we have begun to share our proposals with English faculty to ascertain their response and how we might actualize these ideas. We are hopeful that our English faculty could serve as models for other schools in this important work of preparing English teachers.

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Each NCTE affiliate is at liberty to select a person for this honor in the manner of its choice. An affiliate's governing board might acknowledge someone who has previously won an award within the affiliate, thus moving that person's recognition to a national level, or the affiliate might advertise for applications for nominations before choosing a winner.

Deadline: Documentation should be sent to the Secondary Section Steering Committee administrator, Felisa Jones (fjones@ncte.org) by **May 1** of each year. More information and the nomination form are available at <http://www.ncte.org/second/awards/hste>. Once completed, the nomination form should be sent to the address on the form. A complete list of the 2013 High School Teachers of Excellence Award recipients is available at <http://www.ncte.org/second/awards/hste/winners>.

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Please nominate an exceptional leader who has had an impact on the profession through one or more of the following: (1) work that has focused on exceptional teaching and/or leadership practices (e.g., building an effective department, grade level, or building team; developing curricula or processes for practicing English language arts educators; or mentoring); (2) contributions to the profession through involvement at both the local and national levels; (3) publications that have had a major impact. This award is given annually to an NCTE member who is an outstanding English language arts educator and leader. Your award nominee submission must include a nomination letter, the nominee's curriculum vita, and no more than three additional letters of support from various colleagues. Send by **February 1, 2014, to: Rebecca Sipe, 8140 Huron River Drive, Dexter, MI 48150. Or email submission to** Rebecca.sipe@emich.edu (Subject: CEL Exemplary Leader).

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