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## Practitioner Inquiry for Turbulent Times: Learning to Take an Inquiry Stance Toward Teaching Difficult Topics Through a Teacher Inquiry Community

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## **Practitioner Inquiry for Turbulent Times: Learning to Take an Inquiry Stance Toward Teaching Difficult Topics Through a Teacher Inquiry Community**

***Abstract:** Amid turbulent times and politically polarized communities, many teachers require support if they are to teach or engage with difficult topics in their curricula or professional practices, yet few teachers actually receive any formalized support for addressing such topics. This article responds by describing the work of an inquiry community of inservice educators that was designed to assist teachers in learning to address difficult topics by integrating practitioner inquiry and student inquiry with asset-based and trauma-informed lenses. The article outlines the community's conceptual foundations then describes how a team of university-based teacher educators facilitated the community's work. A participating teacher's reflection illustrates how the support of the community transformed her teaching of one potentially difficult topic—the American Civil War—as she shifted her pedagogy from being a provider of knowledge to facilitating students' inquiries. The article highlights implications for future scholarship about professional learning, student inquiry, and teacher retention.*

In recent years, polarization and partisanship have intensified both in the United States and in other countries. As K-12 teachers increasingly work within politically divided communities, their professional practices have become subject to unprecedented scrutiny by parents, guardians, and other community members (Journell, 2022). A swirl of partisan news stories, social media posts, local school board policies, and state legislation has contributed to a climate of fear for many teachers (Carter Andrews et al., 2018; Pace, 2022).

It is within this turbulent context for teaching (Hallman et al., 2022) that some K-12 teachers' grade-level standards or formalized curricula require them to teach students about topics such as genocide, slavery, racism, or human rights abuses (e.g., Florida Legislature, 2023; Missouri General Assembly, 2022; New York State Education Department, n.d.; Stillman, 2021). Such curricular topics are commonly deemed “difficult” and can be identified by terms such as *difficult knowledge* (Britzman, 1998; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; Zembylas, 2014, *difficult history* or *hard history* (Gross & Terra, 2018; Stoddard et al., 2017), or *tender topics* (Mankiw & Strasser, 2013) because they can be psychologically uncomfortable, sensitive, or traumatizing—especially for young learners (Gross & Terra, 2018; Stoddard et al., 2017). Irrespective of their assigned grade levels or content areas, however, teachers also face a slate of other kinds of difficult topics that can arise unexpectedly as “unplanned episodes” (Cassar et al., 2021, 2023) during classroom discussions, in the lunchroom, or in virtual instructional spaces—including topics

as varied as abortion, policing, and gender. These kinds of topics—sometimes known as *controversial issues*, *contentious topics*, or *contentious issues*—may also be deemed “difficult” because they involve sharp disagreements due to contending values, identities, ideologies, or historical narratives (Goldberg & Savenije, 2018; McCully et al., 2002). This article uses “difficult topics” as a broad, umbrella term.

As the turbulent contexts shaping the teaching of difficult topics continue to evolve, so do teachers’ professional learning needs. Prior research has contributed a great deal to current understandings of the reasons certain topics can be difficult to teach (e.g., Britzman, 1998; Gross & Terra, 2018; Hess, 2002), examined classroom discussions of difficult topics (e.g., Garrett & Alvey, 2021; Hess & McAvoy, 2014), and established numerous reasons why it is common for teachers to avoid difficult topics (Cassar et al., 2023; Hess & McAvoy, 2009; Misco & Patterson, 2012; Schmidt et al., 2007). Previous research has also demonstrated how such topics can nevertheless furnish opportunities for teachers to develop their students’ skills in critical-analytic thinking, empathy, and civic discourse (e.g., Haas, 2020; Middaugh, 2019; Pace, 2019). Scholars have also argued for the teaching of difficult topics on the grounds that many teachers’ tendency to shy away from such issues contributes to the uncritical reproduction of dominant ideologies (e.g., Britzman, 2003). Still, relatively little is known about how teachers can be supported in learning to engage with such topics despite the many reasons they may be inclined to shy away.

In response, this article presents an advancement in professional learning scholarship by describing an inquiry community that was intentionally designed with the aim of supporting teachers in learning to navigate the challenges associated with difficult topics in curricula and educational practice. Following an overview of practitioner inquiry as it was conceptualized in this community, the article describes how two teacher educators facilitated the inquiry community in learning to “lean in” to the teaching of difficult topics. Next, the article presents the narrative of one participating teacher who used inquiry to teach the American Civil War in a politically polarized school community. The article concludes with a discussion of its significance and possibilities for future scholarship.

### **Learning Through Practitioner Inquiry in an Inquiry Community**

The characteristics of high-quality professional learning have been thoroughly documented. Such professional learning engages educators in experiences that are intensive, collaborative, reflective, content-rich, coherent, process-oriented, and led by skilled facilitators (Desimone, 2009; Rutten, 2021). These characteristics can be incorporated through a variety of approaches to

professional learning such as lesson study, video analysis, reflective journaling, peer coaching, and practitioner inquiry (Learning Forward, 2021).

The authors adapted practitioner inquiry—the systematic and intentional study by educators of their own professional practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020)—in part because prior research has demonstrated that this approach can help educators enhance their responsiveness to the needs of learners in their professional contexts (Rutten, 2021) while growing their self-efficacy in content instruction (e.g., Kinskey, 2018) and developing as emergent teacher leaders (Rutten et al., 2022). Furthermore, when grounded in the construct of inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), practitioner inquiry offers an orientation to teaching that endures through changing political climates and yet can be readily “remodelled” to address new challenges across contexts (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). As such, the authors believed the approach held significant promise to support teachers through the challenges of addressing difficult topics.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) theorized that educators who engage in practitioner inquiry can construct knowledge-of-practice and effect systemic change over time. As they inquire with the support of inquiry communities, teachers investigate their classrooms and schools, concurrently treating others’ knowledge as worthy of both consideration and critique. Although many approaches to practitioner inquiry have been proposed, it was Dana and Yendol-Hoppey’s (2020) theorization of a five-phase cyclical model that had the greatest influence upon the professional learning described in this article. According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, educators engaged in practitioner inquiry:

- Pose questions or “wonderings” about their practices;
- Collect data, including relevant literature, to gain insight into their wonderings;
- Analyze the data;
- Take action to make changes in practice; and
- Share their findings with others.

When situated within professional communities, this process can be a promising mechanism for educational change because well-functioning inquiry communities are potentially powerful contexts for professional learning (Wolkenhauer & Hooser, 2021). Inquiry communities that encourage exploring, sharing, and critiquing from an inquiry stance can create a culture of learning in which meanings about practice are constructed from varying perspectives (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Rutten & Wolkenhauer, 2023a, 2023b, in press;

Wolkenhauer et al., 2022). These characteristics, too, contributed to the authors' belief in the potential of an inquiry community as a promising structure for assisting teachers in learning to address difficult topics.

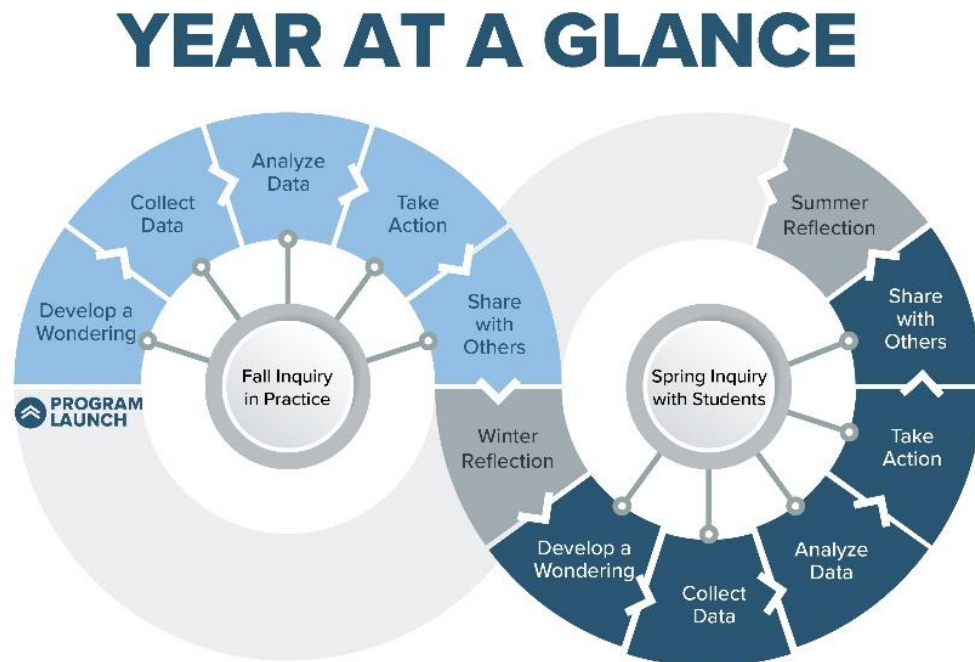
### **An Inquiry Community Focused on Difficult Topics**

In April 2021, school districts across Pennsylvania were embroiled in controversies about COVID-19 safety protocols and appropriate content for school library books. Administrators in one of these districts were seeking support for their teachers to teach and engage responsibly with difficult topics when they connected with Boaz (Author 4), the Director of the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education Initiative at Penn State (the Initiative), which leads a variety of inquiry-based teacher professional learning programs focused on effective instruction of difficult topics.

Administrators were seeking a way to respond to teachers' shared needs for addressing difficult topics while also providing personalized professional learning opportunities aligned with their district's goals and state teacher evaluation requirements. Together, school district and Initiative personnel conceptualized a professional learning program, which they introduced to teachers during a professional development day in May 2021. The program was structured as an inquiry community that would utilize an adaptation of Dana and Yendol-Hoppey's (2020) model of practitioner inquiry, as illustrated in Figure 1, infused with trauma-informed and asset-based lenses as described below. Twenty educators voluntarily signed up and committed to joining an inquiry community that would meet throughout the 2021-22 school year. The participants ranged widely in their professional assignments. They included both general and special education teachers spanning Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as a school administrator.

**Figure 1**

Conceptual Structure for Professional Learning, Adapted from Dana & Yendol-Hoppey (2020)



### **Fall 2021: Growing a Teacher Inquiry Community through Practitioner Inquiry**

In July 2021, teachers convened for a summer inquiry community launch. A team of university-based teacher educators from the Initiative, including Logan (Author 1) and Danielle (Author 2), aimed to build a supportive community, construct shared understandings of inquiry as both a stance and an approach to professional learning and pedagogy, and assist participants as they began to conceptualize shared and individual wonderings. They adapted activities and discussions from a variety of resources including Dana and Yendol-Hoppey's (2020) *Reflective Educator's Guide to Classroom Research*, the National School Reform Faculty's (NSRF, n.d.) discussion protocols, and a wide range of facilitator-developed resources.

Following the launch, the inquiry community's facilitators met with all participants individually. During these meetings, the facilitators challenged teachers to unpack assumptions about the difficult topics they had identified, narrow and clarify the scope of their wonderings, asked them to consider multiple perspectives on their chosen difficult topics, and, when needed, pushed them to eliminate biases, deficit-framings on their students or communities, or approaches that could potentially be traumatizing for students. To do so, they asked questions informed by the examples provided in the Wondering Refinement Partner Talk activity (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020). Throughout these interactions, facilitators' approaches were guided by constructivist understandings of educational supervision (e.g., Lambert et al., 2002; Rutten, 2022), in which one overarching goal is to assist educators in building evidence-informed understandings about their practices through open-ended questioning paired with reflective and critical-analytic talk.

Some educators' inquiries focused on difficult curricular content, while others chose to focus on difficult, contentious, or contested issues they were facing within their professional practices. For example, a seventh-grade English/language arts teacher asked, "How can I engage my students in discussions of difficult topics with people who have different opinions?" A fourth-grade teacher wondered, "How can we assess and own where we stand on issues of equity and inclusion without scaring stakeholders away?" A school administrator initially asked, "How can we reduce class cuts and office referrals in our building?"

As they were refining their wonderings, educators concurrently completed an online trauma-informed practices learning module (Leo et al., 2021) developed by the Initiative, to help them identify how trauma may impact their students and themselves in their classrooms. This module was included as part of the program so that participating educators could work from some shared understandings of how certain topics might be difficult in different ways for different students, depending on their past experiences of trauma, and so that educators could consider what trauma-informed approaches to teaching about difficult topics might entail. Core ideas from this module related to identifying potentially traumatic content, and addressing such content utilizing trauma-informed practices, were integrated into the community through the facilitators' questions during one-on-one coaching sessions and, in particular, as they coached key aspects of the inquiry process such as developing a plan to collect data, or determining how they wished to take informed action in their classrooms without (re)traumatizing students.

Throughout the school year, the inquiry community met biweekly. As a model for teaching a process for inquiring in community, they decided to construct

a shared inquiry into a question developed from themes present across their individual inquiries. The community asked: “How can we, in our roles, help create a culture of respect in which students and the school community feel safe, supported, connected, and valued across differing experiences and perspectives?”

Throughout the fall semester, the inquiry community’s facilitators used the shared wondering as a tool for modeling the practices and mindsets of practitioner inquiry—such as collecting and analyzing a wide range of data, interpreting information through multiple perspectives, engaging in critical-analytic professional dialogue, analyzing student work, and more. As they intentionally practiced with their shared inquiry, participants built common understandings of the inquiry process, which they then applied to individual inquiries as they collected and analyzed a wide array of data sources.

Participants also strived to develop asset-based stances toward their students and community and to integrate their understandings of educational equity by analyzing case studies focused on issues of bias, diversity, equity, and social justice in education (i.e., Gorski & Pothini, 2018). These analyses supported discourse across multiple perspectives on educational (in)equity while helping participants apply these global understandings to local inquiries. As they did for the community’s trauma-informed lens, facilitators used questioning and references to the discussions of these case study analyses in their coaching of teachers’ inquiries to adopt asset-based, rather than deficit-based, lenses on individuals and communities. Initiative teacher educators also used the National School Reform Faculty’s (NSRF, n.d.) discussion protocols—defined as “structured processes and guidelines to promote meaningful, efficient communication, problem solving and learning”—such as the Consultancy Protocol, to support the teachers in identifying and disrupting entrenched patterns in their thinking. Questions on guide sheets encouraged groups to reflect critically on their wonderings and approaches to collecting and analyzing data to root out biases.

As the semester wound down, participants experimented with formative and summative approaches to data analysis using data collected from their professional practices and surveys collected for school district improvement data. They developed preliminary conclusions to inform actions or changes in their professional practices. They gathered in December to share and celebrate their learning, reflect on the inquiry process, and consider implications for continued inquiry in the spring.



## **Spring 2022: Bringing K-12 Students into the Inquiry Process**

During the spring, teachers reconvened to reground their work in their shared wondering and sense of community. They also began to plan how they would engage in the same process of inquiry they had experienced during the fall—now inviting their K-12 students to join as co-inquirers as they framed difficult-topics wonderings within their classroom communities. To assist teachers in piloting the inquiry process in their classrooms, the facilitators provided two entry points in utilizing inquiry with students, which varied according to the origin of the wondering (e.g., curriculum, student curiosities, classroom tensions) and the person or people responsible for framing that wondering (e.g., teacher, student, small group, entire class).

Although most of the teachers contemplated taking a student-led approach to inquiry, many initially took a teacher-directed approach in which they framed wonderings for their students around difficult curricular topics or topics around which they, themselves, were feeling tension. They then invited their students to join in investigating these teacher-framed questions. For example, a Kindergarten teacher who was feeling tension about her students' interactions and choices during independent center time invited them to collaborate in a group inquiry initially framed by the question, "How does practicing kindness impact our classroom community?" An upper-elementary teacher whose curriculum involved teaching a novel set during the Holocaust engaged her students with the question, "How do people decide if, when, and how to act against authority?" Three special education teachers engaged in intersecting inquiries into the questions "How can we help our students labeled with disabilities grow in their ability to advocate for themselves and their needs?" and "How can we advocate for our own needs?" The school administrator's inquiry about class cuts and office referrals, informed by new understandings developed during the fall semester, evolved to include her entire building's teachers and staff in exploring how they could foster a positive school climate and more equitable discipline policy.

Other teachers adopted a more student-led approach to inquiry in which students framed their own wonderings. For example, a sixth-grade teacher created space for student inquiry into self-selected difficult topics within the community. Another elementary teacher, whose curriculum required her to teach about the American Revolution, restructured her approach and lessons to be driven by her students' wonderings about the content, rather than structuring her planning solely around the content and limiting the exploration to teacher-framed questions.

Interspersed with data collection in their classroom contexts, Initiative content experts led sessions focused on providing additional perspectives to consider, such as the role of language in framing difficult historical topics and various ways to collect data during field research (e.g., interviewing, jotting field notes). The facilitators met one-on-one with participants to assist them in applying their learning to inquiries developed in their own contexts. Like the fall semester, the spring concluded with a celebration and sharing of inquiry findings, this time within and beyond the inquiry community itself. At this culminating session, participants demonstrated their growing commitment to inquiring with their students into difficult topics by planning for collaboration during the following year.

### **Shifting Difficult-Topics Teaching Practices Through Inquiry: Wendy's Story**

The preceding description of the inquiry community and its context could make it seem as though teachers experienced their professional learning in a linear fashion. However, the inquiry community itself was designed to support teachers as they engaged in complex, messy, “open grappling” (Lawton-Sticklor & Bodamer, 2016) about their practices. To illustrate how the community’s work supported teachers’ reworking of their practices, in the paragraphs that follow, one participating teacher, Wendy (Author 3), shares her experience.

Wendy’s narrative is highlighted because it illustrates how the process of inquiry, as experienced in the context of an inquiry community, effectively supported a teacher to “lean in” to the teaching of a specific difficult topic—even in a politically polarized community where the teacher knew from past experience that the topic was likely to provoke contending views. She introduced herself:

My name is Wendy Lane Smith, and I am a fifth-grade language arts teacher... I have been teaching for about 33 years, most of them with my current district.

While Wendy was an experienced teacher in her professional context, she was new to the work of the inquiry community. She described how she had been feeling a new sense of burden with tensions over difficult topics in her community. She shared:

I live in a county that had been in the national spotlight for proposed school board policies related to classroom and school library books, many of which were written by or featured the stories of people of color. As I navigated

these policies as a citizen and classroom teacher, I became curious about how students would experience them. I became unsure of how this would impact me as a teacher. I wanted to gain perspective on why certain books were being discussed as inappropriate. I wanted to examine how I could still teach about historical figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Rosa Parks. I knew that I had to do something to take informed action. Part of that meant getting further education for myself on how to approach these topics.

As Wendy explains, one impetus for her participation in the inquiry community was to work out how to continue teaching familiar curriculum, but in a new context that felt more divided than in years past.

In the context of the tensions she had felt in the broader community, as Wendy began her first cycle of inquiry into her own practices, she focused on using inquiry to grow her classroom community's capacity to support all learners:

I found that the inquiry cycle was a very effective tool for working through some social turmoil within one of my classes. Quite a few of the students were saying and doing very mean things to each other. I approached the class during a class meeting and said that I felt that we were not doing a great job of being kind and respectful. I gave the class several anonymous surveys to learn more about their experiences, and together we reviewed the data. We realized that all of the students felt that they were being treated in an unkind manner and that sometimes they felt like they were unkind also. To learn more, I also did personal interviews with those students who agreed to do so.

Our class had a perceived tension, and we had some preliminary data. Next, we came up with the wondering, "How can we make our classroom a better place for all students?" We used class discussions and shared documents to develop some goals for our classroom community. One of the most popular goals was to let a teacher know when something happened so we could talk it out. The data we used initially was the number of incidents of unkind behavior that were reported. We also looked at the incidence of behavior slips that were related to bullying and the number of counselor referrals. We checked in regularly to reflect on how we were doing. What I noticed as we continued working on these issues is the number of counselor referrals decreased, as did the number of behavior slips for unkind words or deeds. I also found that more students came to talk to me about things about which they felt happy, instead of asking for help with friendship issues or bullying.

For Wendy, then, teaching her students how to inquire initially served as a powerful way to build her classroom community. Through this experience, she began to gain confidence in her capacity to utilize inquiry in her classroom.

As the year continued, Wendy began to draw on her early efforts to use inquiry as a means of addressing a classroom community issue in order to engage her students in learning about a curricular topic she perceived as difficult to teach:

In fifth grade, we teach the Civil War. Even prior to these troubled times, though, I have had some “interesting” feedback from students regarding the subject of the Confederacy. For instance, I once had a student who always called the Civil War “The War of Northern Aggression.” Prior to the inquiry community, I used the textbook to lay out facts, but I still felt nervous about discussing the Confederacy. For this year, I decided to use the inquiry cycle to structure the Civil War unit.

As I began to explain the inquiry cycle to my students, I was able to present myself as a co-learner and let them know that I did not know all the outcomes of our inquiries, but that we would learn together. So, as we looked at topics such as the factors that led to the Civil War, differing historical views on slavery, and the factors that led to the Union victory, I encouraged the students to form, express, and refine their own understandings. I had the students look at as many primary sources as possible, and, after class discussion of the sources, we engaged in further discussions about the factors that contributed to the start of the Civil War. The students then wrote essays about their understandings of these factors. The goal was for each student to identify and explain what they thought was the most compelling explanation for the start of the war.

Once students had explained their understandings, they were asked to discuss and consider additional perspectives before ultimately finalizing a conclusion that reflected a deeper sense of their own understandings. For instance, many students explained that slavery was the most compelling reason to go to war. Many stated that they thought it was wrong to “own” another person, while others said that they did not understand how our country, which they believed was founded on ideas about personal liberty, could tolerate slavery. After class discussion and the opportunity to clarify their conclusions, they were asked to state what they thought other perspectives might say about their own.

Another example of how I used inquiry to teach the unit is that when the classes discussed the various assets that the Union had and the assets that the Confederates had, some students initially argued that it was not a fair fight. So, we debated whether or not there could possibly be a “fair”

way to engage in a Civil War in which slavery was one of the core issues. Each student had to support their ideas with evidence from individual research. They also worked in groups to create their own representations of the factors that helped the Union to win the war. I guided and coached them in finding their conclusions but only intervened if there was misinformation involved. Given the previous problems we had with students being unkind to each other, it was gratifying to watch them sort through, debate, and discuss tough issues in a supportive way.

As Wendy's narrative illustrates, when the moment arose that she needed to teach about a difficult topic, the inquiry process she had already piloted through the class's shared wondering provided a familiar foundation.

When she reflected at the end of the year on the shifts she had begun to notice in her thinking and practices, Wendy shared:

Student participation, choice, and higher order thinking skills were more evident than in previous years when I taught this unit. I truly believe that what we learn best is what interests us most and those things which we practice and set aside time for. Before using the inquiry cycle, there were days when I may have just tried to "cover" the material and see what the students retained.... I think that the inquiry cycle allows for deeper discussion, tailoring learning to match student interests, and greater understanding of concepts.

I was able to focus more on being an observer, a noticer, rather than having a preconceived goal about how to approach difficult classroom issues. Instead of assuming I knew the answers, I became one who sought both questions and possibilities. This is important to me because I never want to become that stereotypical "sage on a stage." I want my teaching to be vital and responsive to student needs. I don't want to become the grumpy teacher on the playground who just emanates negativity. As I became more of an observer, I became closer to my students. I was able to judge less and help to find solutions more... It has made me feel more hopeful as a teacher at a time when many teachers are feeling burned out, and it helped me navigate the teaching of a difficult topic, even in a community where difficult topics had become increasingly polarized in recent years.

Wendy's reflections indicate how the inquiry process impacted not only her students' engagement in learning about the Civil War but also her own understanding of her role as a teacher of a difficult topic. They illustrate how, even

for a teacher who had taught the same unit for many years, inquiry provided a foundation for addressing a difficult topic amid a new set of contextual challenges.

### **Discussion & Implications**

The work described in this article reflects an emerging approach to supporting teachers as they learn to engage with difficult topics amid a polarized political climate. The article described one inquiry community and illustrated how a participant's experiences enabled her to investigate and teach about difficult topics more deeply and in more nuanced ways than she had in the past, even in a context that had been experiencing significant political turbulence. The illustration highlights several professional learning features that are critical (Desimone, 2009). The work was grounded in sustained relationships developed over a long period, as the inquiry community met intensely over the summer and throughout the following school year. The inquiry community was designed to align with the school district's goals for professional learning and pedagogy (i.e., self-directed modes of professional learning; individualized learning for K-12 students) and in response to locally experienced challenges, such as teaching amid controversy over book banning. The community's facilitators intentionally took time to build community, even as they explicitly taught the process of practitioner inquiry.

As Wendy's narrative illustrates, some teachers underwent significant shifts in their understandings of how to teach difficult topics. For Wendy, her professional learning meant that she was supported as she tried a new approach to teaching a familiar difficult topic despite her feelings of trepidation. She found her passion for teaching revitalized despite, or, perhaps, because of, the challenges she had decided to pursue through the inquiry community, and she noticed how participating enabled her to work toward the school district's goal of personalizing learning for all students. Aligned with pre-service teacher education literature pertaining to the impacts of practitioner inquiry on teachers' practices, as an inservice teacher Wendy exhibited a shift (Clayton, 2017) in focusing on the characteristics of her students as learners through her classroom's inquiry into how Wendy's classroom could become a better place for all learners. As Wendy's narrative also indicates, she was beginning to engage her students as co-inquirers—a process she continued to explore through a second year of participation and, at the time of this paper's publication, a third year.

To the difficult topics literature, the article offers a contemporary case-in-point of how difficult topics might be responsibly integrated into classrooms, even where polarization, partisanship, and divisiveness are significant influences on how teachers enact curricula. To the literature on professional learning, this article

illustrates a new way that practitioner inquiry can be utilized to support teachers in learning to teach difficult topics. Wendy's narrative, in particular, with its observation that the experience of learning to utilize inquiry to lean into the teaching of a difficult topic made her feel more hopeful as a teacher even during a time of intense burnout for many educators, suggests several implications for future scholarship, including further study of how difficult-topics inquiry communities might support teacher retention and well-being during turbulent times, how teachers might be supported to take a more student-led approach to inquiry sooner in their own experience of inquiry-based professional learning surrounding difficult topics, and how practitioner inquiry and student inquiry can be intentionally aligned and bridged within inquiry communities' practices. Both conceptual and empirical investigations across a wider array of contexts could further develop these literatures and deepen existing understandings of the potential of practitioner inquiry to address the unique challenges posed by difficult topics.

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