Fired up instead of burning out: Developing a tool to facilitate teacher leadership for mid-career teachers

Tabetha Bernstein-Danis

Kathleen Stanfa

Casey Horvath

Dawn Laubner

Abstract

Mid-career teachers are at a pivotal point in their practitioner journeys when they can either shift towards winding down in preparation for retirement or ramping up to assume new teacher-leadership roles. Opportunities to become teacher-leaders can revitalize mid-career educators' practice in ways that ultimately benefit their schools and districts (Chapman et al., 2024; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This paper introduces a newly developed tool, the SAGE Protocol, which was designed to help mid-career teachers in a practitioner Ed.D. program find their identities as action researchers and teacher leaders. Examples of the ways merging practitioner-scholars (EPS) in an Ed.D. program demonstrate teacher leadership offer insight into what it can look like in the contexts of practitioners' daily working lives.

About the Authors

Tabetha Bernstein-Danis, Ph.D. Department Chair, Special Education Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

Kathleen Stanfa, Ph.D. Professor, Special Education Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

Casey Horvath Special Education Consultant and Adjunct Professor Acorns to Oaks Psychological Services, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania Dawn Laubner German/Social Studies Teacher East Penn School District

Direct correspondence to bernstein@kutztown.edu.

Introduction

Experienced and passionate mid-career teachers are invaluable to students, colleagues, and school communities. For our purposes here, we define mid-career teachers as educators that have at least five years of experience, have moved beyond the novice phase, and have become skilled practitioners, often serving as informal mentors and curriculum leaders in their schools. These teachers expect to continue in the field for at least five more years and seek meaningful ways to expand their impact without leaving the classroom. They frequently explore new instructional approaches, embrace challenges with more confidence than they did earlier in their careers, and draw upon deep pedagogical expertise to meet the diverse needs of their students. They are also well-positioned to provide school-based leadership by mentoring new teachers, developing innovative programs, and reducing the gap between research and practice by conducting and sharing the findings of action research as part of school-based professional development (Chapman, 2024; Jefferson et al., 2024; Lowe et al., 2019; State et al., 2019).

Yet their leadership potential is often underutilized. Advancement in PK-12 education typically involves leaving the classroom for administrative or academic roles - the traditional pathways associated with doctoral study. In this manuscript, we introduce a reflective tool, the Scholar Advocate Guided Engagement (SAGE) Protocol, that we developed to support mid-career teachers in shaping their teacher-leader identities. The tool emerged from work with students enrolled in a practitioner-focused doctoral program aligned with the Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED). Creating intentional, flexible pathways for mid-career teachers to demonstrate leadership can reignite enthusiasm and support retention. These teachers have distinct professional needs from their early-career counterparts, particularly when they assume peer leadership roles such as providing school-based professional development (e.g., Chapman, 2024; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2011). The SAGE Protocol is grounded in practitioner inquiry and supported by emerging frameworks in scholarly literature. Early findings from our use suggest the tool has the potential to guide mid-career educators in articulating their leadership goals and engaging in school-based change.

Conceptual Framework

A growing body of literature explores how Emerging Practitioner-Scholars (referred to as EPS in this manuscript) in Ed.D. programs reflect on their own positionality and navigate shifting professional identities as they transition from knowledge consumers to knowledge producers (Becton et al., 2020; Czerniawski, 2023; Flood, 2024; Storey & Fletcher, 2023). CPED-aligned Ed.D. programs culminate in a Dissertation in Practice (DiP) - a capstone designed not only to contribute to academic knowledge, but also to drive meaningful change within practitioners' own educational contexts where they are "credible insiders" (Chapman, 2024) who can adapt new learning to communities where they are already accepted as members. This model invites educators to redefine leadership as a locally situated, inquiry-driven endeavor.

Among these scholars, Becton et al. (2020) offer a compelling framework grounded in action research and advocacy. They outline four practitioner-leadership profiles: Coalition Builders, Visionary Leaders, Vocal Risk-Takers, and Social Justice Champions. These profiles reflect different ways educators might address challenges and enact leadership within their school communities. Rather than promoting a singular model, the framework encourages flexibility, allowing educators to adopt different profiles depending upon the context or nature of the challenge they are addressing.

Engaging in scholarship aimed at creating meaningful change in schools requires EPS to be equipped with the tools and skills that allow them to identify problems of practice and investigate them in ways that lead to actionable solutions. Faculty in Ed.D. programs play a critical role in supporting this development by intentionally structuring and sequencing coursework to build relevant skills (Flood, 2024); valuing the lived experiences of doctoral candidates, whose research questions often emerge from workplace observations rather than solely from gaps in the literature (Donaghue & Adams, 2023; Flood 2024); and preparing candidates to navigate the challenges they may encounter in their professional settings, including instances of anti-intellectualism among colleagues and supervisors (Czerniawski, 2022). Additionally, faculty should teach

research approaches well-suited to insider contexts, such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) - a collaborative, cyclical process in which educators systematically investigate issues within their classrooms or schools, implement changes, and reflect on outcomes to inform ongoing practice (DeMartino and Renn, 2023).

The SAGE Protocol

In response to the need for structured reflection and identity development in Ed.D. programs, we created the Scholar Advocate Guided Engagement (SAGE) Protocol. This tool uses adaptive questioning and discussion prompts to help faculty and candidates in Ed.D. programs engage in productive conversations that put research into action. The approach builds on the CPED Scholar Activist Framework developed by Becton et al. (2020) and expanded by Storey and Fletcher (2023) and utilizes discussion as a powerful tool in shaping EPS identities (Donaghue & Adams, 2023). According to the model, scholar activism work typically falls within four roles which we define in Table 1.

These profiles emerge from a body of literature that positions research as a form of activism when it is used to ignite practical change to improve the lives of participants. We have chosen to use the term "advocate" while acknowledging that we should use caution regarding conflation of terms like "activist" and "advocate" (Storey & Fletcher, 2023). This decision responds to the common misconception that "activism" entails civil disobedience and could evoke images of current protests in the media (e.g., protests against Tesla) and clashes with law enforcement. Teachers may feel particularly vulnerable during political moments when educators' actions are being scrutinized, so carrying a label with potential for misinterpretation could pose a barrier to advancing their valuable ideas. Advocacy, on the other hand, is a term that, in its vernacular usage, more readily aligns with what the public expects teachers to do for their students.

Teachers conducting research on or about practices in their schools (like most of the learning associates in our Ed.D. program) may already feel at risk for backlash if their research yields results administrators view as unflattering to the school or district (Czerniawski, 2023; Storey & Fletcher, 2023). It is our aim to use the SAGE Protocol to help teachers identify issues in their schools and learn to use research to create positive change, which will ultimately require buy-in from administrators and families in their communities.

Meant to be used with EPS in Ed.D. programs who are at the beginning, middle, and end of their dissertations, the tool is intended to guide discussions that will help faculty advisors co-develop roadmaps with their advisees that envision ways research can facilitate action in PK-12 schools. It is important to note that aspects of all four roles are likely relevant for all EPS and may change over the course of their research. For example, EPS may become more vocal about issues after they've deepened their understanding and gathered evidence to support their positions through research.

The tool is ideally intended for use across different courses in an Ed.D. program as EPS work on developing their Dissertations in Practice (DiP) and for private consultation between EPS and university faculty. Once EPS are comfortable using the part of the tool relevant to their current stage of research, this tool can also be used for peer feedback sessions and ongoing self-evaluation. Appendix A provides the Middle: Data Collection and Writing segment of the protocol since that was the section used for the findings referenced in this paper. Next steps for the protocol include considering ways to adapt it as part of an artificial intelligence (AI) chat model to allow more effective independent use of the tool.

Using the SAGE Protocol

To test the Protocol, the four authors - two university faculty (Authors 1 and 2) and two Ed.D. candidates (Author 3, a special education consultant and Author 4, a high school world language teacher) - used the prototype protocol in preparation for a joint presentation at the 2024 CPED Convening in Honolulu, Hawaii. Prior to the convening, each faculty member partnered with one of the Ed.D. candidates to conduct a protocol-guided conversation focused on the candidate's DiP. These conversations were structured to clarify each candidate's evolving leadership identity, identify the advocacy strategies most aligned with their school context, and move them forward in their research process. The pairs then reflected on the experience and offered feedback to improve clarity, adaptability, and usability of the protocol. Their insights informed on-

Table 1

Defining the Four CPED Scholar Activist Profiles

Profile	Description	Teachers in this role identify/consider
Coalition Builder	The coalition builder brings people together to work towards mutual goals.	• their professional and personal relationships with other individuals within the community who can be part of their network • how the context of their work situation allows them to carve out time and space for collaborative work
Vocal Risk Taker	The vocal risk taker amplifies critical issues publicly and speaks out regarding structures that privilege some groups of people over others.	• their willingness to face opposition and criticism for addressing a potentially controversial issue • job security (e.g., tenure) and their ability to take risks at work • access to or the ability to gather sufficient information about the problem to provide convincing evidence and dispel skepticism • if they are not part of the group of individuals marginalized by the problem, how they will consult and collaborate with individuals with lived experience • potential risk factors for themselves if they are part of the group that has been marginalized
Social Justice Champion	The social justice champion identifies equity issues in the context of their workplace and advocates for more equitable practices.	• if the issue is one that can be changed but is not currently being addressed • if the issue is one directly related to marginalization of a group of people within their context (e.g., at their school or for the families of their students) • if the issue is causing harm and will continue to cause harm unless individuals in the organization make active changes
Visionary Leader	The visionary leader identifies innovative and creative ways to address issues and forge opportunities.	• issues within their organization that have not been effectively addressed in conventional ways • novel or innovative ideas for how to address those issues • connections among one or more issues that have not been previously identified and ways these connections lead to new insights about the issues

going tool development and laid the groundwork for further refinement of the protocol.

After returning from the conference, the two faculty members introduced the SAGE Protocol to members of the current Ed.D. cohort during a dissertation writing retreat for current Ed.D. candidates. The aim was to help candidates reflect on their EPS identities, identify the leadership profiles they most aligned with, and articulate the next steps in the DiP.

The following section highlights the experiences of the two faculty members as they implemented the SAGE Protocol with Ed.D. candidates during a dissertation writing workshop. The structured conversations helped these EPS recognize how they were already embedding advocacy, innovation, and risk-taking into their work, often without consciously identifying their actions as leadership. (Please note that while most EPS in the Ed.D. program are PK-12 educators, some work in other educational settings, including universities and nonprofits.)

The section concludes with reflections from the two Ed.D. candidate co-authors, who describe how engaging with the protocol has fostered their growth as mid-career educators and helped shape their evolving identities as EPS.

Author 1's Experience in the Writing Workshop

Author 1 used the protocol with the following EPS: (1) a special education teacher who started an inclusive book writing club; (2) a community college mathematics developmental educator who wanted her adult learners to develop self-regulation and goal setting skills; (3) a middle school mathematics teacher who was exploring the self-efficacy beliefs of other mathematics teachers; (4) a middle school success coach building a professional learning community (PLC) to help her colleagues employ instructional practices that are culturally responsive to their students' lives; and (5) a music educator working with a history educator to incorporate soundscapes into history lessons to foster deeper engagement with learning history. Each of these teachers had moments during the discussion that led to illuminating insights about their work and they became visibly excited as they discussed their projects, giving deeply meaningful responses to the questions in the protocol.

For example, the music teacher shared her belief in the power of music to convey emotion, build empathy in students, and help them appreciate perspectives that may be different from their own. She cited the sensory experience of sound as an important element for connecting with history content that transcends reading alone. As the conversation progressed, she identified with both the Social Justice Champion and Visionary Leader profiles. She revealed that sometimes other educators give her "some flack" for her novel teaching approaches, asking why she bothers. Her response to such criticism is to affirm that "[her] students are better for it" and that "they're worth it." Her convictions about the potential for music to create connections between content and emotion help her innovate and find ways to spark genuine engagement in students about the content they are learning.

Visionary Leader and Social Justice Champion emerged as popular roles for other EPS as well. For example, the special education teacher who started an inclusive book writing program also felt most affinity with these identities. She shared how she had recruited a student in the autistic support room for her book club and helped him find a niche that made him eager to write despite his initial reluctance. She shared that the first day the student had said: "I'm not doing it. Do I look like an author to you?" In return she told him he did look like an author to her and prompted him to consider the type of book he might want to write. He replied that "maybe I could be a chef" and "maybe I could write a cookbook," which was exactly what he ended up doing. This teacher also managed to secure grant funding for her book writing club, which helped her gain support with her administration because she was bringing in money rather than asking for money.

The two highlighted stories here show how, far from stagnating and falling into a rut, veteran teachers can and should continue to experiment and innovate in their classrooms and how some of these innovative approaches have the potential to inspire colleagues and students alike.

Author 2's Experience in the Writing Workshop

Author 2 used the protocol with two EPS: (1) a middle school teacher conducting classroom-based interventions and (2) a higher education Student Success Coor-

dinator tasked with supporting student retention and engagement.

Both EPS had collected data and were at the data analysis stage. Their conversations with Author 2 surfaced three common themes: (1) the importance of collaboration and networking; (2) how personal and leadership growth led to their changing identities; and (3) excitement and surprises along the research journey.

Some of those surprises included the Student Success Center coordinator realizing she identifies with the Vocal Risk Taker profile as well as with the Coalition Builder role. The conversation guided by the protocol helped highlight her comfort in advocating for programs and building networks forcollaboration. Over the course of the discussion, Author 2 also pointed out how the EPS was stepping into a Visionary Leadership role, telling her she was "making really profound changes" through her advocacy. The conversation helped the EPS view herself as someone capable of rallying support and asserting leadership to secure the resources needed for student success.

Author 3's Reflection on Using the Protocol

Author 3 was initially skeptical about how helpful the protocol would be. However, as she observed Author 4 engage in use of the protocol with Author 1, her thoughts shifted. She began thinking: "Wow, she is so lucky! She is actually going to leave this meeting with new ideas and directions." She appreciated the great interactive feedback Author 4 received and how well-positioned she now was to turn those ideas around in her writing. At the same time, Author 3 worried that her own conversation using the protocol would be less productive.

She expressed that her downfall was believing everyone else's work was more meaningful and important than anything she could be doing and that "other people are researchers, not me."

That began to change a few minutes into the discussion, when things she had not previously considered began to emerge and new directions began to unfold. She realized the process of asking questions she already knew the answer to was not meant for her to gather information; it was meant for her to reflect on her work so far. Answering these questions and then

moving the discussion in new directions in response to the questions opened previously unidentified avenues for her work. She found herself producing a whole page of notes with fresh and creative ideas to try.

Another unexpected surprise came as the team began talking about her role as a researcher. She was finally able to recognize and acknowledge that she was just that - a researcher who was making a difference in her own little corner of the educational world. She was investigating a real problem and identifying real solutions. How empowering and motivating it was to finally acknowledge and feel as though she, too, could lay claim to a researcher identity!

Author 4's Reflection on Using the Protocol

Author 4's Ed.D. journey and engagement in action research have revitalized her teaching practice. After 25 years in the classroom, she embarked on the path to an Ed.D. to advance her credentials and reignite her passion for teaching in her place of practice. She saw too many mid-career educators fall into burnout and cynicism and was determined not to become another voice of frustration. Instead, through becoming an EPS she feels she's found her place as a leader engaged in solutions-driven change.

The SAGE protocol's themes of practitioner scholarship, advocacy through research, contextual grounding, and meaningful engagement with others who want to advance new ideas have been pivotal in reshaping her practice and mindset. As an EPS, she has learned to critically engage with research and analyze best practices that could be applied directly to her classroom and school community, helping to ameliorate the divide that has traditionally existed between research and practice (Chapman, 2024; State et al., 2019).

The transformative coursework has helped her move beyond surface-level ideas to deeper equity-driven, data-informed decision-making. She found herself in the role of Social Justice Champion as she learned to advocate for multilingual learners in social studies classrooms and sought to document and amplify teachers' voices to help push structural changes.

As a mid-career educator, she had previously experienced disillusionment as her ideals clashed with institutional realities. The SAGE Protocol approach ground-

ed her and helped her find pathways to advocate for equity, access, and student empowerment through meaningful, research-driven change.

Through collaborative inquiry, she engaged with colleagues, students, and the data she collected via ethnographic interviews and survey research. These processes helped her find her "why" again, making her work feel purposeful instead of routine and mundane. The SAGE Protocol has helped her reclaim agency over her personal growth and avoid stagnation and feelings of hopelessness. She now embraces her role as a mentor, advocate, and leader in transforming the educational landscape both within and beyond the walls of her place of practice.

Discussion

In an era marked by teacher shortages and burnout, the voices of mid-career educators are frequently overlooked. They need opportunities to define their professional identities, capture the spark of innovation, and remain committed to their work. These stories exemplify how mid-career educators, rather than burning out, can use reflective tools like the SAGE Protocol to recognize and deepen their leadership practices. They demonstrate not only capacity for innovation, but also a fierce commitment to student-centered change.

Professional development offers a key venue for mid-career educators in Ed.D. programs to flex their new learning and skill sets as EPS. The opportunity to engage in action research can stimulate the mid-career teacher's professional trajectory and sharing the results of this research with colleagues offers the potential for them to showcase their emergence as teacher leaders. Usually top-down in nature, schools would benefit from encouraging experienced teachers to take on new responsibilities and offer their own ideas about ways to design creative solutions for challenges schools face. Practitioner-focused Ed.D. programs not only benefit the individual educators but also the schools and communities they serve. The leadership these teachers bring can revitalize schools from the inside out.

The four profiles provide guidance to help EPS find their personalized pathways for becoming school-based leaders. Social Justice Champions help shed light on inequities that institutions have failed to recognize

or effectively address. Vocal Risk Takers speak out with courage about those inequities while others remain silent. Visionary Leaders provide new ways to frame issues and creatively forge novel connections among ideas. Finally, Coalition Builders develop the networks of individuals who will do the necessary work to achieve desired outcomes. Teachers are the ones on the ground, doing the day-to-day work in classrooms that directly impacts students. Recognizing teachers as the individuals most directly connected to school-level change, schools should embrace the journey of EPS as they gain comfort in these roles and learn to use action research as a starting point for creating professional development tailored to their own educational communities.

As more experienced teachers join Ed.D. programs, they are redefining the role of the mid-career educator. In turn, schools and districts should reconsider their approaches to professional development (PD). District PD often entails one-size-fits-all, one-time events and lectures provided by expensive outside consultants (Barrett & Pas, 2020; Darling Hammond et al., 2017; State et al., 2019). This type of PD might raise knowledge levels, but it usually has little impact on changing existing teacher practices (Coles et al., 2015; Simonsen et al., 2008). Rather than focusing on expensive and less effective approaches, schools would benefit from providing PD to experienced teachers that helps them assume coaching roles with their early career counterparts and offers them the chance to try new ideas that can then be shared with others (Barrett & Pas, 2020; Chapman et al., 2024; Darling-Hammond et al, 2017).

Veteran teachers have typically achieved self-efficacy in their own classrooms, having mastered foundational teaching and classroom management skills and demonstrated persistence in the face of challenges over time (Milner, 2002). They are primed and ready to seek new horizons, especially those opportunities that position them to support their novice colleagues. It typically takes multiple weeks of engagement in new practices along with consultation, coaching, and feedback on performance for PD to lead to sustained, substantive changes in practice (Ramsey et al., 2022). As ongoing, site-based members of the school community, experienced teachers can provide the sustained, contextually-driven intensive support that is crucial for

the learning and retention of newer teachers who may grapple with implementation of evidence-based practices and classroom management, particularly in areas such as special education (Chapman et al., 2024; Milner, 2002; Ramsey et al., 2021; Simonsen et al., 2008; State et al., 2019).

Teachers face numerous barriers to quality professional development including cost, time, distance, and lack of resources such as substitute teachers and administrative support to travel to conferences or workshops (Barrett & Pas, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; State et al., 2019; Toman & Maag, 2024). District and school administrators could ultimately save money and build a deep infrastructure of capacity within their schools by recognizing veteran teachers as a resource for providing embedded PD rather than just additional participants in a PD provided by outside groups.

Author 3 provides an example from her own practice about what practitioner-led PD can look like in action. She was able to transform her research into a professional development module that she implemented in the district where she works.

She conducted a 3-hour session where she shared data from her dissertation, using her findings to engage with staff and help them understand the reasons behind necessary changes to classroom management practices. In addition to the presentation, she provided them with a survey to request additional follow-up consultations for the purpose of coaching them in turning around these practices in their own classrooms. As an existing district employee, she has the ability to spend multiple weeks providing this support as part of her job, saving the district money and providing the follow-up that has been shown through research to make professional development meaningful and impactful Simonsen et al., 2008).

Tools like the SAGE Protocol can facilitate teachers' self-discovery journey as they imagine their next steps in their careers. Recommendations for future research and programming include the possibility of establishing a mastery-level state certification designation for practitioner-scholars and teacher leaders (similar to National Board Certification); expanding opportunities for experienced teachers to learn to create and lead professional development, including ongoing coach-

ing of newer colleagues; and establishing a state-level council or think tank of experienced teachers from different disciplines and grade levels to share insights and provide guidance on policy and curriculum development. Experienced teachers have much to offer and with the right support, mid-career can be a time of flourishing and growth rather than winding down and burning out.

References

Barrett, C. A., & Pas, E. T. (2020). A cost analysis of traditional professional development and coaching structures in schools. *Prevention Science*, *21*(5), 604–614. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-020-01115-5

Becton, Y. J., Bogiages, C., D'Amico, L., Lilly, T., Currin, E., Jeffries, R., & Tamim, S. (2020). An emerging framework for the EdD activist. *Impacting Education: Journal on Transforming Professional Practice, 5*(2), 43–54.

Chapman, L., Fransko, K., & Young, L. (2024). "Reclaiming" special education's professional practice doctorate: Strengthening the pipeline of special education leaders. *Journal of Education Human Resources, 42*(4), 580–604. https://doi.org/10.3138/jehr-2022-0033

Coles, E. K., Owens, J. S., Serrano, V. J., Slavec, J., & Evans, S. W. (2015). From consultation to student outcomes: The role of teacher knowledge, skills, and beliefs in increasing integrity in classroom management strategies. *School Mental Health: A Multidisciplinary Research and Practice Journal, 7*(1), 34–48. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-015-9143-2

Czerniawski, G. (2023). Power, positionality and practitioner research: Schoolteachers' experiences of professional doctorates in education. *British Educational Research Journal, 49*, 1372–1386. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3902

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Day, C., & Qing Gu. (2009). Veteran teachers: commitment, resilience and quality retention. *Teachers & Teaching, 15*(4), 441–457. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600903057211

Donaghue, H., & Adams, G. (2023). The role of situated talk in developing doctoral students' researcher identities. *Studies in Continuing Education, 47*(1), 68 – 87. https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2023.2274925

DeMartino, L., & Renn, D. G. (2023). Honor, build, and restructure: Preparing transformative school leaders as equitable changemakers through doctoral research methods courses. *Impacting Education: Journal on Transforming Professional Practice, 8*(2), 30–35.

Flood, L.D. (2024). Centering the scholarly practitioner within the EdD. *Impacting Education: Journal on Transforming Professional Practice, 9*(2), 31-33. https://doi.org/10.5195/ie.2024.369

Jefferson, S., Gray, C., & Lowe, G. (2024). Comfort in the role: The core of positive veteran teachers. *Education Sciences, 14*(9), 998. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14090998

Lowe, G., Gray, C., Prout, P., Jefferson, S., & Shaw, T. (2019). Still keen and committed: Piloting an instrument for identifying positive veteran teachers. *Teachers & Teaching, 25*(4), 418 - 433. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2019.1621829

Milner, H. R. (2002). A case study of an experienced English teacher's self-efficacy and persistence through "crisis" situations: Theoretical and practical considerations. *The High School Journal, 86*(1), 28–35.

Ramsey, K. L., Smith, S. D., Hansen, L. K., Mohn, R. S., Walbridge, F. C., Barajas, K. G., Ellis, B. M., & Dufrene, B. A. (2022). Internalization of behavior management skills among teachers in a specialized school serving students with neurodevelopmental disorders. *Behavior Modification, 46*(4), 863–893. DOI:10.1177/01454455211010708

Simonsen, B., Fairbanks, S., Briesch, A., Myers, D., & Sugai, G. (2008). Evidence-based practices in classroom management: Considerations for research to practice. *Education & Treatment of Children*, *31*(3), 351–380.

State, T. M., Simonsen, B., Hirn, R. G., Wills, H. (2019). Bridging the research-to practice gap through effective professional development for teachers working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 44*(2), 107–116.

Storey, V., & Fletcher, R. (2023). Developing scholar activists: The role of the EdD. *Impacting Education: Journal on Transforming Professional Practice, 8*(1), 1–8.

Taylor, M., Yates, A., Meyer, L. H., & Kinsella, P. (2011). Teacher professional leadership in support of teacher professional development. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 27*(1), 85–94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.07.005

Toman, G., & Maag, J. W. (2024). A survey of rural special education teachers' professional development experiences. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 43*(3), 150–160.

B. Middle: Data Collection and Writing

These questions are intended to support the advisement of doctoral candidates in an ongoing manner throughout data collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissertation writing. They guide conversations about initial findings, difficulties encountered, and new insights gained during the dissertation process. The questions help emerging practitioner-scholars shape the direction of their research and engage in ongoing assessment about how that work is going. They also offer the opportunity for emerging practitioner-scholars to revisit how their identities align with one or more of the four profiles over time.

Social Justice Champion

A. Are you changing awareness about the issue in your organization through your research?
- How has your research increased awareness? Why do you think that?
- What might it take to move from awareness to action? What would that look like?
- Who could help move the organization from awareness to action? How might they help?

B. Have you gathered data that demonstrates the problem is causing harm?
- What will you do with this data? With whom might you need to share it? (Who might be in a position to act on this data?)
- What might you do if there is evidence of immediate, active harm that cannot wait until you finish your dissertation to be addressed?

C. What is your plan to address possible backlash from your school or district to evidence that a practice or situation causes harm (especially if it might negatively affect the public image of the school or district)?
- Who is in a position of power and might help you in response to such backlash? How might they help you?
- How might you know if your research is having unintended negative effects on those marginalized by the issue? How could you ameliorate such effects?

Vocal Risk-Taker

A. What allies and collaborators have emerged as a result of your amplification of this issue?
- How are you working (or how do you intend to work) with these individuals?
- What opposition have you faced so far? How did you contend with that opposition?
- How have/might your allies and collaborators assist(ed) in addressing opposition?
- What is your plan if you feel threatened or at risk for punitive action as a result of your research?

B. If you are not part of the group of individuals marginalized by the problem:
- How have you worked collaboratively with the marginalized community? Who are your key contact persons and what insights are they offering you?
- How have you developed insight into the community's perspective on the issue? What perspectives might be missing and how can you fill in those blanks?
- How are you currently grappling with your own positionality in response to your work within the marginalized community?

C. If you are part of the group of individuals marginalized by the problem:
- Who else have you connected within the community and what commonalities have you found across your experiences?

- How are you situating your own lived experience within the broader lived experiences of others in the marginalized community and what does that mean for the next steps in your work?

D. What do your emerging findings indicate as features of the issue most in need of amplification?
  - Why have you selected those features of the issue?
  - Who needs to know about these findings?
  - How will you communicate that message to them in a way that will make them care?
  - Who might help with those efforts? How will they help?

Visionary Leader

A. What is new about your ideas?
  - How are your ideas different from what has been proposed in the past?

B. How has the reception to your ideas been so far?
  - Who has been supportive? Who has been unsupportive? Why?
  - What has changed since your proposal about your more novel or innovative ideas?
  - How has your data collection impacted or changed the way you think the problem needs to be addressed?

C. What more have you learned about the issue as a result of your research?
  - What findings support your initial conjectures?
  - What has been surprising or unexpected in your findings?
  - How might you use new information to help others view the issue differently?

D. If you have lived experience that is uncharacteristic of most previous researchers of the problem, how has your lived experience shaped the way you view the issue?
  - How might you use those insights to help those without lived experience recognize their own blind spots about the issue?
  - How have you connected with others who also have lived experience to enrich this previously overlooked or under-acknowledged perspective?

Coalition Builder

A. What connections have you built so far among your colleagues as a result of your research? What about the broader community in which your organization is situated?

B. What does your existing support network look like? Who is part of the network and what role does each individual have?
  - How has this network helped you work towards achieving your project goal?
  - What role might this network play as you try to put the results of your research into action once you've completed your dissertation?

C. What has the collaborative work related to your research looked like?
  - What aspects of the research have been collaborative? What does that collaboration look like?
  - What have you learned about the issue from working collaboratively with others?
  - How are you establishing this network in a more permanent way to serve as a support structure for ongoing implementation of action steps that emerge as important in light of your research?