Using *Learning Express-Ways* in Special Education Teacher Preparation: Developing Student-Faculty Relationships as a Path to Partnership

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This paper explores the effects of implementing Learning Express-Ways as an instructional communication tool between students and faculty in courses that are part of a special education teacher preparation program and apprenticeship. Findings suggest that using Learning Express-Ways contributed to the development of learning relationships with faculty and this instructional communication tool may be helpful in creating a partnership-focused approach in special education teacher preparation program.

Keywords: Learning Express-Ways, instructional communication tool, special education teacher preparation, feedback, reflection, partnership

Teacher directed instruction and intervention remain a predominant approach in both K-12 and higher education; however, partnership approaches, between students and teachers/faculty, are becoming more prevalent in the literature as an opportunity to improved learning. Teacher educators may enhance their programs by providing instruction to pre-service teachers through authentic, experiential learning pedagogy (Clark, Threeton, & Ewing, 2010). When coursework is carefully constructed and coordinated with field experiences and the opportunity for student voice to be heard (e.g, as partners through the use of Learning Express-Ways), teacher preparation programs can better prepare future educators who use evidence-based and high leverage practices (Darling-

Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005).

A 'partnership movement' in higher education is emerging, suggesting a shift in focus from traditional, hierarchal faculty-student dynamics, to understanding the value and benefits to learning through partnership with students related to inquiry-based teaching and an increase in student voice (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Eckoff, 2017; Fletcher, 2008; Houseal, Abd-El-Khalick, & Destefano, 2014; Mitra & Gross, 2009). Pre-service special educators are at the forefront, challenging the traditional, hierarchal teaching model, and actively trying to understand how a more equitable student-teacher relationship can be fostered. This paper explores the effects of using *Learning Express-Ways* (LE), an evidence-based instructional communication tool originally created for adolescents with learning disabilities, in special education teacher preparation courses. Can LE offer an integrated, classroom-scale approach to partnering with students in their learning, positioning future general and special educators to recognize benefits to partnership approaches with students in their own classrooms?

Background

Constructivism in education centers on the belief that people construct their own understanding of the world though their experiences and interactions with individuals formally or informally (Sivan, 1986). More specifically, the works and ideologies of John Dewey's project method (Dewey, 1916) and Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) serve as foundational underpinnings for this study. Dewey and Vygotsky suggest that repetition and memorization play only a small role in the learning process of students. Dewey believed the education foundation should be built upon democracy and child-centeredness, and that students' ideas should be projected, realized, and encouraged by teachers (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). Vygotsky theorized student learning is a social exchange gained through interactions with peers or adults. In practice, LE reflects both ideals.

Recent research and policy discussions in special education teacher preparation have centered on the creation and demonstration of high leverage teaching practices (HLPs) for educators, notably those providing instruction to students with specialized learning needs or exceptionalities (Martin-Raugh, Tannenbaum, Tocci, & Reese, 2016). Educators 'in training' (i.e. pre-service teachers) need to be competent and knowledgeable in many areas including: HLPs for collaboration with others, assessment, social/emotional/behavioral practices, and academic instruction (Barrie, Ginns, & Prosser, 2005; Lane, Oakes, & Menzies, 2014; Martin-Raugh et al., 2016; Sailor, 2010; Wang et al., 2015).

There is need for enhanced experiential learning in higher education (Wurdinger & Allison, 2017); special educator preparation is a prime example (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Smith, 2018; Wozencroft, Pate, & Griffiths, 2015). Pre-service teacher education students mention preferences in use of activities or other experiential learning methods in coursework (Cheng, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009). Further, a new epistemology focused on creating expanded and innovative opportunities for teachers has emerged connecting academic coursework and university-based teacher education.

Zeichner (2010) suggests aspiring educators "frequently do not have opportunities to observe, try out, and receive focused feedback about their teaching methods learned about in their campus courses" (p. 91). "Student teachers' learning from experiences is a process involving many interrelated personal and social aspects, including past and present experiences gained in multiple situations and contexts over time" (Leeferink, Koopman, Beijaard, and Ketelaar, 2015, p. 334). The intersection of research on *Learning Express-Ways* and Students as Partners provides context for this study.

Learning Express-Ways

Learning Express-Ways (LE) is an evidence-based instructional communication tool originally developed for adolescents with learning disabilities to communicate with their classroom teachers and express learning-related interests and needs (Lenz, Adams, & Fisher, 1994; Lenz, Adams, Fisher, & Graner, 2016) and was created at The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KUCRL). Further, LE is a written dialogue between student and teacher where a student can give feedback on a teacher's instruction, reflect on their own attempts at learning of academic content, demonstrate their learning, and provide thoughts and ideas to faculty to enhance their learning (see Figure 1). It is a tool for building academic relationships between students and teachers (Lenz, Adams, Fisher, & Graner, 2016). This tool has been adapted for use in educator preparation to model and practice its use. Adaptations of curriculum and tools are inevitable, especially when working to support diverse learners (Odom, 2009).

Researchers who have studied secondary classroom teachers' (grades 6-12) use of LE to connect with individual students in both general and special education settings, report several benefits, one being that LE created a place to record student concerns and improve communication (Adams, Lenz, Laraux, & Graner, 2001). LE also enabled cueing feedback to address specific student concerns, documenting progress monitoring and changes in instruction, and build increased trust and a positive relationship (Lenz, Graner, & Adams, 2003). The LE are completed at the end of class or unit where the student is responsible for completing the form thoroughly and honestly. The student is typically given a writing prompt that is directly related to the course content for that specific class/unit. The student also has the opportunity to rate the effectiveness of instructor pedagogy and content delivery and has an opportunity to ask questions and/or leave messages for the instructor. For example, a student might be given a writing prompt to demonstrate new learning (e.g., "What are features of effective instruction?"), use the question space to ask a question (e.g., "Can you give more examples of positive reinforcement?"), or make general comments (e.g., "I have been struggling to write the behavioral objectives in the correct format, but I finally think I have it!"). The teacher must then read, reflect, and respond to the comments and questions before the next meeting. This instructional communication tool (ICT) was adapted for use in undergraduate special educator preparation coursework for the purpose of this study (see example in Figure 2).

In special education teacher preparation programs, LE can be utilized to provide a space and framework for written

dialogue between the student and faculty so that the student has the opportunity to give feedback on class content, reflect on their own learning, and ask questions about any aspect of instruction or learning. LE provides faculty the opportunity to reflect on instruction/class content, student content mastery, give feedback and respond to student comments, and revise course content and delivery based on student feedback. Possible benefits to faculty review of LE include: encouragement of student voice in pedagogical approaches, opportunities to individualize instruction for a student or group of students, and openings to discuss student needs privately. The explicit instruction with these types of evidence-based tools in special educator preparation (such as LE) is essential given the troubling number of students who fail to achieve in U.S. schools. Aspiring special educators need training, practice, and tools to be ready to meet the needs of students with diverse learning needs, including learners with exceptionalities and students from culturally, economically, and linguistically diverse groups (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Students as Partners

The importance and benefit of having Students as Partners (SaP) is a growing focus in higher education (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). SaP "embraces students and staff working together on teaching and learning in higher education" (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p. 2) where "all are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together" (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014, p. 12). A recent review of literature on SaP in higher education found enhanced relationships of trust between students and staff as positive outcomes of partnerships for both

students and staff (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Mercer-Mapstone and colleagues also suggested additional benefits to students including: increased student engagement, motivation, ownership for learning, confidence, and understanding of the each other's experience. Notable positive faculty outcomes included development of new or better teaching or curriculum materials, understanding of the "other's" experience, and new beliefs about teaching and learning that change practices for the better. Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014) suggested consideration of "what activities you or your students already do that could regularly involve partnership (e.g., teaching, pedagogical planning, course feedback, programs offered by your teaching and learning center)" (p. 154).

Equitable student-faculty interactions in higher education have been found to improve faculty teaching (Barrie, Ginns, & Prosser, 2005; Biggs, 2001; Bryant & Harper, 2005; Hirschy, 2002; Sax, Bryant, & Harper, 2005; Wang, BrckaLorenz, & Chiang, 2015). Further, Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) determined that trust is important in relationships and learning and that when a student trusts that their comments and questions are valued by the teacher, reciprocation and recognition of value and an increase in positive interaction occurs. Trust in educational settings is essential for relationships and should reflect an individual's, in this case a pre-service special education teacher's, willingness to be vulnerable and these five facets of trust: 1) benevolence, 2) reliability, 3) competence, 4) honesty, and 5) openness (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). These five facets are also prominently evidenced in special education research and

research on instructional coaching (Knight, 2009), parent participation (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak, & Shogren, 2015), and collaboration/co-teaching (Friend & Barron, 2016).

Method

This qualitative study utilized a qualitative content analysis approach. Content analysis is a "detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of materials for the purpose of identifying patters, themes, or biases" (Leedy & Ormond, 2010, p. 144). As such, the researchers selected written LE interaction artifacts from three similar courses at different institutions as the sample. In addition, a careful review and analysis of literature on student engagement, student-teacher relationships, and how adolescents learn was also conducted simultaneously to find patterns and themes that could potentially correspond with what was noted through the analysis of the LE in this study. The research was completed in two phases: 1) Seeking to understand the student writing and responses in the LE to understand relationship development and, 2) Follow-up analysis using the SaP literature to understand if and how this instructional communication tool reflects the process of developing SaP.

Thus, the overarching research question for this study was:

1. What are the main characteristics of student-faculty interactions via *Learning Express-Ways* and do they reflect partnership?

The Adapted LE for Special Education Teacher Preparation

Smith, Peterson, & Mitchell (2014) have successfully adapted LE folders and feedback forms from the original form for use by individual faculty. Using an adapted LE materials, faculty can model authentic incorporation of an LE into a course to provide experiential learning of the tool for pre-service special educators. As suggested in the background literature above, LE is an evidence-based tool for adolescents with learnings disabilities designed to empower students in their learning and create student-teacher relationships.

For fidelity purposes, in adapting the LE for special education teacher preparation coursework, several features of the LE needed to be present including: fields for feedback on instruction, personal learning reflection and content mastery, and an opportunity for questions and/or comments. Figure 1 and Figure 2 are provided to illustrate the similarities and differences. The original and adapted LE both provide space for students to provide information on their learning, rate their learning, and for instructors to comment or reply. However, the adapted form for higher education provides and explicit content related writing prompt and a space for other general information and comments from the student. The three courses, and adapted LE, were selected for inclusion in this research study following review of each for evidence of the three fields listed above. Further, the research team identified these fields as important to understanding partnership aspects through evidence of student voice, responsibility, and power identified in the SaP literature.

Class _____Name _____

Learning Express-Ways Feedback Form

Date:	M T W T F	Date:	M T W T F
Message from Student		Message from Teacher	
Rating	Put an 'X" on the scale about learning today. 1----2----3----4----5----6----7 Low . . . . High		

Date:	M T W T F	Date:	M T W T F
Message from Student		Message from Teacher	
Rating	Put an 'X" on the scale about learning today. 1----2----3----4----5----6----7 Low . . . . High		

Figure 1. Example of an original *Learning Express-Ways* Feedback Form (used with permission from KUCRL)

Course name, Instructor
Semester, Year

Student Name: _____   Date: _____

Message/Comments **to** Instructor:	I rate **my learning** this week as (select your choice): 0- I didn't learn anything new or relevant. 1- Learning was minimal. 2- I learned some new things this week about the chapter(s) and related content. 3- I learned many new things about the chapter(s) and related content. 4- I had an outstanding week and learned many new things that will be relevant to my future in education.
Questions/feedback **for** the Instructor:	Message **from** Instructor:

Content Related Writing Prompt: *The question here should be based on content from class and/or materials read or reviewed in preparation for class.*

Student Response to Writing Prompt:

Figure 2. Adapted *Learning Express-Way*s Feedback Form Used in Study

Data Collection

This study collected and analyzed pre-service special education students' completed LE (N=78) from three different sections of an undergraduate, special education course taught by three different faculty members at one university in the southwest region of the United States.

Identifying information from the student LE responses were removed. Two of the three classes used in this study were taught 100% online while one was taught face-to-face. The study was considered exempt from review by IRB based on several factors: 1) the implementation of LE into coursework was determined to be a part of regular

instruction; 2) the completed LE were deemed existing data; and 3) the documents were analyzed once student level identification was removed.

To be included in the study, the LE tool had to be used a minimum of five times over the course of a 15-16 week-long semester. Interactions were defined as anytime the student provided feedback on the course content or instruction, when the student asked a question or made a request or provided a comment on their learning. The LE were distributed and explained at the beginning of the semester in all three respective courses. In both face-to-face and online course delivery, faculty provided research on, and the rationale for LE, to support adolescent learning and guidance on how and when the feedback form would be used. Then the pre-service education students were asked about their learning preferences, hobbies, and expectations for the course. The LE were then used at the end of that class period, or designated online period, for the student to reflect on the instruction of the faculty member, describe their personal learning approach and content mastery, and ask questions and/or provide comments.

Direct quotes from the artifacts illustrate these three purposes of *Learning Express-Ways*. Examples of student reflections on a faculty member's instruction include:

Thank you for providing the scenarios online. I will utilize them throughout the course.

I believe it is hard to understand sensory impairments for individuals who have not experienced those impairments or who have not known or met anyone with either hearing or visual impairments. If you added an additional video about hearing impairments to

compare and contrast the difference of the sensory impairments it would allow us has future teachers to developed understanding of these two different kinds of sensory impairments.

Examples of comments reflecting students' personal learning and understanding of class content include:

This week I learned about challenges and methods taken towards inclusion. I learned about how more and more schools have been trying this, from elementary to high school. I also learned that not everyone agrees with this method of education but that it seems to be a personal, individualized thing. It's not for everyone but many can and are benefiting from it.

It's amazing that despite parents' expectations or support, peer pressure or life-long friendships, struggling through school to try and fit in or finding something you're good at and love, teachers still have the greatest impact.

Examples of questions and comments written in students' LE included:

I guess I really just want to see if I understand the large picture. When I am a teacher, and have a child with a severe sensory impairment, I will have assistance in making sure the child is receiving the correct attention? I know that blindness or deafness doesn't make it impossible to learn, but I am not sure how I would be able to properly educate them without extensive assistance and guidance.

Is this becoming something that will eventually be in all schools? I wasn't sure of the date of the video and if it has

progressed much since then? Or is it still a lower percentage of schools that have begun to move towards inclusion?

Coding and Analysis

The first phase of data analysis included open coding of the LE artifacts. Two members of the research team previewed the materials, identifying re-occurring patterns in the narrative text related to the three field of the LE: feedback on faculty instruction, personal learning reflection and content mastery, and an opportunity for questions and/or comments. During this review, it was noted that written or typed student responses related to one or more of the three purposes of the LE. Thus, it was possible to code and label each written response as a unique piece of narrative data, regardless of which response the student was writing to on the LE itself.

A deeper analysis of this data focused on axial coding where broader categories were specified and operational definitions created (see Figure 3). This step encouraged more precise understanding of the interactions in the LE text. The researchers chose to continue analysis by importing the artifacts into NVivo 10, a qualitative software program, to digitally code the samples and create more complex visualizations of the patterns and categories for analysis.

Evaluative Feedback: Feedback to instructor (e.g., pedagogy, classroom management, learning community) or self-assessment. Instructor feedback might include words/ phrases such as: I enjoy ___; I like it when ___; It was helpful when___; Good job, You are doing great!
Gratitude: Language to express thanks. Key words/phrases: Thank you; Thanks; I appreciate…
Knowledge Enhancement: Language to acknowledge and actively seek additional help or resources. This is sometimes expressed through questions to the instructor.
Personal Information: Topics discussed are not related to the course work or the class, Connects with student's life outside of class.

Figure 3. Categories and Operational Definitions

The second phase of data analysis focused on the LE and responses for evidence of SaP. This process found evidence of the eight foundational values (see Figure 4) supporting the process and development of student partnership. The researchers identified text and responses from all eight to be present.

Results

Table 1 provides descriptive information from the sample including the number of pre-service special education teachers in each class, the number of LE completed across the semester, and the total number of student interactions coded. Students used the LE to reflect on the instruction of the faculty member, their

personal learning, and/or the class content; to ask questions; and/or to provide comments. The written interactions from the LE reflected similarities and differences in the four categories chosen for analysis: evaluative feedback, gratitude, knowledge enhancement, and personal information. In terms of similarities, students' writing on LE across all three courses reflect roughly similar percentages of interactions focused on Evaluative Feedback and Gratitude.

However, differences were noted in the category of 'Knowledge Enhancement', with much lower percentages of students in the face-to-face class writing these kinds of responses than in the on-line sections. Moreover, there was variation in the frequency of students' written LE that included personal reflections on their experience/learning (see Table 2).

Table 1
Course Enrollment Details per Class

	Faculty 1 Online	Faculty 2 Online	Faculty 3 Face-to-Face
Number of students in each class (Total N=78)	23	30	25
LE completed per student (range)	5	8-11	5-6
Total number of student interactions coded	210	266	191

Table 2
Number and Percentage of Interactions by Category

Student	Online Class 1 (N=210)	Online Class 2 (N=266)	Face-to-Face Class (N=191)
Evaluative Feedback Specific General	108 (51%) 100 8	146 (55%) 132 14	135 (70%) 118 17
Gratitude	8 (4%)	5 (2%)	11 (6%)
Knowledge Enhancement	72 (34%)	78 (29%)	28 (15%)
Personal Information	22 (11%)	37 (14%)	17 (9%)

This study suggests certain types of communication or interactions are encouraged by the LE and suggest that these interactions indicate a positive student-faculty relationship. The evidence of the formation of student-faculty relationships is suggested through themes of trust, student engagement, and

authenticity identified in the interactions (see Table 3). Further, examples of written student responses reflect each of the eight foundational values supporting the process and development of students from the second phase of the research are provided (see Figure 3). Faculty approaches and

interactions differ, but the themes are reflected in each category and some categories inform multiple themes. The different individual categories reflected in Table 2 play their own unique role in building student-faculty relationships. They are listed by category from most prevalent to least prevalent overall for each theme.

Trust

The theme of trust is informed by the following categories: Evaluative Feedback, Knowledge Enhancement, and Personal Information. Trust is a foundational piece in personal relationships (Gottman, 2011) and student-teacher and student-faculty partnerships (Wang et al., 2015). The Evaluative Feedback category displays evidence of students who actively criticize, offer the faculty ways to improve class, indicate their learning preferences, or indicate that they enjoyed the class. Trust is informed by Evaluative Feedback when the student interaction suggests that the student trusts the faculty to receive the criticism, or learning preference, in a positive manner and trusts that the faculty member will adapt their lesson plan in a way that reflects the student's comments. Examples of student comments reflecting Evaluative Feedback include:

> I liked our more frequent small breaks. It made it easier for me to pay attention & stay on task.

> Today was full of information, but also flowed together well. It was also helpful to review our syllabus and the requirements for our upcoming assignments.

Interactions in the Knowledge Enhancement category suggest that the student trusts the faculty to receive the question asked and is able to respond with an answer or direct the student to a resource that may contain an answer. Knowledge Enhancement was operationally defined for this study as language to acknowledge and actively seek additional help or resources through questions to the instructor. The questions are optional and are generated by the student's own motivation. As you can see from the following examples, students are willing to raise questions, taking a risk to expose their own vulnerability:

> So the focus of our part was to understand the difference between consequence and reinforcement? I was a little nervous about today's class because of the quiz. But overall I was a little confused but once we got in groups and discussed I was happy.

> Once I read the chapters I will have a better understanding.

Authenticity

- I think the BIP was a great project I think the only change I would make would maybe note in the instructions to make a point to note some key terms. I think I would have gone deeper in the reflection and maybe done better.

Inclusivity

- I think that some of my classmates asked too many specific questions about information on the slides and started confusing themselves. I'm sure the info will sink in when they review it at home. I know it will for me!

Reciprocity

- The extended discussions & exploration of positive vs. negative reinforcement confused me more than reading the descriptions and explanations in the chapter.

Empowerment

- I liked our more frequent small breaks. It made it easier for me to pay attention & stay on task.

Trust

- I had no idea that there were so many explanations for human behavior, but all of the information makes sense to me!
- Thank you so much for your honest feedback.

Challenge

- I do feel like I did work well collaborating because we were able to throw around ideas. It was great to get another person's perspective. It was also great to apply it to myself and areas I need improvement in.

Community

- I like the way today's class was set up- with more group collaboration and an organic schedule. It was fun to hear about my peer's Behavior Intervention Projects.

Responsibility

- I really enjoyed the fact that we got time today to reflect on our BIP's. This helped me realize that I left out some really important key terms. I also loved hearing other people's behavior intervention plans.

Figure 4. Written Examples Reflecting Students as Partners (SaP) Foundational Values in LE

Table 3

Categories and Themes from Content Analysis of Interactions

Student Faculty Relationship	Trust	Evaluative Feedback
		Knowledge enhancement
		Personal Information
	Student Engagement	Evaluative Feedback
		Knowledge Enhancement
		Gratitude
	Authenticity	Evaluative Feedback
		Knowledge Enhancement
		Personal Information
		Gratitude

The Personal Information category interactions suggest that the student trusts the faculty with personal information. The personal information displayed related to students' work outside of the classroom, narrative descriptions of their personal experiences, or what they have personally observed. The disclosure of personal information suggests that the student trusts the faculty member to positively receive the information given and use it as a building block for learning or exercise discretion. Examples of comments reflecting Personal Information include:

I haven't received my loan money yet so I can't afford books. I will go to the library but I might not have a book for class for a few weeks.

I was yawning in class not because I didn't enjoy the class but because I woke up at 5:00 AM. I'm tired but I feel like I understand how to do a case study now!

Student Engagement

The theme of student engagement is informed by the following categories: Evaluative Feedback, Knowledge Enhancement, and Gratitude. As mentioned above, Evaluative Feedback comments include students' criticism or complements of the lesson, suggestions for improvement, or information about learning style. Examples of comments reflecting Evaluative Feedback include:

I think it would have been neat to maybe have a group discussion board where people could come up with ideas on how to best help a student with a learning disability at home and in the classroom. This would just help brainstorm ideas for future reference.

I really liked hearing other peoples' behavior intervention because it opened my mind to all of the possible scenarios that you could use a BIP.

Being that I am taking this class online, I learn best my providing examples for assignments that are due. If I am confused about a certain task that is assigned to me, I hope to see examples of what my professor wants to see from me.

Comments reflecting Knowledge Enhancement display interactions where students actively seek help or information that further enhance their knowledge in the field. Both categories display interactions that suggest the student is actively engaged in their learning environment by informing the faculty what does and does not work for them pedagogically and actively asking information. Examples of comments reflecting Knowledge Enhancement include:

This week, I learned about the different support functions such as teaching, befriending, financial planning, employee assistance, behavioral support, in-home living assistance, community access and use, and health assistance. I would love to learn more about the fragile x syndrome, and hydrocephalus.

Personally, I loved the video and I think we should watch one every week because that's the best way I connect the information I read to what I am seeing. This week was a great week.

Interactions under the Gratitude category display students' comments in which they actively express their thanks. These interactions suggest that students are actively engaged in material being taught by informing the faculty member that they have positively received the information that was taught or given. Examples of comments reflecting Gratitude include:

Thank you for providing the scenarios online. I will utilize them throughout the course.

Thank you for working with me. Thank you for being so understanding and helpful about my financial situation.

Authenticity

The theme of authenticity is informed by all of the categories: Evaluative Feedback, Knowledge Enhancement, Personal Information, and Gratitude. An authentic teacher is one who "does not distance herself from the students by hiding herself behind a detached and impersonal teacher role but views herself as well as the students as human beings with intentions, feelings, and interests" (Laursen, 2005, p. 205). This authenticity must show through in all areas to demonstrate commitment growth and learning for both students and faculty. Students and faculty must each value the other and see a commitment to personal growth and learning. Each has intentions, feelings, and interests. Narrative text in all categories suggest there is authenticity in the interactions that appeals to the intention and interests of both the student and the faculty.

Student examples of Evaluative Feedback and Knowledge Enhancement demonstrate their intention to learn and demonstrate their own interest in the material to better their learning. At the same, the students give faculty information that can help them create and deliver improved lessons and material. Examples of Evaluative Feedback and Knowledge Enhancement that reflects both categories and intentions, feelings, and interest include:

I cannot think of any suggestions because I really enjoy how the online

class is laid out. The power points are great because I can use them while I read though the chapters. The quizzes are great because they are well throughout and not too long. My favorite part is the different learning modules you have us doing. Ever week is something new. The modules and assignments are never the same boring thing, it is always something new each week, and I love that.

The only suggestion I can think of is on the videos we have watching. I am not a big fan of watching a document from someone standing around giving a lecture or speech. I lose interest really fast and have to re-watch more than once. However, I am a big fan of watching a movie or a movie like document, such as the one we watch a while back about the young boy name Peter.

Examples of Personal Information that also reflects intentions, feelings, and interest.
I enjoyed this chapter because I come from a single parent home as well as divorced parents and it was good to read about programs and regulations regarding at risk children. I would've enjoyed to have had a discussion with the whole class just to see what others thought about not allowing at risk children to be eligible for special education programs.

I went to SCEC meeting right before class and found Dr. Allen's talk very encouraging. I would love to continue my education and be ABA.

Gratitude informs the theme of Authenticity through interactions where students are acknowledging the feelings of the faculty and their intention to help the students learn. Examples of Gratitude include:
I'm so excited about this class!

Thank you for explaining more about the observations. I like to know exactly what to do and what is expected, I like to ask questions.

Discussion and Implications for Practice

The findings of the first phase of this qualitative research study suggests the student comments and responses using the LE, as an ICT, demonstrates the development of student-faculty relationships in higher education across a semester. The second phase of the analysis suggests evidence of partnership through demonstrations of student voice, responsibility, and power and emphasis on process, as suggested essential is SaP literature. We suggest LE can create a classroom-scale approach to relationships and partnership between each student in a course and the teacher at the secondary or post-secondary level. The authentic use of LE values the student as a partner in their learning. LE inform partnership through the building of connections, fostering communication between students and faculty, and the development of relationships. Further, educator preparation that develops collaboration skills may support the induction and retention of special educators (Billingsley, 2004). Educators who understand and have experience with partnership principles of equality, choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity (Knight, 2009) and see themselves as participant collaborators might be more able to balance the demands of K-12 teaching.

Building on original applications for classroom teachers and special educators at the secondary level working with adolescents with learning disabilities we discuss the four categories identified in this study and their implications for teachers, aspiring secondary educators, and faculty seeking to create partnership-focused relationships with students to maximize both students' and faculty's learning.

Evaluative Feedback

The category of Evaluative Feedback is reflected most in the student interactions. The use of LE creates a space for student voice, going beyond traditional in-class or on-line course discussions, creating deep written dialogue with the faculty member valued by both students and faculty. However, not all students may have the social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) to know how to engage with faculty. The ideal zone of proximal development here would be one in which the student understands and reflects on their learning and can communicate effectively with faculty. As such, the use of LE offers an opportunity for guidance in reflection and communication with faculty. Weekly or bi-monthly use of LE provides useful formative assessment information to faculty to guide immediate course revisions or inform long-term iterative course design. We also see the LE as an ICT that fosters equality because all students are given explicit instruction on how the tool is used and have equal opportunity to interact with the faculty member. This written exercise becomes a routine in the course and part of the class culture.

Additionally, it is helpful in post-secondary classrooms to help students develop the skills to provide specific feedback, especially in educator preparation as this an important practice for effective teachers. We see in this study a much higher use of specific feedback over general feedback. This specific feedback is valued over general feedback in education. Providing feedback may seem an intuitive part of teaching, but is often left to the instructor to provide with little training or understanding of how to best use feedback to improve behavior and ultimately create long lasting reflective changes in practice. The use of LE or a similar practice can support growth in both. Giving effective feedback is learned through modeling and practice (Routman, 2014). The faculty can model this practice through LE.

Today's focus on students as partners is more innovative and connected to the student than Dewey's or Francis Parker's turn of the 20th century versions of "student-centered" instruction described by Larry Cuban (1993). Today, students in special education teacher prepration should be able to connect with their professors as partners in their learning. A partnership focused student-faculty relationship might be of assistance when students seek greater insight on a subject or wants to provide feedback on instruction.

Knowledge Enhancement

Learning Express-Ways (LE) and this research reflect a constructivist perspective, as students are asked to reflect on their own learning and take responsibility for asking questions and constructing their own meaning. Questions play an important role in learning for all students, especially aspiring educators. This study's adaptation of LE for higher education provides a model of the use of high-leverage and evidence-based practice. The use of LE can help model how these practices are interconnected through the opportunity for to reflect and ask questions on these topics in education coursework. The LE can help

continue the conversation on a topic and prompt faculty to revisit topics based on student feedback and comments.

We suggest the LE reflect partnership learning communities (see Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014). While it may seem that the use of LE is a discrete project or initiative, it builds community through continued use. Each time the LE is completed the student and faculty are offered the time to reflect and learn, reinforcing the sense of community and partnership.

Personal Information

Moreover, these findings suggest how LE support an inclusive, democratic classroom focused on equality while seeking to improve educator preparation. Teachers need to know Personal Information about the students they teach. Integrating this practice into pre-service educator coursework can improve student understanding of evidence-based practices, improving communication on learning and relationships with our students, understanding possible benefits to course learning and improving the likelihood of future educator use of evidence-based practices. This is an excellent experiential learning, actively engaging students in the learning process (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2009), and appropriate for future special educators.

Modeling supports for diverse learners with pre-service educators offers promise in the proper use and implementation of these and similar supports in future classrooms (Hattie, 2009). We suggest use of this instructional support tool can provide a myriad of benefits in the college classroom and for students with learning disabilities in K-12 education. *Learning Express-Ways*, in addition to being an evidence-based instructional support for students with learning disabilities, also supports Dewey's (1981) ideal view of educational equality as a support providing students a voice and a way to access "equal opportunity of development of his own capacities" (p. 219). Similar to instructional coaching where partnership is based on the principles of equality, opportunities for authentic dialogue, reflection, and teacher coach reciprocity, innovative educator preparation programs and courses (see Jim Knight) value experiential learning and expanded learning opportunities, including opportunities for students as partners in their learning. This can be a place where the aspiring educator can be practicing, experiencing, and reflecting on themselves in the role of teacher. Cook-Sather (2006) argues for the need and power of student voice in actively shaping their education and for partnership between university faculty and students. "An allusion to the literal absence of student voices from discussions of educational policy and practice, 'voice' also asks us to understand sound, specifically speaking, as representative of presence, participation, and power of individuals and/or of a collective and, in particular, to understand all of these in terms of relationship—to other people, to institutions, to practices.

Thus 'student voice' as a term asks us to connect the sound of students speaking not only with those students experiencing meaningful, acknowledged presence but also with their having the power to influence analyses of, decisions about, and practices in schools. (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 4)" Further, student voice must be heard and valued to establish student-teacher relationships in higher education (Cook-Sather, 2006). Student voice is valued in the use of LE through the

important placed on the feedback and comments of students. LE were designed to recognize and value the student as part of the learning process (Lenz, Adams, & Fisher, 1994). As an ICT, the communication is focused on the instruction and learning. This process, and the importance of feedback and reflection must be understood by both the students and the faculty using LE before collaborative use of the tool can begin, ensuring the student is seen as a partner.

Gratitude

Although only a small percentage of the overall written comments recorded on the LE expressed gratitude, of note is the role that Gratitude plays for both the giver and receiver. Positive psychology researchers are focusing on the benefits of feeling and expressing gratitude. Gratitude is a function of our attention. Further, researchers at the University of Massachusetts (2017) explain,

> Our thoughts can actually trigger physiological changes in our body that affect our mental and physical health. Basically, what you think affects how you feel (both emotionally and physically). So, if you increase your positive thoughts, like gratitude, you can increase your subjective sense of well-being as well as, perhaps, objective measures of physical health (like fewer symptoms of illness and increased immune functioning. (n.p.)

When we express our gratitude to others, it helps both the giver and receiver feel happier (Emmons, 2007). By both people focusing on the positive things, it helps the stressors in our lives feel less significant and strengthens our relationship

(O'Connell, O'Shea, & Gallagher, 2017). Thus gratitude plays a role in supporting the student-teacher relationship.

Considerations for Implementation

The use of LE in online instruction does reflect similar relational aspects as one would expect in face-to-face instruction. This is noteworthy, as online instruction has been viewed as having many barriers to overcome to be effective (Bennett & Lockyer, 2004). The only real difference was that we found much lower percentages of students in the face-to-face class writing Knowledge Enhancement focused interactions than in the on-line section. This may indicate there was less need for this when the faculty member is physically present. The quantity and quality of the interactions indicate student-teacher relationships are achievable in online environments. Research on getting started with students as partners suggest starting small (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014). For faculty already implementing and ICT, LE or other, this may just mean reflecting on your current practice and determining how the partnership. Additionally, the tool should not be used in isolation, but as part of an ongoing set of assessment and communication strategies. Ideally, these are determined and coordinated at the program level in educator preparation to maximize the content and experiential learning and prevent duplication of efforts across coursework. As partnership is defined as a process, practitioners should be prepared for the changes and improvements from working and learning in partnership learning communities. Figure 5 illustrates the comparison on these themes.
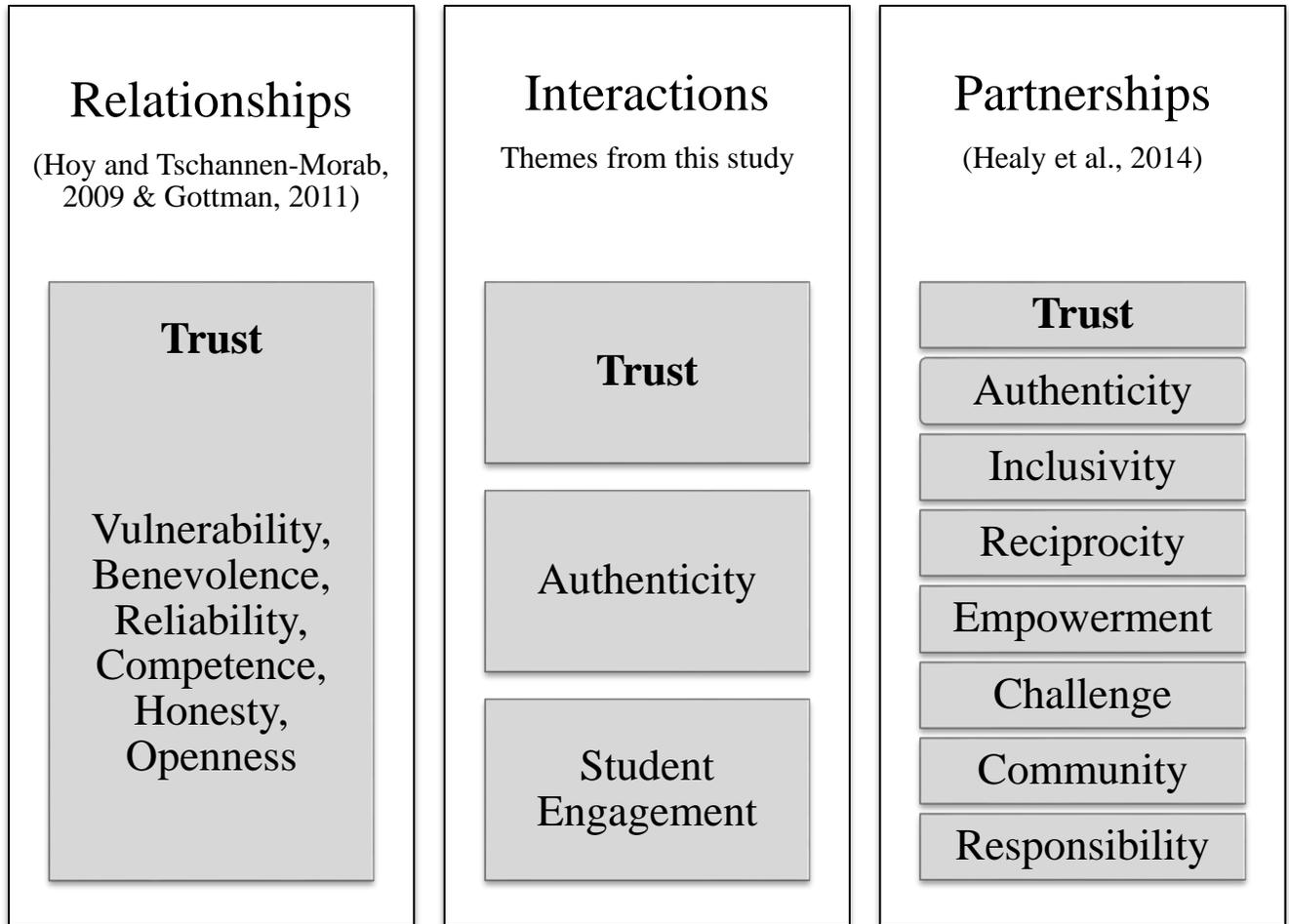
Relationships	Interactions	Partnerships
(Hoy and Tschannen-Morab, 2009 & Gottman, 2011)	Themes from this study	(Healy et al., 2014)
Trust	**Trust**	**Trust**
		Authenticity
		Inclusivity
Vulnerability, Benevolence, Reliability, Competence, Honesty, Openness	Authenticity	Reciprocity
		Empowerment
		Challenge
	Student Engagement	Community
		Responsibility

Figure 5. Comparison of themes: Relationships, interactions, and partnerships

Limitations

Barriers to the implementation of LE may include time, interest, and context. The act of reading and responding does take time and is an investment in learning, both for the teacher and the students. This is probably not an ICT that can be used in just any special education teacher preparation course with any number of students. There has to be faculty interest and a willingness for working with students as partners and to accept and respond to evaluative feedback (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felton, 2014). These findings also reflect the long-standing connection and commitment to clinical practice and experiential learning in educator preparation. As specialized coursework that is pre-professional, the student-teacher interactions are possibly more authentic and purposeful. The engagement is implied in self-selection of a course likely specific to a major or career choice. The interest has to be there for the interactions to have depth and commitment to mastery of new knowledge and skills. If we consider partnership as a process, then this example of practice and modeling of LE is an example of an ICT that supports the process of developing students as partners. However, there are still adjustments that would strengthen the role and support of partnership development. Additional data, such as written reflections on the use of the

tool at the end of the semester could better inform the study and practice.

Conclusion

The results of this study provide evidence suggesting a formal communication tool, the *Learning Express-Ways*, fosters student-faculty relationships through interactions that reflect and/or build trust. "The ultimate result of a good communication system is that it should help you know and understand your student's learning needs and promote responsiveness to those needs (Lenz & Deshler, 2004, p 147)." As such, we feel this tool can be used to realize these goals in any higher education coursework in face-to-face and online formats, not just special educator preparation courses. Like Gottman's (2011) research on personal relationships, trust is foundation in partnerships. Students need to trust that their information, reflection, and learning are protected and valued by faculty. Likewise, student-centered faculty are driven by student learning and interest.

Learning Express-Ways are one example of how private, written interactions between a student and teacher in special education pre-service coursework can create classroom-scale student-teacher relationships by creating and/or enhancing trust, student engagement, and authenticity. These findings align with Healey, Flint, and Harrington's (2014) framework for students as partners as the themes of authenticity and trust are explicitly listed as values. Further, our operational definition of student engagement reflects some of the authors' other key conceptual factors including: responsibility, empowerment, and community also valued in the literature on students as partners. Student voice and empowerment are also central to the

development of the relationship through opportunities to reflect on their own learning and the faculty pedagogy as they master course content. The LE can be adapted for other coursework if care is given to uphold the foundational values of the ICT. However, more research is needed to understand this generalization and the teacher/faculty role. Future research is also needed to explore adaptations of LE or the creation of other ICTs for other higher education coursework, particularly outside of the field of education.

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