

# Poetry in America for Educators: Pilot Program Evaluation and Recommendations for Growth

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## Executive Summary

Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE) is a new teacher professional development program from the educational media nonprofit Verse Video Education that seeks to equip middle and high school teachers with content, skills, and techniques for reading and teaching poetry—a genre that often induces anxiety in students and teachers alike—as well as complex texts of all kinds. **This report outlines key findings and recommendations following an evaluation of the October 2022 PIAE pilot, and it makes market research-informed recommendations for boosting enrollment in the program in the future.**

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This report addresses the following research questions:

#### *Program Evaluation Questions*

1. How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program? How does PIAE compare to past professional development experiences?
2. What impact did the program have on educators? To what extent do participants plan to use what they learned in their own classrooms/schools?

#### *Market Research Questions*

3. What are best practices for boosting enrollment in professional development programs? How can PIAE reduce existing barriers to participation in educator professional development?

### METHODS

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to investigate the questions above. The findings and recommendations in this report primarily draw on feedback from PIAE pilot participants (collected via an exit survey and follow-up interviews), as well from individuals who work for other professional development provider organizations (collected via informational interviews).

### KEY FINDINGS

- **PIAE participants enjoyed their experience in the program and indicated that they are highly likely to translate content and techniques encountered during the program into practice.** Findings for Questions 1 and 2 outline in greater detail what pilot participants valued and enjoyed, as well as what they thought could be improved.
- **While there was no consensus among interviewees from other professional development organizations about ways to boost enrollment in synchronous programming, pilot participants were fairly united in their recommendations.** Question 3 findings lay out possible avenues for boosting enrollment in teacher professional development programming in the future.

<b>Research Question 1 Findings</b>	
<b>1</b>	All participants enjoyed PIAE, and a majority felt that the pilot was better than prior professional development courses they had taken.
<b>2</b>	All participants enjoyed the synchronous sessions, and most pointed to synchronous discussion as a critical component of the professional development experience.
<b>3</b>	In contrast, participants seemed to regard the asynchronous course content as a collection of resources they could—and did—consult, rather than a core feature of the professional development experience.
<b>4</b>	PIAE participants highly valued applicability and easy adaptability of content, materials, and teaching strategies.
<b>Research Question 2 Findings</b>	
<b>1</b>	Across the board, program participants indicated that they were highly likely to use content and strategies presented in the PIAE pilot in their own classrooms—with several indicating that they are already doing so.
<b>2</b>	Participants reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to teach poetry and other complex texts following the pilot.
<b>3</b>	A majority of participants mentioned the value of being in community with other teachers during the pilot—and several expressed a desire for continued access to that community after the program’s end.
<b>Research Question 3 Findings</b>	
<b>1</b>	Most professional development providers indicated that their organizations use a business to business model for the bulk of their teacher recruitment, rather than relying on organic teacher enrollment.
<b>2</b>	Inclusion on states’ or districts’ lists of approved professional development providers helps to boost organic enrollment in those places; however, navigating approval processes is labor-intensive and expensive for programs serving teachers nationwide.
<b>3</b>	There was no consensus among professional development providers about the best ways to address the challenge of synchronous scheduling.
<b>4</b>	In contrast, PIAE pilot interviewees were united in their preferences for synchronous session timing: summer is the best time for teacher professional development, followed by transitional times of year.
<b>5</b>	Terminology in the professional development space is evolving; the phrases “professional development” and “content knowledge” are falling out of favor.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on my findings, I have made the below recommendations for (1) growing and improving the PIAE program and (2) conducting future research.

Recommendations for the Program	
1	Preserve the synchronous components of PIAE offerings, and consider adding prioritization cues to asynchronous prework.
2	Incorporate more time for teachers to share their practice with one another, and create outlets for continuous community among PIAE enrollees.
3	Leverage other teacher professional networks while growing the PIAE network.
4	Schedule future sessions well in advance, and prioritize offering sessions over the summer and at transitional times of year.
5	Emulate select professional development providers' "middle-ground" strategies for getting offerings approved: continue relying on ASU's accreditation, and seek inclusion in Rivet Education's Professional Learning Partner Guide.
Recommendations for Future Research	
1	Track enrollment trends in PIAE courses offered at different times of year.
2	Continue surveying enrollees in future offerings, and consider implementing experimental study designs if enrollments grow large enough.
3	Enroll larger populations of Poetry in America for High Schools (PIAHS) dual enrollment facilitators in PIAE courses in order to study the impact of teacher PIAE participation on PIAHS student performance.

## NAVIGATING THIS REPORT

- **Introduction:** This section places PIAE within the broader context of professional development programming, introduces the study's methodology, and provides a more comprehensive overview of this report's findings and recommendations. This section begins with a literature review that outlines: the importance of teachers and their ongoing professional development; teacher professional development research trends and findings to date; and how PIAE program evaluation findings can contribute to the growing body of research in the field.
- **Background:** This section provides background information on the PIAE program and the organizations that created and administer it, and it outlines the research questions driving this study.
- **Methodology:** This section provides an in-depth description of the study's mixed-methods approach.

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- **Key Findings:** This section discusses the study's most important findings in detail, incorporating and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data gleaned from the instruments described in Methodology.
  - **Limitations:** This section acknowledges limitations of this study's design and execution and their potential impacts on the validity of the study's findings.
  - **Recommendations:** This section offers in-depth program recommendations drawn from the study's findings. In addition, it contains recommendations for future research that stem from the study's findings, as well as its acknowledged limitations.
  - **Conclusion:** This section synthesizes the study's findings and recommendations and connects them back to the broader context described in the introduction.

# Introduction

## The Case for Teacher Professional Development

### **TEACHERS: A CRUCIAL RESOURCE IN SHORT SUPPLY**

Teachers play a pivotal role in helping students succeed—both in the near term and in the longer term. Research has shown that students with high-caliber teachers tend to earn higher standardized test scores.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, students learning from high-caliber teachers attend college at higher rates and earn more money over the course of their lifetimes; they also tend to experience teenage pregnancy at lower rates and to live in more desirable zip codes as adults.<sup>2</sup> Even just one year with a quality elementary school teacher has measurable impacts on these longer-term outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, teachers matter, and so does teacher quality.

Unfortunately, shortages of qualified teachers have long plagued school districts across the United States.<sup>4</sup> A 2018 survey by the Education Week Research Center, for example, found that every state experienced a “statewide” qualified teacher shortage in at least one subject area between 2016 and 2018, and that shortages occurred across an array of disciplines.<sup>5</sup> This supply problem owes in part to a decline in the number of people entering the teaching profession. According to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, institutions of higher education awarded fewer than 45% as many undergraduate education degrees in academic year 2018-19 as in 1970, and the number of college graduates earning degrees in education has consistently declined since 2005.<sup>6</sup> Recruitment of male teachers and teachers of color has

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<sup>1</sup> Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, and Jonah E. Rockoff. *The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood (Non-Technical Research Summary)*: Opportunity Insights, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, and Jonah E. Rockoff. *The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood (Non-Technical Research Summary)*: Opportunity Insights, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Nathaniel Hilger, Emmanuel Saez, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Danny Yagan. *\$320,000 Kindergarten Teachers (Non-Technical Research Summary)*: Opportunity Insights, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Importantly, teacher shortages do not impact states, districts, and schools uniformly. Districts and schools that serve low-income students and students of color, as well as districts and schools located in rural areas, see the greatest shortages. Additionally, there is variation across subject areas, with some disciplines (e.g., math, special education, world languages other than English) being especially hard to staff. Over the last decade, researchers have shown that looking at the teacher supply nationally does not tell the full story, as national-level data indicate that the number of teacher education program graduates exceeds the demand for new teachers. See James Cowan, Dan Goldhaber, Kyle Hayes, and Roddy Theobald. *Missing Elements in the Discussion of Teacher Shortages*: National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER), 2016.

<sup>5</sup> “[F]requent problem areas included math, computer science, science, English/language arts, and English-as-a-second-language instruction.” Debra Viadero. “Teacher Recruitment and Retention: It’s Complicated.” *Education Week*, January 23, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. *Colleges of Education: A National Portrait (Second Edition)*: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2022: 8. It is important to note that this picture does not account for alternative pathways to certification. For example, states provide alternative teacher licensure programs, and organizations like Teach for America and charter school

proven especially difficult.<sup>7</sup>

But retention is perhaps an even bigger problem than recruitment. A 2016 report by the Learning Policy Institute found that simply “reducing [teacher] attrition by half could virtually eliminate shortages.”<sup>8</sup> Put another way, vacancies due to teacher attrition constitute “about 90% of the annual demand for teachers in the United States.”<sup>9</sup> This statistic is staggering, but it does not fully encapsulate the teacher “churn” problem: yet more teachers (an estimated 8% of the teaching force per year) do not leave teaching altogether, but rather switch schools or districts in search of higher pay or better working conditions.<sup>10</sup>

Such volatility in teaching faculty is problematic for schools and, ultimately, for students. Nationwide, schools spend an estimated \$2.2 billion each year filling teacher vacancies—resources that could otherwise go toward student instruction, teacher professional development, and other supports. Moreover, high teacher turnover is associated with lower academic performance on school-level measures. As schools serving large populations of low-income students and students of color see the highest levels of teacher turnover, they bear an outsized share of the associated financial and academic costs.<sup>11</sup>

### **CONCERNING TRENDS: THE PANDEMIC’S IMPACTS ON K-12 TEACHERS**

The COVID-19 pandemic has only made the teacher turnover problem worse. A National Center for Education Statistics “School Pulse” survey found that a full 44% of public schools in a nationally representative sample were experiencing teaching vacancies as of January 2022—and that 61% of respondents attributed the uptick in vacancies on their campuses to the pandemic.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, educators are reporting far lower levels of morale and job satisfaction than they were prior to the pandemic. For instance, the 2022 Merrimack College Teacher Survey, administered to a nationally representative sample of K-12 teachers, found that 44% of teachers were

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networks provide training for those who were not undergraduate education majors, but who wish to enter the teaching profession. This may help to lessen the supply deficit; however, turnover tends to be higher among those who seek alternative certification. See Leib Sutchter, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Desiree Carver-Thomas. *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2016: 59-61.

<sup>7</sup> Partnership for the Future of Learning. *Teaching Profession Playbook: Partnership for the Future of Learning*, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Leib Sutchter, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Desiree Carver-Thomas. *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2016: 4. The authors also indicated that the average annual rate of teacher attrition in the U.S. (8%) was at least double that observed in “high-achieving jurisdictions” internationally.

<sup>9</sup> Partnership for the Future of Learning. *Teaching Profession Playbook: Partnership for the Future of Learning*, 2022: 63.

<sup>10</sup> Partnership for the Future of Learning. *Teaching Profession Playbook: Partnership for the Future of Learning*, 2022: 10, 63.

<sup>11</sup> Partnership for the Future of Learning. *Teaching Profession Playbook: Partnership for the Future of Learning*, 2022: 63-66, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Institute of Education Sciences. *School Staffing Shortages: Results from the January School Pulse Panel*, 2022. The survey found that 51% of vacancies owed to teacher resignations—more than double the share owing to retirements (21%).



considering leaving teaching within two years, and only 12% of teachers were “very satisfied” with their jobs—a sharp decline from 39% of respondents in 2012, the last year for which comparable data are available.<sup>13</sup>

Teaching is always a demanding job, but the burden on teachers’ shoulders is especially (impossibly) high at the current moment. Following the pandemic, academic and behavioral regression are top of mind for parents, educators, and lawmakers alike: students’ test scores are troublingly low; behavioral problems, troublingly high.<sup>14</sup> These are big, complex problems, and we expect teachers to deal with them—to make up for “lost” academic and socioemotional learning while simultaneously teaching the current year’s curricula. The trouble is, teachers feel ill equipped to do so. Results from the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress teacher questionnaires show that, on average, less than half of fourth- and eighth-graders are in classrooms with English Language Arts and Math teachers who feel confident in their ability to bring students up to grade level following the pandemic.<sup>15</sup> Teachers need more—and better—resources to help them address today’s challenges. High-quality teacher professional development experiences offer one such resource.

## Research Trends and Findings from the Field

### **SUPPORTING TEACHERS WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: “HIGH-IMPACT” BUT HARD TO EXECUTE**

A 2022 “playbook” by the Partnership for the Future of Learning identifies investment in teacher

<sup>13</sup> Holly Kurtz. *A Profession in Crisis: Findings from a National Teacher Survey*; EdWeek Research Center, 2022. For 2012 comparison data, see Madeline Will. “Teacher Job Satisfaction Hits an all-Time Low; Survey shows just 12 Percent of Teachers are very Satisfied.” *Education Week* 41, no. 31 (Apr 27, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> “Average scores for age 9 students in 2022 declined 5 points in reading and 7 points in mathematics compared to 2020. This is the largest average score decline in reading since 1990, and the first ever score decline in mathematics.” See U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). *NAEP Long-Term Trend Assessment Results: Reading and Mathematics*; US Department of Education. In addition, 84% of public schools surveyed by the National Center for Education Statistics reported increased behavioral issues among students following the pandemic. See U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. *More than 80 Percent of U.S. Public Schools Report Pandemic has Negatively Impacted Student Behavior and Socio-Emotional Development*; U.S. Department of Education, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Known as “the Nation’s Report Card,” the NAEP is a standardized test administered to a nationally representative sample of public school students in fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade each year. Twelfth-grade results for 2022 were not yet available at the time of this report’s completion. See U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. *NAEP Report Card: 2022 NAEP Mathematics Assessment: Highlighted Results at Grades 4 and 8 for the Nation, States, and Districts*; US Department of Education, 2022. See also U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). *NAEP Report Card: 2022 NAEP Reading Assessment: Highlighted Results at Grades 4 and 8 for the Nation, States, and Districts*; US Department of Education, 2022. See also U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). *The Nation’s Report Card: 2022 Reading and Mathematics Teacher Questionnaire Grade 4*. US Department of Education, 2022.

professional development as a “high-impact” and “high-retention” strategy for equipping teachers with the knowledge they need to succeed—and to stay in their current positions for a sustained duration.<sup>16</sup> The playbook further describes continuing professional development as “especially critical” in imparting “skills and competencies” not covered in traditional teacher preparation programs, and in helping teachers stay current on emerging best practices in the field.<sup>17</sup> This characterization of professional development as a necessary extension of teacher education echoes a 2017 literature review from the Learning Policy Institute, which asserts that quality teacher professional development is “needed” to help teachers “develop student competencies such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction”—skills that are hard to teach yet essential to success in higher education and the workforce.<sup>18</sup>

But, just as teaching students these essential skills is easier said than done, so is *teaching teachers* how to teach them. In the more than 20 years since No Child Left Behind increased the primacy and availability of data in the education space, dismayed researchers have found that many professional development programs are not moving the needle on student or teacher performance measures.<sup>19</sup> This is despite major spending on teacher professional development annually: \$18 billion, according to a 2014 report by the Gates Foundation. The same report finds that the average teacher devotes 89 hours to completing professional development programming each year, much of it provided in-house by schools or districts themselves.<sup>20</sup> In other words, there is no shortage of professional development programs out there—just scant evidence that many of them are having the desired impact.

That is not to say that all teacher professional development to date has led to poor outcomes. On the contrary, studies over the last decade have shown that well designed professional development “can lead to shifts in teachers’ skills and instructional practice and significantly improve student learning.”<sup>21</sup> These more optimistic findings stem in part from a change in research focus: rather than classifying entire programs as effective or ineffective, researchers have prioritized identifying effective “features” in program design—the thinking being that

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<sup>16</sup> Partnership for the Future of Learning. *Teaching Profession Playbook: Partnership for the Future of Learning*, 2022: 66, 71.

<sup>17</sup> Partnership for the Future of Learning. *Teaching Profession Playbook: Partnership for the Future of Learning*, 2022: 71.

<sup>18</sup> Darling-Hammond, Linda, Maria E. Hylar, and Madelyn Gardner. *Effective Teacher Professional Development*, 2017: v.

<sup>19</sup> The New Teacher Project. *The Mirage: Confronting the Hard Truth about our Quest for Teacher Development*. New York: TNTP, Inc., 2015. See also Heather C. Hill, Mary Beisiegel, and Robin Jacob. “Professional Development Research: Consensus, Crossroads, and Challenges.” *Educational Researcher* 42, no. 9 (December, 2013): 476-487. For background on No Child Left Behind, see Alyson Klein. “No Child Left Behind: An Overview.” *Education Week*, April 10, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and (BCG) Boston Consulting Group. *Teachers Know Best: Teachers’ Views on Professional Development*: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Boston Consulting Group (BCG), 2014: 3.

<sup>21</sup> Heather C. Hill, John P. Papay, and Nathaniel Schwartz. *Dispelling the Myths: What the Research Says about Teacher Professional Learning*: Annenberg Institute at Brown University, 2022: 3.

features are both easier to study and to replicate.<sup>22</sup>

While there is still some disagreement over these optimal design features—or perhaps merely over what to call them—researchers broadly agree that effective teacher professional development programs exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: (1) they are highly collaborative and support active learning; (2) they use instructional modeling to show rather than tell teachers how to implement best practices; and (3) they incorporate coaching and follow-up interaction with the instructor or fellow learners for reinforcement.<sup>23</sup> Importantly, practitioner-driven teacher organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Writing Project also emphasize that teacher professional development should acknowledge and leverage program participants' own expertise.<sup>24</sup> In other words, professional development programs should acknowledge that program participants are teachers as well as students—and, accordingly, should build in opportunities for participants to share their own prior knowledge and experience with one another.<sup>25</sup>

### **ADVANCING THE RESEARCH: POETRY IN AMERICA FOR EDUCATORS**

The research to date on identifying effective teacher professional development program design features represents a start, but more work remains to be done. As a 2022 report by the Research Partnership for Professional Learning puts it, “the evidence base for these features remains relatively tentative and is largely correlational in nature.”<sup>26</sup> The report goes on to say that, in addition to causal research on these design features' effects, the professional development community needs a more nuanced understanding of (1) the contexts in which these features tend to succeed and (2) the ways in which successful contexts can be replicated and

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<sup>22</sup> Heather C. Hill, Mary Beisiegel, and Robin Jacob. "Professional Development Research: Consensus, Crossroads, and Challenges." *Educational Researcher* 42, no. 9 (December, 2013): 478.

<sup>23</sup> Linda Darling-Hammond, Maria E. Hylar, and Madelyn Gardner. *Effective Teacher Professional Development*, 2017: v-vi, 4-16. See also Heather C. Hill and John P. Papay. *Building Better PL: How to Strengthen Teacher Learning: The Research Partnership for Professional Learning*, 2022: 2-14. On disagreement: Darling-Hammond et al (2017) list “content-focused” as the first feature of effective professional development, whereas Hill et al (2022) emphasize the primacy of “subject-specific instructional practices over content knowledge.” Both seem to be making the same point—that teachers need effective strategies for content delivery—but they frame their points differently. Furthermore, even within Hill et al, there is a tension between two design features: “subject-specific instructional practices over content knowledge” and “practice-supportive materials.” Both seem to emphasize giving teachers concrete tools and strategies for teaching effectively in their content areas, but, whereas the former discounts the value of focusing on “content knowledge,” the latter depends on it. These two features need further teasing out in future research, and I would argue that reinforcing content knowledge is integral to delivering “subject-specific instructional practices.”

<sup>24</sup> National Council of Teachers of English. "Shifting from Professional Development to Professional Learning: Centering Teacher Empowerment." See also Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood. *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003: 15-16.

<sup>25</sup> Deference to teacher expertise seems compatible with, and arguably inherent in, the collaborative and active-learning design features mentioned in the literature.

<sup>26</sup> Heather C. Hill and John P. Papay. *Building Better PL: How to Strengthen Teacher Learning: The Research Partnership for Professional Learning*, 2022: 14.

scaled. Moreover, the authors express their “hope [that] the field takes up this challenge as well.”<sup>27</sup> The educational media nonprofit Verse Video Education aims to do just that.<sup>28</sup>

Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE), Verse Video Education’s new professional development program, incorporates many of the design features the recent literature deems effective: PIAE experiences are highly collaborative; they feature synchronous (i.e., real-time) sessions that integrate best-practice modeling with active learning; and they offer space for teachers to share their own knowledge and expertise. Moreover, because PIAE is delivered virtually and can be easily accessed by teachers nationwide, it has immense potential to scale.<sup>29</sup> As such, early PIAE program runs represent ideal “Stage 1” test sites—program runs during which design features can be tested and modified in response to participant and facilitator feedback.<sup>30</sup> Stage 1 findings from PIAE program evaluations can contribute to the professional development community’s understanding of optimal design features, as well as to its awareness of the contexts in which these features can succeed and scale.

## Report Scope and Study Methodology

This report covers the Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE) pilot, which served 5 teacher enrollees in October 2022. It presents the findings of the pilot evaluation and makes recommendations (drawn from market research) for boosting enrollment in future program runs. The report addresses the following research questions:

### PROGRAM EVALUATION

1. How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program? How does PIAE compare to past professional development experiences?
2. What impact did the program have on educators? To what extent do participants plan to use what they learned in their own classrooms/schools?

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<sup>27</sup> Heather C. Hill and John P. Papay. *Building Better PL: How to Strengthen Teacher Learning: The Research Partnership for Professional Learning*, 2022: 14-15.

<sup>28</sup> Verse Video Education, Inc., is a nonprofit educational media organization that produces Poetry in America, an educational initiative that includes a public television series, for-credit courses, and programming designed specifically for K-12 students and teachers.

<sup>29</sup> The program, which will be described in further detail in the Background section of this report, operates according to a virtual hybrid format—meaning that it incorporates asynchronous and synchronous components, all of which are delivered virtually. Asynchronous content includes 9 hours’ worth of readings, videos, and instructional prose built into the Canvas Learning Management System. Synchronous content includes 6 hours’ worth of real-time engagement via Zoom.

<sup>30</sup> Heather C. Hill, Mary Beisiegel, and Robin Jacob. "Professional Development Research: Consensus, Crossroads, and Challenges." *Educational Researcher* 42, no. 9 (December, 2013): 479. This paper, authored by members of the Research Partnership for Professional Learning, spurred research identifying the optimal design features described above.

## MARKET RESEARCH

3. What are best practices for boosting enrollment in professional development programs? How can PIAE reduce existing barriers to participation in educator professional development?

## METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

I used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the research questions above. This research incorporated quantitative and qualitative feedback from two different populations:

Population	Population Description	Research Question(s)	Primary Data Sources
1	PIAE Pilot Participants*	1, 2, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Exit survey responses (quantitative &amp; qualitative)</li> <li>■ Canvas activity logs (quantitative)</li> <li>■ Synchronous session recordings (qualitative)</li> <li>■ Followup interviews (qualitative)</li> </ul>
2	Representatives from Other Teacher Professional Development Organizations	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Informational interviews (qualitative)</li> <li>■ Organizations' websites (qualitative)</li> </ul>

*\*Note: Most PIAE participants were dual enrollment facilitators for another Poetry in America program, the Poetry in America for High Schools (PIAHS) program. See this report's Background section for more information.*

## Overview of Findings and Recommendations

### FINDINGS OVERVIEW

Overall, Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE) participants enjoyed their experience in the program and indicated that they are highly likely to translate content and techniques encountered during the program into practice. The below findings outline in greater detail what participants valued and enjoyed, as well as what they thought could be improved (Research Questions 1 and 2). In addition, the Research Question 3 findings shed light on ways to boost enrollment in teacher professional development in the future; these findings blend feedback from PIAE pilot participants and from representatives from other professional development organizations.

<b>Research Question 1 Findings</b>	
<b>1</b>	All participants enjoyed PIAE, and a majority felt that the pilot was better than prior professional development courses they had taken.
<b>2</b>	All participants enjoyed the synchronous sessions, and most pointed to synchronous discussion as a critical component of the professional development experience.
<b>3</b>	In contrast, participants seemed to regard the asynchronous course content as a collection of resources they could—and did—consult, rather than a core feature of the professional development experience.
<b>4</b>	PIAE participants highly valued applicability and easy adaptability of content, materials, and teaching strategies.
<b>Research Question 2 Findings</b>	
<b>1</b>	Across the board, program participants indicated that they were highly likely to use content and strategies presented in the PIAE pilot in their own classrooms—with several indicating that they are already doing so.
<b>2</b>	Participants reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to teach poetry and other complex texts following the pilot.
<b>3</b>	A majority of participants mentioned the value of being in community with other teachers during the pilot—and several expressed a desire for continued access to that community after the program’s end.
<b>Research Question 3 Findings</b>	
<b>1</b>	Most professional development providers (Population 2) indicated that their organizations use a business to business model for the bulk of their teacher recruitment, rather than relying on organic teacher enrollment.
<b>2</b>	Inclusion on states’ or districts’ lists of approved professional development providers helps to boost organic enrollment in those places; however, navigating approval processes is labor-intensive and expensive for programs serving teachers nationwide.
<b>3</b>	There was no consensus among professional development providers (Population 2) about the best ways to address the challenge of synchronous scheduling.
<b>4</b>	In contrast, PIAE pilot interviewees (Population 1) were united in their preferences for synchronous session timing: summer is the best time for teacher professional development, followed by transitional times of year.
<b>5</b>	Terminology in the professional development space is evolving; the phrases “professional development” and “content knowledge” are falling out of favor.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW

Based on my findings, I have made the below recommendations for (1) growing and improving the PIAE program and (2) conducting future research.

Recommendations for the Program	
<b>1</b>	Preserve the synchronous components of PIAE offerings, and consider adding prioritization cues to asynchronous prework.
<b>2</b>	Incorporate more time for teachers to share their practice with one another, and create outlets for continuous community among PIAE enrollees.
<b>3</b>	Leverage other teacher professional networks while growing the PIAE network.
<b>4</b>	Schedule future sessions well in advance, and prioritize offering sessions over the summer and at transitional times of year.
<b>5</b>	Emulate select professional development providers' "middle-ground" strategies for getting offerings approved: continue relying on ASU's accreditation, and seek inclusion in Rivet Education's Professional Learning Partner Guide.
Recommendations for Future Research	
<b>1</b>	Track enrollment trends in PIAE courses offered at different times of year.
<b>2</b>	Continue surveying enrollees in future offerings, and consider implementing experimental study designs if enrollments grow large enough.
<b>3</b>	Enroll larger populations of Poetry in America for High Schools (PIAHS) dual enrollment facilitators in PIAE courses in order to study the impact of teacher PIAE participation on PIAHS student performance.

# Background

## Organizational Descriptions

### **VERSE VIDEO EDUCATION AND POETRY IN AMERICA<sup>31</sup>**

Verse Video Education, Inc., is a nonprofit educational media production company that brings the highest quality humanities content to diverse audiences around the world. Verse Video Education produces the multiplatform Poetry in America initiative, which includes the PBS series *Poetry in America* and educational media and resources for global learners of all kinds. For-credit courses, non-credit learning experiences, and professional development opportunities—including programming designed specifically for high-school students and K-12 teachers—are available in partnership with Arizona State University and Harvard.

### **ASU CENTER FOR PUBLIC HUMANITIES**

The Arizona State University Center for Public Humanities is a new hub for innovation in the humanities and adjacent fields dedicated to creating relevant, engaging interdisciplinary content of the highest quality for learners of all kinds. The Center for Public Humanities is now home to Poetry in America's educational programs, including its flagship Poetry in America for High Schools dual enrollment program.

## Program Descriptions

### **POETRY IN AMERICA FOR EDUCATORS**

The **Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE)** program draws from the acclaimed *Poetry in America* PBS series. These professional development intensives enable educators across disciplines to deepen their expertise as readers and as teachers of English Language Arts, Social Studies, and the Arts. In keeping with Poetry in America's signature approach to professional development, enrollees have the chance to be scholars as well as teachers, immersing themselves in rich new content along with approaches to teaching it. Offered in partnership with the ASU Center for Public Humanities and ASU Learning Enterprise, PIAE intensives are hybrid experiences that blend 9 hours of rich asynchronous content with four 90-minute live virtual sessions. Participants receive:

- 15 professional development hours and a Certificate of Completion
- Engaging content to take back to their students
- Preparation to facilitate the companion Poetry in America ASU Universal Learner Course<sup>®</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> I adapted the following organizational and program descriptions from several sources: See Verse Video Education. "Mission and History." Accessed April 26, 2023. See also ASU Center for Public Humanities. "Mission Statement." Unpublished document, 2022. See also ASU Learning Enterprise. "Poetry in America for Educators." Accessed April 26, 2023.



## **POETRY IN AMERICA FOR HIGH SCHOOLS**

The Center's flagship **Poetry in America for High Schools (PIAHS)** program, offered in partnership with [ASU Learning Enterprise](#), enables high school students to take ASU Humanities [Universal Learner Courses](#)® for college credit. Since 2019, the program has served more than 4,000 learners from 184 schools across 26 states and the District of Columbia and is growing rapidly. A majority of students who start these courses complete them, and are eligible for low- or no-cost college credit that can be transferred to a college or university of their choice. This program, which was [featured in \*The New York Times\*](#), moved from Harvard to ASU in Fall 2020.

### ***Timing of the Poetry in America for Educators Pilot***

The PIAE pilot can serve as a complementary experience for teachers leading groups of students through the Poetry in America for High Schools program (i.e., it can serve as preparation for dual enrollment course facilitators) or as a standalone professional development experience. The original pilot dates in late August of 2022 would have enabled participants to complete the PIAE experience before the school year had begun in many districts—and before the Poetry in America for High Schools Fall 2022 dual enrollment course opened. However, registering teachers over the summer months—especially those teachers whose districts' summer break extends until Labor Day—was difficult, and so program uptake was low.

Consequently, program administrators decided to postpone the PIAE pilot. In September, we polled Poetry in America for High Schools dual enrollment teachers about their availability and timing preferences, and then we chose the most popular dates and times for the program's virtual synchronous sessions: Saturday, October 1, 2022, and Saturday, October 8, 2022. Although full-tuition scholarships were available to up to 25 teachers, uptake was again low, with 8 teachers signing up and 5 teachers actually logging on for the synchronous sessions.

## Poetry in America for Educators: Program Goals

Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE) was designed to serve educators teaching students to navigate literary and other complex texts. Especially suitable for teachers working with learners in grades 6-12, PIAE intensives are open to all current, prospective, and former educators. Librarians, administrators, counselors, and other educational professionals are also welcome to enroll. Dual enrollment facilitators leading groups of students through companion Poetry in America for High Schools (PIAHS) courses may especially benefit from the PIAE experience.

### **PROGRAM GOALS FOR ALL PIAE PARTICIPANTS**

1. To provide an enriching, active-learning, academic experience for educators
  - a. To fill a gap in English Language Arts teacher professional development by providing *content-area* professional development
2. To equip educators to incorporate the “Four Pillars” approach to reading and analyzing literary and complex texts into their own teaching practice
3. To practice engaging both critically and creatively with poetry

## **PROGRAM GOALS FOR PIAE PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE PIAHS DUAL ENROLLMENT FACILITATORS**

4. To better prepare teachers to support students in the companion dual enrollment course by (a) introducing teachers to texts and prompts featured in the course and (b) modeling classroom activities based on course texts

## Research Questions

This report has two primary objectives: (i) to evaluate the Poetry in America for Educators program pilot and (ii) to identify ways in which program administrators can boost educator enrollment in short-form educator professional development in the future.

### **I. PROGRAM EVALUATION: POETRY IN AMERICA FOR EDUCATORS PILOT**

The PIAE pilot sought to provide a standout professional development experience for participating educators—one that equipped teachers with content-area knowledge and with videos, texts, activities, and frameworks they could implement in their own classrooms. Among those who participated in the pilot, PIAE administrators primarily sought to gather feedback for program improvement and for future marketing and recruitment efforts. Areas of interest included (1) participant satisfaction levels and (2) program impact on participants' teaching practices. Evaluation questions included:

1. **Implementation:** How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program? How does this compare to past professional development experiences?
2. **Outcomes:** What impact did the program have on educators? To what extent do participants plan to use what they learned in their own classrooms/schools?

### **II. MARKET RESEARCH: PILOT PARTICIPANTS AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDERS**

The PIAE pilot enrollment population was much smaller than anticipated: because scholarships were available, program administrators had expected that 20 to 25 educators would enroll; in reality, only 5 enrolled. Preliminary feedback from teachers who had expressed interest in the pilot but who did not ultimately enroll suggested that scheduling of synchronous sessions was a barrier to enrollment. It is worth noting that low enrollment in other, prior Poetry in America professional development intensives with virtual synchronous components has historically been a problem—even when those programs were offered at no cost to participants.

In order to scale the program's impact in the future, PIAE administrators sought to learn more about best practices for reducing barriers to teacher enrollment in educator professional development. Suspected barriers included scheduling of synchronous sessions and program pricing. Primary research questions included:

- 3. Context:** What are best practices for boosting enrollment in professional development programs? How can PIAE reduce existing barriers to participation in educator professional development?

## Methodology

I used a mixed-methods, non-experimental approach to evaluate the success and impact of the PIAE pilot itself, as well as to investigate how future runs of the program might be modified in order to reach more educators. This research incorporated feedback from two different populations:

- **Population 1:** PIAE pilot participants
  - **Subgroup 1:** High school teachers who are currently serving as Poetry in America for High Schools (PIAHS) dual enrollment course facilitators
  - **Subgroup 2:** Current, former, or prospective K-16 educators who are not currently serving as PIAHS dual enrollment course facilitators
- **Population 2:** Representatives from other organizations offering educator professional development programming

## Quantitative Methodology

### POPULATION 1 QUANTITATIVE SURVEY DATA

I collected quantitative data using an exit survey. The program instructor administered the survey to Population 1 via Qualtrics at the end of the final virtual synchronous session of the PIAE pilot; participants had time to complete the survey at the end of the session. We successfully achieved a census sample (100% response rate) after distributing the survey to all 5 pilot participants.

#### *Process Notes*

- The survey focused on research questions 1 and 2: (1) participant satisfaction with the PIAE pilot and (2) the impact of the pilot program on participants and their teaching practices. (See Appendix: Survey Questions.)
- The PIAE instructor reserved time to administer the survey at the end of the final virtual synchronous session. One participant was absent from the second session and completed the survey later, after watching the recording of the second session.
- Survey responses were anonymous.
- I sent survey respondents a \$20 gift card to a meal delivery service. Survey instructions had informed respondents that their contact information (which they entered in order to receive the gift card incentive) would be dissociated from their survey responses before I analyzed the data in order to ensure their anonymity.<sup>32</sup>
- I re-coded some values in Qualtrics (See Appendix: Codebook for recoding notes).

<sup>32</sup> Respondents may be more likely to give candid feedback if they know their identities will not be connected to their responses. Capacity for anonymous data collection is a major strength of survey instruments. Claire Robertson-Kraft. "Quantitative Design" (Lecture presented in GAFL 641: Program Evaluation and Data Analysis at the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government, virtual, January 24, 2022).

- I downloaded the results from Qualtrics and cleaned the data in Google Sheets. I conducted descriptive analysis in Google Sheets.
- I imported the cleaned data into SPSS and conducted inferential analysis in SPSS.
- I used a combination of Excel and Google Sheets to create the figures shown in this report.

### **RESPONSE RATE AND DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW**

- All 5 pilot participants completed the survey, yielding a 100% response rate.
- Demographic summary:
  - 3 respondents (60%) identify as female; 2 respondents (40%) identify as male.
  - 3 respondents (60%) identify as white; 1 respondent (20%) identifies as Black; 1 respondent (20%) identifies as Hispanic or Latino, white, and self-describes as Native South American.
  - 2 respondents (40%) were not current PIAHS dual enrollment facilitators (i.e., Subgroup 2); 3 respondents (60%) were current PIAHS dual enrollment facilitators (i.e., Subgroup 1).
  - 0 respondents had served as PIAHS dual enrollment facilitators in the past, meaning that all 3 current PIAHS dual enrollment facilitators (Subgroup 2) were new to the PIAHS program in the Fall 2022 semester.
  - 4 respondents (80%) work in public high schools, whereas 1 respondent (20%) works at an institution of higher education.
    - Of the high school teachers, 3 respondents (75%) work in Title I schools.
  - All 5 respondents (100%) are English Language Arts teachers; 2 respondents (40%) also teach Writing/Composition; 1 respondent (20%) is also a Special Education teacher.

### **ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF QUANTITATIVE DATA**

- I also consulted the Canvas activity log for the pilot course to examine users' page views in Canvas and last dates of Canvas access.
- In addition, I analyzed Canvas PIAHS grade reports for Subgroup 1 teachers' students (i.e., for PIAHS students whose PIAHS dual enrollment facilitators participated in PIAE).

## Qualitative Methodology

I used qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data collected via the exit survey administered to the PIAE pilot cohort (Population 1). The exit survey administered to Population 1 included open-ended questions, and I subsequently conducted interviews with Populations 1 and 2.

## POPULATION 1 QUALITATIVE SURVEY DATA

Program administrators achieved a census sample on the PIAE exit survey, meaning that we collected feedback from 100% of PIAE pilot participants.

### *Process Notes*

- See process notes for Population 1 quantitative survey data.

## POPULATION 1 INTERVIEWS

Only 4 of the 5 program participants opted to sit for interviews (80% response rate). Of those who sat for interviews, half were current PIAHS dual enrollment facilitators (Subgroup 1), and half were not (Subgroup 2). Of those in Subgroup 2, 1 interviewee had prior experience in a different Poetry in America program. 3 of the 4 interviewees (75%) taught at the high school level, and one taught at an institution of higher education. Because the interviewee pool was evenly split between Subgroups 1 and 2, we can be reasonably confident that the sample was fairly representative of the PIAE pilot population overall. However, because the PIAE pilot population was small (n=5), and because participants opted into the program, interviewees may differ from the general population of educators in meaningful ways. This may limit the generalizability of findings beyond the sample population.

### *Process Notes*

- When I distributed meal delivery service gift cards to survey respondents (i.e., the incentive for completing the exit survey), I included a note indicating that I would be following up toward the end of the semester with an invitation to participate in a Zoom interview about the PIAE experience.
- In mid-December, I sent individual email follow-ups to each program participant inviting them to sign up for a time on my calendar between late December and early February. I followed up in early January, once schools were back in session following winter break.
- I administered the interviews using an interview protocol to ensure I asked consistent questions (See Appendix: Population 1 Interview Protocol).<sup>33</sup>
- At the beginning of each interview, I informed interviewees that their names would not be connected with anything they said in any materials shared with Poetry in America or ASU leadership, or published in any capacity.

<sup>33</sup> While no two interviews can be exactly alike, having an interview protocol makes the interview experiences as uniform as possible—thereby reducing the potential for interviewer bias or other variables to unduly influence interviewee responses or the range of data collected. This in turn increases the validity of resulting interview data. Claire Robertson-Kraft. “Qualitative Data Collection” (Lecture presented in GAFL 641: Program Evaluation and Data Analysis at the University of Pennsylvania’s Fels Institute of Government, virtual, January 31, 2022).

- I conducted interviews via Zoom; with interviewee permission, all interviews were recorded and transcribed. I corrected the Zoom-generated transcripts.<sup>34</sup>
- I used Population 1 interview transcripts to code the interviews in Google Sheets.
- As an incentive to participate, Population 1 interviewees each received a \$10 Starbucks gift card upon completion of their interviews.

## POPULATION 2 INTERVIEWS

In order to learn more about best practices for reducing barriers to educators' participation in professional development experiences, I conducted interviews with representatives from other organizations offering professional development (Population 2). I worked with Elisa New, the director of Poetry in America and the ASU Center for Public Humanities, to devise a list of professional development providers in Verse Video Education's professional network with comparable target audiences, and I used this list for outreach.<sup>35</sup> The following organizations responded and agreed to provide a representative for an interview:

- The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
- Fishtank Learning (Fishtank)
- The Relay Graduate School of Education (Relay)
- ASU Preparatory Academy / Arizona Virtual Teacher Institute (ASU Prep Digital)

These organizations take a variety of approaches to educator professional development. The NCTE offers optional professional learning programming to its national member network; Fishtank offers supplemental professional development for teachers in schools using companion Fishtank English Language Arts curricula; Relay offers tailored programming to subscribing districts and schools; and ASU Prep Digital focuses on Arizona districts, schools, and teachers while marketing offerings to teachers and school partners nationwide. Although the Population 2 organizations do not represent the full range of professional development providers (e.g., I did not speak to representatives from districts that provide professional development "in-house" or from providers that operate exclusively within particular states or regions), their models are sufficiently representative of the provider types most relevant for Poetry in America's purposes.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> As one of the transcripts had formatting issues due to the tempo of the interviewee's responses, Poetry in America's production assistant Géraldine Joseph took the first pass at reformatting the interview transcript for Interviewee 2, and I performed subsequent cleanup of that transcript.

<sup>35</sup> More specifically: like Poetry in America, all Population 2 organizations cater to a national audience and offer some programming tailored for English Language Arts teachers.

<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, my planned interview with the ASU-affiliated National Writing Project chapter did not materialize. The National Writing Project—organized into regional chapters, or project sites—is the premier professional development organization for English Language Arts educators. To account for this, I reviewed a book-length study of the National Writing Project and have made notes on the features of its model throughout the findings and recommendations sections of this report. See Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood. *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003.

***Process Notes***

- In mid- and late December, I reached out to other organizations with an email introducing my project, and I requested an interview.
- In late January, I followed up with organizations that had not responded.
- I conducted interviews via Zoom.
- As Population 2 interviews were more akin to informational interviews, I did not ask to record the sessions; instead, I took notes during the interviews and fleshed them out after the interviews had ended.
- I did not offer incentives to Population 2 interviewees, and I did not promise anonymity to these interviewees.
- While I developed an interview protocol for Population 2 (See Appendix: Population 2 Interview Protocol), I found in practice that it did not make sense to use it. After I introduced myself and stated my primary research question, Population 2 interviewees anticipated my questions and tended to answer them in their opening descriptions of their organizations' respective business models and professional development program designs.

**ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF QUALITATIVE DATA**

- I conducted post-session interviews with the PIAE instructor (who also designed the PIAE experiences) after each of the two sessions and took notes during our conversations.
- I also watched the recordings of the two Zoom sessions and took notes on my observations.



## Key Findings

### Research Question 1 (Population 1)

**IMPLEMENTATION | How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program? How does this compare to past professional development experiences?**

**Finding #1.1 | All participants enjoyed Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE), and a majority felt that the pilot was better than prior professional development courses they had taken.**

100% of pilot participants agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed the program overall, that they would recommend the course to a friend or colleague, and that they would enroll in another PIAE course in the future if given the opportunity. Moreover, the hybrid virtual format of the program was not a drawback: all participants indicated that they found both the synchronous and asynchronous components of the course to be engaging, and, as one survey respondent put it, “I’m usually not a fan of online courses, but I really enjoyed this one.”

When asked to compare the pilot with prior professional development experiences, a majority of survey respondents ranked PIAE more favorably:

**“To me this is so much better because this program seems grounded in the idea that kids can take literature seriously and imaginatively at the same time.”**

**- Population 1 Interviewee**

**“This was much better than other PDs I’ve attended, mostly because I was actively engaged throughout the whole process.”**

**- Population 1 Interviewee**

Importantly, participants felt that they were treated like “people and professionals first,” and that their time was not wasted. In the words of one survey respondent, “The Zooms were well planned and used our time purposefully. Most other PDs I have attended could easily be reduced to an email.” Another appreciated that the PIAE instructor gave “the highlights [...] without belaboring every single point.” This respondent went on to express appreciation for the course’s emphasis on substance over “magic buzzwords,” describing overuse of “education jargon” as “the bane of my existence in other pd courses.”

**Finding #1.2 | All participants enjoyed the synchronous sessions, and most pointed to synchronous discussion as a critical component of the professional development experience.**

All survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Zoom sessions were engaging. In fact, one participant had taken other, full-semester Poetry in America courses in the past, and she shared that “this experience [was] better” because it had a more substantial synchronous component.

When asked to elaborate on what they had enjoyed about the program’s format, survey respondents consistently pointed to the discussion-centered design of the Zoom sessions. Several respondents cited the “the pacing and the opportunities to work in small groups,” or the “rhythm of breakout rooms, and then coming back to discuss” with the full group. Another reflected on how helpful it was to see discussion-centered lessons in action: “I really enjoyed the live Zoom sessions. They really helped solidify the practical teaching aspects by modeling them for us.”

The Zoom sessions were so central to the experience that a few participants even suggested the program could be improved by adding more synchronous time in the future. As one survey respondent shared, “I wish we had more than just two live sessions. It felt like things had to be crammed. [...] I enjoyed our instructor and her guidance. I would have enjoyed more time to ask questions around the lesson plans she had.”

**Finding #1.3 | In contrast, participants seemed to regard the asynchronous course content as a collection of resources they could—and did—consult, rather than a core feature of the professional development experience.**

100% of participants indicated that the asynchronous pre-work was engaging, and that the asynchronous workload was manageable. However, Canvas data shows that only two participants (40%) ever completed the asynchronous written discussion assignments, and most interviewees confirmed that they were unable to complete all of the pre-work in advance of each session. In fact, one interviewee (who had taken other, full-semester Poetry in America courses previously) was extremely apologetic about not completing the asynchronous work: “Okay, so I actually didn't get to any of it. And I am very sorry, and I feel terrible about it.”

That is not to say participants did not access the Canvas materials at all, but rather that they did not complete the asynchronous *assignments*. In fact, between September 25, 2022, and the final synchronous session on Saturday, October 8, 2022, each participant viewed 54 Canvas pages per week on average.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, in the three weeks following the second synchronous session (between Sunday, October 9, and Saturday, October 29, 2022), most participants (80%) continued to access the PIAE course site: on average, each participant viewed 40 Canvas pages per week.<sup>38</sup> While post-course Canvas access dropped off after the three-week mark, this data

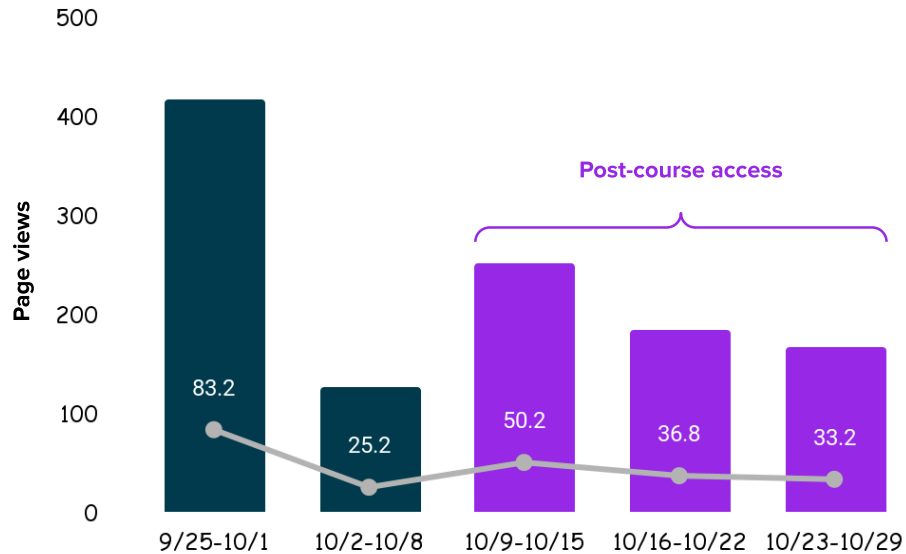
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<sup>37</sup> For reference, the first week of asynchronous content contained 32 Canvas pages; the second week contained 26 Canvas pages. This means that participants likely visited some Canvas pages multiple times.

<sup>38</sup> This average includes the participant who did not access any Canvas pages at all after the second synchronous session.

suggests that most participants referred back to the Canvas site as a resource in the weeks following the PIAE synchronous sessions.<sup>39</sup> One interviewee (the same apologetic interviewee quoted above) seemed to confirm this when she explained that she “really took the course because [she] wanted the synchronous time,” and that, although she had not completed all the asynchronous work, she nonetheless “used everything that was there in some way or another” in the fall courses she was teaching.<sup>40</sup>

**Most Poetry in America for Educators participants continued to access Canvas pages after the program ended.**



Bars represent total page views per week; line represents average number of weekly page views

**Finding #1.4 | PIAE participants highly valued applicability and easy adaptability of content, materials, and teaching strategies.**

Most teachers cited having plug-and-play content they could take directly into their classrooms as a value add. As one participant who was simultaneously facilitating the Poetry in America dual enrollment course put it, “I just think that the more structured activities you provide, the more we tired facilitators will provide them [to students].” That is to say, the easier the content and

**“It’s just having those—you know, those takeaway things that I can then adapt to my own courses. That’s the most valuable aspect as a teacher, I think.”**

**-Population 1 Interviewee**

<sup>39</sup> Final post-session dates of access included October 13, October 21 (2 participants), and October 26.

<sup>40</sup> Canvas activity logs provide imprecise measures of user activity. While page view metrics do not tell us how long each user spent on the pages they visited, the number of page views, coupled with qualitative data from program participants, suggests that a majority of users engaged meaningfully with Canvas content during and after the official program run (October 2 to October 8, 2022). As the participant with the most Canvas page views shared, “Watching the videos and reading the poetry and doing that work, I would say 15 hours was like a—that was a minimum.”

materials presented are for teachers to implement, the more likely teachers are to use them with students.

But because one size does not fit all, flexibility and adaptability of content were also important to teachers. When asked to describe what draws her to professional development experiences, one participant (who teaches at an institution of higher education) responded that it is “really important” for professional development “to have content that I feel like I can apply or adapt easily to what I'm teaching, or to what I want to teach, if I'm not teaching that currently.” Another participant, a dual enrollment facilitator, indicated that he valued seeing the content modeled during the synchronous sessions because it helped him think through modifications that might work better for his students.<sup>41</sup>

“[W]ith the synchronous stuff, when you're getting the materials, and you can actually go through it in a timely fashion, I think that kind of gave me more insight to where, like, okay, **I can kind of go through and kind of pull and pick certain things that may not necessarily work with *this* group or amount of students, but I know this may work with *this* set amount of students.**”

- Population 1 Interviewee

Notably, one participant indicated that, while he enjoyed the experience, “[i]t did not feel like a PD class.” He explained that he would have liked even more explicit signposting regarding pedagogical implementation than the pilot provided:

**“I felt like I was a student at a poetry class, and I can transfer that. But oftentimes professional development is more, ‘And this is how I teach this,’ or ‘This is how you can teach this.’** ‘These are the kinds of handouts you can create.’ [...] And some teachers will want to just copy that handout, which is fine, I guess. But also some will just go, ‘That's a great suggestion. I might use it this way instead.’”

- Population 1 Interviewee

In other words, whereas the pilot called for teachers to experience the content and lessons as *students* would, this participant would have preferred a greater focus on experiencing the content as a *teacher*. He meant that teachers would benefit from having some of that “transfer” work—making that intellectual shift from “student mode” (to borrow another participant’s phrase) to teacher mode—done for them.

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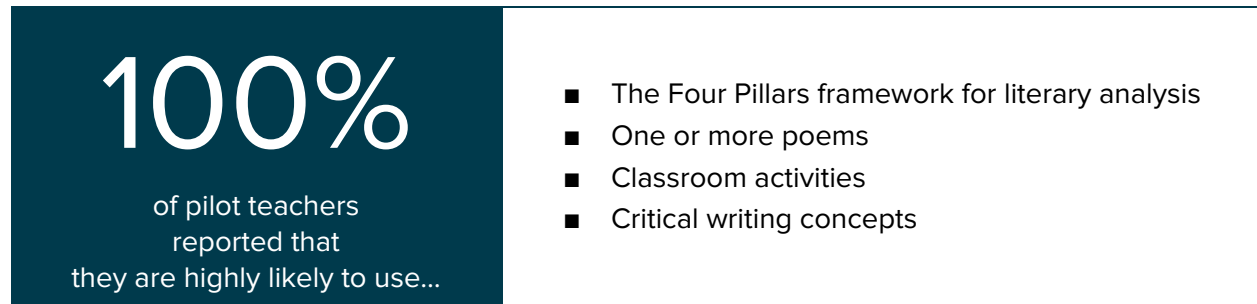
<sup>41</sup> Emphasis in pull-quote added by the author.

## Research Question 2 (Population 1)

**OUTCOMES | What impact did the program have on educators? To what extent do participants plan to use what they learned in their own classrooms/schools?**

**Finding #2.1 | Across the board, program participants indicated that they were highly likely to use content and strategies presented in the PIAE pilot in their own classrooms—with several indicating that they are already doing so.**

All pilot participants indicated that they were highly likely to use content and strategies presented in the PIAE pilot in their own classrooms:



When asked to share “feedback about whether/how this program will impact your teaching practice,” a majority of survey respondents indicated that they had already used, or that they planned to use, concepts and materials from the pilot in their own teaching:

- “It already has! I’ve used some of the practices in class this week!”
- “I’ve already used the focused annotation and making observations about key words in the texts activities. I plan to [use] the activities today to help my students generate effective thesis statements.”
- “I would love to teach using this program in full or different parts at different times. I look forward to trying to integrate what I have learned here.”

Speaking across her experiences in different Poetry in America programs, one participant shared that the Four Pillars framework for literary analysis is “the most important thing” she’s gained from Poetry in America courses: “I use that in all of my classes—every single one of my classes.”

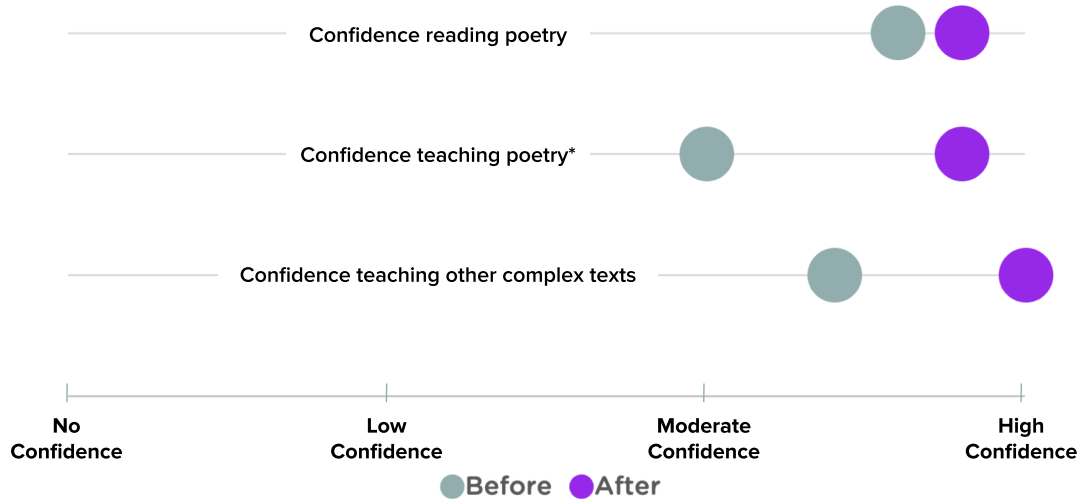
**Finding #2.2 | Participants reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to teach poetry and other complex texts following the pilot.**

Participants were significantly more confident in their ability to teach poetry after the pilot experience than before it ( $M_{\text{after}} = 1.2$ ;  $M_{\text{before}} = 2.0$ ;  $p < .05$ ).<sup>42</sup> The effect size was quite large ( $D = -1.8$ ). While none of the other results were statistically significant, observed effects on confidence teaching complex texts other than poetry were moderate to large ( $D = -.671$ ). Effects on

<sup>42</sup> Coding note: Lower scores indicate higher confidence.

confidence reading poetry, designing lessons that blend creative and critical analysis, and designing interdisciplinary lessons were approaching moderate ( $D=-.447$ ).

**Participants' confidence reading and teaching poetry & complex texts increased after the pilot.**



As shown in the figure above, before the pilot, participants felt only moderately confident teaching poetry, whereas they felt somewhat more confident in their ability to teach other types of complex texts (i.e., besides poetry)—and much more confident in their ability to read poetry.<sup>43</sup> Following the pilot, confidence levels increased across the board, but confidence teaching poetry saw the greatest increase: after the pilot, participants felt as confident teaching poetry as they did reading it.<sup>44</sup> In fact, this increase in confidence was so large that the change was statistically significant. Confidence teaching other types of complex texts also saw a sizable, but much smaller, increase following the pilot.

**Finding #2.3 | A majority of participants mentioned the value of being in community with other teachers during the pilot—and several expressed a desire for continued access to that community after the program's end.**

Most participants (80%) described the sense of community they felt with the other pilot enrollees as a valuable outcome of the program. For instance, a survey respondent, commenting on his or her enjoyment of the small- and full-group discussions during the pilot, expressed that “[i]t was also just nice to be in [a] small group of like minded people.” Three of the four interviewees, moreover, spoke to the professional benefits of being in a community of educators. One of

<sup>43</sup> Because participants opted into the pilot—which was explicitly about poetry—it is possible that they decided to enroll *because* they love poetry. This could explain, for example, why participants’ baseline level of confidence reading poetry was so high.

<sup>44</sup> It is worth drawing attention to the difference in participants’ baseline confidence levels *reading* and *teaching* poetry. That participants still had so much “room to grow” with regard to reading poetry emphasizes that reading and teaching are different skills—and further suggests that even avid poetry readers stand to benefit from formal training in poetry pedagogy.

these, a fifth-year teacher, especially appreciated the “melting pot of ideas and thoughts” generated when he had the opportunity to work with veteran teachers, and he spoke to the value of “working through [poetry] with other colleagues” and “pick[ing] their brain[s].”

But the benefits of being in a professional community were not limited to its more junior members. Two highly experienced educators echoed these sentiments in their interviews—and, in fact, regretted being unable to remain in community with their colleagues from the pilot. As one of them put it, “I would love for [Poetry in America for Educators] to be the start of a conversation with comrades who can circle back from time to time to update each other on progress.”

## Research Question 3 (Populations 1 and 2)

**CONTEXT | What are best practices for boosting enrollment in professional development programs? How can PIAE reduce existing barriers to participation in educator professional development?**

For this component of my research, I consulted PIAE pilot participants (Population 1), as well as representatives from other teacher professional development organizations (Population 2). Population 2 interviewees included Emily Kirkpatrick, Executive Director of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); Dr. Sarah Marder-Eppstein, Vice President of Teacher Professional Education at the Relay Graduate School of Education; Claire Kaplan, CEO of Fishtank Learning; and Alison Hernandez, Director of Professional Development and Learning at Arizona State University Prep Digital. I supplemented findings from my Population 2 interviews with a review of Population 2 organizations' websites, as well as broader literature on educator professional development.

**Finding #3.1 | Most Population 2 organizations use a business to business model for the bulk of their teacher recruitment, rather than relying on organic teacher enrollment in professional development sessions.**

Nearly all Population 2 interviewees indicated that their organizations work with schools or districts to offer synchronous teacher professional development programming. That is to say, these providers do not market most of their programs directly to teachers; rather, they market to schools and districts, who then commission the providers' services and encourage or require teachers to attend scheduled workshops.

- **Relay:** Dr. Marder-Eppstein shared that Relay works with school and district leaders to identify their needs and then makes recommendations about the best packages and sequences of offerings from the Relay catalog. She indicated that this dynamic facilitates synchronous virtual workshops because school principals can select times that work for their faculty members: Relay instructors can then drop in—in-person or, more often post-pandemic, virtually—to facilitate large-scale workshops, typically for whole-school audiences (i.e., to all teachers across disciplines).
- **Fishtank:** Fishtank's primary line of business is developing and licensing Math and English Language Arts curricula to K-12 schools. As such, Kaplan indicated that the majority of the nonprofit's professional development end users are teachers who use Fishtank curricula in their own teaching practice. Because entire schools tend to adopt Fishtank curricula, they offer much of their discipline-specific professional development programming to whole-school audiences (i.e., to all English Language Arts teachers in a school or all Math teachers in a school).
- **ASU Prep Digital:** Hernandez shared that ASU Prep Digital, like Relay, works with school and district leaders to identify and build packages around their professional development needs; some offerings are discipline-specific, whereas others are not. This model has



proved especially successful within Arizona, where the state Department of Education has set aside state-wide teacher professional development days each month.

Notably, each organization does offer some professional development programming in which teachers can enroll organically, but interviewees indicated that attendance at these sessions tends to be much lower.

**Finding #3.2 | Inclusion on states' or districts' lists of approved professional development providers helps to boost organic enrollment in those places; however, navigating approval processes is labor-intensive and expensive for programs serving teachers nationwide.**

Most Population 2 interviewees indicated that inclusion on schools' and districts' lists of approved professional development providers seems to boost attendance at “open enrollment” sessions, or those sessions open to all teachers (regardless of whether their schools have a formal business relationship with the provider).<sup>45</sup> However, both Kirkpatrick of the NCTE and Dr. Marder-Eppstein of Relay emphasized that the infrastructure required to secure these approvals, and maintain them over time, is substantial: processes differ from state to state and district to district, such that even just *researching* the requirements is time-intensive. As such, no providers interviewed had adopted a strategy of seeking approvals in all or even most markets (i.e., states and districts) nationwide.

On the one hand, Relay and ASU Prep Digital have so far focused their efforts on particular regions where they see high enrollment. Relay, for instance, is an approved Continuing Teaching and Leader Education (CTLE) sponsor, meaning that its programs confer approved professional development hours that count toward salary bumps in the state of New York (where many of its school partners are located). Dr. Marder-Eppstein did indicate that Relay only undertakes the bureaucratic “rigmarole” for other regions if it is launching major expansion campaigns in particular states. ASU Prep Digital's Hernandez did not describe the Arizona state and local education agencies' approval processes, but she did share that ASU Prep Digital sees the highest levels of organic attendance—and active engagement—from teachers in Arizona school districts that count ASU Prep Digital offerings when awarding salary increases using “301 money,” or when allowing teachers to use these credentials “to move up a step on the ladder” (e.g., the Chandler and Yuma districts).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Many states require teachers to earn a minimum number of professional development credits or clock hours annually, and some places offer salary bumps to teachers who participate in enough approved professional development programming. As such, teachers in theory have administrative and financial incentives to participate in professional development programs. In practice, though, many schools and districts offer enough programming “in-house” to enable teachers to earn all the professional development they need—which means that many teachers do not seek professional development from external providers. Teachers are even less inclined to seek external professional development if they would have to pay out of pocket. See Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and (BCG) Boston Consulting Group. *Teachers Know Best: Teachers' Views on Professional Development*: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Boston Consulting Group (BCG), 2014: 13.

<sup>46</sup> Arizona Office of the Auditor General. *Planned Uses of Proposition 301 Monies (Report Highlights)*: Arizona Office of the Auditor General, 2002.

While launching multiple approval campaigns may not be possible for smaller providers catering to national audiences, Fishtank and the NCTE identified alternate strategies that have been successful in their experience. Fishtank's Kaplan cited a private organization—Rivet Education—that is working (in Rivet's words) to “[i]mprove the quality of the professional learning marketplace by highlighting and fostering strong professional learning providers and by signaling to preexisting partners what constitutes high-quality professional learning.”<sup>47</sup> Rivet's Professional Learning Partner Guide provides a centralized place (“a searchable database of national and local professional learning providers”) where administrators can find professional development opportunities that a third party—importantly, not the provider organization itself—has deemed to be of quality.<sup>48</sup> In a similar vein, Kirkpatrick indicated that the NCTE has an agreement with a higher education provider, the University of San Diego (USD), which offers credit validation for teachers who participate in selected NCTE professional development programs (e.g., its national convention).<sup>49</sup> This “plug-and-play relationship” enables these NCTE professional learning experiences to count anywhere USD professional development credentials are recognized.<sup>50</sup>

It is worth noting that Population 1—that is, the pilot participants—did not seem overly concerned with professional development credentials.<sup>51</sup> For example, while the Population 1 exit survey explicitly asked teachers for feedback on the “credential conferred (15 professional development hours),” only two respondents commented. One indicated that he or she “would like to get the credential even though I don't need it for PD hours”; the other, based in Massachusetts, indicated that 15 hours perfectly matched “the size of one level of our different requirements.” He followed up in his interview, indicating that he does most of his professional development through an organization called The Connecting Link, which is “very much geared toward being on the radar of every state education department—of, like, ‘We are an approved—we are a place where your PD will be approved.’” He indicated that their content library was not very robust (hence the appeal of the PIAE program), but that Connecting Link offerings are “attractive” to him specifically

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<sup>47</sup> Rivet Education, Inc. "About the Professional Learning Partner Guide." Accessed March 11, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Rivet Education, Inc. "About the Professional Learning Partner Guide." Accessed March 11, 2023.

<sup>49</sup> See University of San Diego. "2022 New Perspectives on Primary Sources Project." Accessed March 11, 2023. This approach mirrors that of the National Writing Project, one of the most successful and widely known teacher professional development programs in the nation. Each project “site” operates independently but is affiliated with a local institution of higher education. See Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood. *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003.

<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, Kirkpatrick did note that, in cases where NCTE professional learning credentials were not recognized, the NCTE has had luck in helping teachers to get special approvals from their principals. By writing customized letters for teachers who ask for them, NCTE can sometimes convince principals to grant teachers the opportunity to participate in NCTE programs—or to recognize the credential after the fact. This process is not scalable, but it does suggest that principals in some districts have sufficient authority to recognize or grant approval for individual offerings.

<sup>51</sup> Of course, three of the pilot participants teach in New York City Public Schools, the largest public school district in the country. Because the New York market is so big, it seems plausible that many professional development providers—like Relay—seek approval from the New York State Department of Education. And so, the lack of concern may simply indicate that New York teachers have the luxury of having more experiences count in their state than not.

because he can easily tell which of their experiences will count, and for what requirements, in his state.

**Finding #3.3 | There was no consensus among professional development providers (Population 2) about the best ways to address the challenge of synchronous scheduling.**

All Population 2 interviewees discussed synchronous scheduling as a major challenge, but the consensus ended there. Each organization has taken a different approach to tackling said challenge:

- **NCTE:** Kirkpatrick indicated that, as a large membership organization, the NCTE has a “built-in audience,” which helps to draw attendees to their synchronous professional development programming. Even so, a few years ago, she tapped members of her staff to look into strategies for boosting attendance at synchronous virtual programs. They did not find any great answers. In Kirkpatrick’s words, “There was no magic formula” they could discern. Partly owing to these findings, and partly to the pandemic, the NCTE invested in building out its asynchronous professional learning library—where it posts (among other resources) recordings of the live webinar-style events it holds.<sup>52</sup>
- **Relay:** As discussed in Finding #3.1 above, Relay utilizes a business to business model, which makes synchronous programming possible. In fact, Dr. Marder-Eppstein’s top recommendation for Verse Video Education—if it hopes to move forward with synchronous offerings—was to move away from organic recruitment of teachers and to adopt a business to business model instead.
- **ASU Prep Digital:** ASU Prep Digital is using external funding to develop long-term market demand for its synchronous programming. In August 2020, the state of Arizona awarded ASU Prep Digital a \$7.5 million grant to offer no-cost professional development programming to Arizona’s K-12 educators—who suddenly found themselves teaching online or in hybrid format for the first time in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>53</sup> This programming will remain free to Arizona teachers (and districts) until ASU Prep Digital exhausts the grant resources—which they expect to do in June of 2024. As such, ASU Prep Digital currently offers virtual synchronous sessions several times per week (including on weekends), regardless of enrollment or attendance numbers. Hernandez indicated that ASU Prep Digital’s interim strategy is to offer continuous, high-quality programming while investing in relationships with districts, schools, and teachers. Their long-term hope is to generate demand for services that will outlive the grant period.<sup>54</sup>
- **Fishtank:** Fishtank, like Relay, operates on a business to business model and facilitates virtual synchronous sessions. Unlike Relay, however, Fishtank finds that its school partners’ collective appetite for *virtual* synchronous programming has waned post-COVID; low engagement on Zoom has been a significant problem. According to Kaplan, Fishtank

<sup>52</sup> See National Council of Teachers of English. "NCTE Video Library." Accessed March 11, 2023.

<sup>53</sup> Hannah Moulton Belec. "Arizona Virtual Teacher Institute Offering no-Cost Professional Development to Schools for another Year." *ASU News*, June 25, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Hernandez indicated that out-of-state teachers can participate in grant-affiliated programs, but they must pay for access.

schools crave in-person synchronous training, which is not scalable, and so Fishtank is developing a middle-ground approach: a train-the-trainer model. Conducted synchronously online, these train-the-trainer courses will prepare selected teachers at partner schools to deliver Fishtank professional development programs in person.

This wide variation in approaches suggests that—at least among this group—there is no established best practice for boosting organic teacher enrollment in synchronous professional development sessions.

**Finding #3.4 | In contrast, pilot interviewees (Population 1) were united in their preferences for synchronous session timing: summer is the best time for teacher professional development, followed by transitional times of year.**

Interestingly, pilot interviewees were united in their scheduling preferences: all four indicated that summer is the optimal time for teachers to participate in synchronous professional development programs. More specifically, three of the four interviewees indicated that the original timing of the PIAE pilot—late August, right before the start of the school year—would have been ideal for them.<sup>55</sup> One participant even indicated that, had the August session proceeded as planned, she “probably would have completed all the assignments, because [she] wasn't teaching at that time.”

**“So I would definitely say the best time would be the summertime [...] that's the time where teachers want to take advantage to kind of perfect their craft, because we're not confined to just the classroom.”**

**-Population 1 Interviewee**

The key to getting enough enrollees in a late-August session, one interviewee explained, is advertising the dates very far in advance: “And if you let people know in January that in late August we're going to have this thing, then they can plan their vacations around them.” He added that teachers with children of their own start registering for summer camps right after the winter break, and that knowing professional development dates early in the new year would enable them to schedule child care wisely.

While all interviewees expressed that synchronous professional development programming is harder for them to attend during the school year, most did think teachers could make just about anything work—if given enough notice. The amount of advance notice varied among interviewees: half of interviewees said two to three *months'* notice could work, while the other half indicated that two or three *weeks'* notice would be enough time. Importantly, one interviewee who expressed a preference for announcing sessions several months in advance shared that financial considerations, in addition to scheduling considerations, motivated her answer:

<sup>55</sup> This feedback aligns with “the central organizing unit” of National Writing Project sites: the summer institute, a multi-week professional learning intensive experience held (as you might expect from the name) during the summer months. See Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood. *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003: 33-36.

I would say **90 days is a good lead time for most people**. [...] Obviously, you know, no sooner than 60 days, I would say, because it's hard sometimes to work it into your schedule, but **it's also sometimes hard to work into your budget. So, you know, 90 days out I can start budgeting for that if it's not expensive.**

- Population 1 Interviewee

In addition, two interviewees indicated that scheduling offerings during transitional times of year—particularly the beginnings or ends of semesters—could yield larger enrollment numbers. One suggested that “right before we go into our breaks, like winter break,” could work well for teachers. The other indicated that the winter break itself—specifically, the “limbo zone” between “December 26th to, like, January 10th”—tends to be flexible for her and might work for others, as well.

### Finding #3.5 | Terminology in the professional development space is evolving; the phrases “professional development” and “content knowledge” are falling out of favor.

The education sector is full (perhaps overfull) of specialized language.<sup>56</sup> And that language is constantly evolving—even when it comes to such seemingly entrenched terms as “professional development.” Indeed, while professional development was the preferred term for nearly two decades, the NCTE in 2019 threw its support behind a new term: professional learning.<sup>57</sup> In a tellingly-entitled position statement—“Shifting from Professional Development to Professional Learning: Centering Teacher Empowerment”—the NCTE argued that “professional development” frames teachers as “passive recipients of knowledge,” whereas “professional learning” connotes “teacher agency” and reflects changes in established best practices for continuing teacher education.<sup>58</sup> Other organizations have followed suit—including several others in Population 2. Fishtank, like the NCTE, has opted for “professional learning,” whereas Relay has adopted an adjacent phrase: “professional education.”<sup>59</sup> Only ASU Prep Digital retains the term “professional development.”<sup>60</sup>

Other terms associated with professional development are falling out of favor, as well, as education researchers build consensus around best practices. Changes in attitudes toward the

<sup>56</sup> Hence the PIAE pilot participant’s somewhat disdainful references to “jargon” and “magic buzzwords” described in Finding #1.1.

<sup>57</sup> Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood. *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003: 2-3. See also National Council of Teachers of English. “Shifting from Professional Development to Professional Learning: Centering Teacher Empowerment.”

<sup>58</sup> National Council of Teachers of English. “Shifting from Professional Development to Professional Learning: Centering Teacher Empowerment.”

<sup>59</sup> Fishtank Learning. “Fishtank Professional Learning.” Accessed March 12, 2023. See also Relay Graduate School of Education. “Professional Education.” Accessed March 12, 2023.

<sup>60</sup> ASU Prep Digital. “Professional Development - ASU Prep Digital.” Accessed March 12, 2023.

word “content” are particularly relevant to the PIAE program, which prides itself on exposing teachers to “rich new content, along with approaches to teaching it.” A 2022 report from the Research Partnership for Professional Learning found that, at least for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) educators, professional development centered on “building content knowledge” or “subject matter knowledge” is substantially less effective at improving teaching practices than professional development centered on “subject-specific instructional practices.”<sup>61</sup> While the PIAE program’s “approaches to teaching” language suggests that its professional development offers *both* types of knowledge, the nuance may be lost on some.

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<sup>61</sup> Heather C. Hill and John P. Papay. *Building Better PL: How to Strengthen Teacher Learning*. The Research Partnership for Professional Learning, 2022.

## Limitations

### GENERALIZABILITY OF FINDINGS

- The **small sample size** of the Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE) pilot cohort (Population 1) and the professional development provider cohort (Population 2) limits the generalizability of findings beyond those considered in this study.
- Furthermore, because both Population 1 and Population 2 effectively “opted into” participating, this study utilized a **convenience sample**, which is the least rigorous sampling method.<sup>62</sup> Those who opted in may also differ from the general population in meaningful ways, which may impact the generalizability of findings to educators and to professional development providers more broadly.

### STUDY QUALITY

- The **small sample size** of the PIAE pilot cohort (Population 1) limits the predictive power of survey findings. However, program administrators did achieve a 100% response rate on the survey and an 80% response rate for the followup interviews for Population 1.
- The study’s **non-experimental design** does not enable a determination of causality. Observed outcomes may be attributable to factors outside the PIAE program, rather than to PIAE itself.
- PIAE participants in Population 1 (inclusive of both subgroups) who had participated in other Poetry in America programs **tended to give feedback across programs**. In other words, their feedback tended to draw on multiple experiences. This was particularly pronounced among those in Subgroup 1 (current PIAHS dual enrollment course facilitators), as all were participating in PIAHS concurrently with their participation in PIAE.<sup>63</sup> While I tried to ask questions in real time to disambiguate, and while I used context clues in respondents’ answers to tie feedback to relevant programs, I may not always have correctly determined what feedback actually pertained to PIAE itself.
- **Social desirability bias** among PIAE participants who sat for interviews (Population 1) may have been more pronounced because of interviewees’ knowledge that I (the interviewer) work for Verse Video Education and ASU. Interviewees may have given more favorable feedback than they would have if interviews had been conducted by someone outside the organization. However, all interviewees did offer critical feedback, as well, which suggests that the impacts of social desirability bias were limited.

<sup>62</sup> Claire Robertson-Kraft. “Quantitative Design” (Lecture presented in GAFL 641: Program Evaluation and Data Analysis at the University of Pennsylvania’s Fels Institute of Government, virtual, January 24, 2022).

<sup>63</sup> Because PIAHS featured virtual synchronous sessions for dual enrollment facilitators, some participant feedback referred to those experiences in addition to the synchronous experiences that were part of the PIAE experience; moreover, some discussion of asynchronous work blended feedback on the educators’ experience in the PIAE pilot with their students’ experience in PIAHS. For an overview of contamination (in the context of contamination of control groups with experimental conditions), see Joseph S. Wholey, Harry P. Hatry, and Kathryn E. Newcomer. *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*. Essential Texts for Nonprofit and Public Leadership and Management. 3. Aufl. ed. Vol. 19. Hoboken: Jossey-Bass, 2010: 147-8.

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- In addition, interviewees in the professional development provider cohort (Population 2) may have chosen not to share **proprietary information**. However, interviewees from Population 2 were incredibly generous with their time and shared far more information than I expected them to, which suggests that proprietary information was not as significant a concern as I had anticipated.



# Recommendations

## Recommendations for the Program

Across the board, pilot participants rated the Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE) program as a standout professional development experience. The following recommendations touch on elements of program design (see Recommendations 1 and 2), as well as strategies for scheduling and marketing future offerings (see Recommendations 2 through 5).

### **Recommendation #1 | Preserve the synchronous components of PIAE offerings, and consider adding prioritization cues to asynchronous prework.**

All participants enjoyed the PIAE pilot and indicated that both the synchronous Zoom sessions and the asynchronous course materials (i.e., the Canvas content) were engaging. However, it was infeasible for most participants to complete the asynchronous prework on top of their respective teaching loads.

- **Continue offering synchronous Zoom sessions.** Across the board, pilot exit survey respondents and interviewees reflected positively on small- and full-group discussions with the pilot instructor and fellow enrollees.
- **Continue designing synchronous sessions that can stand alone.** Teachers are pressed for time, especially during the school year. Continuing to design synchronous experiences such that doing “the homework” is not a prerequisite for enjoyment and active participation will enable every enrollee to have a valuable experience—even those who cannot get to all the asynchronous prework.
- **Consider adding prioritization cues to help teachers navigate asynchronous prework.** Although one Population 1 interviewee indicated that the instructor’s “welcome to the course” email offered reassurance that participants did not need to complete all the prework in order to attend the synchronous sessions, he suggested that explicitly flagging for teachers “the essential work” and the “ancillary” work would enable them to “streamline” more effectively.

### **Recommendation #2 | Incorporate more time for teachers to share their practice with one another, and create outlets for continuous community among PIAE enrollees.**

Participants valued being in a professional community with, and learning from, fellow teachers during the synchronous sessions. Adding more opportunities for enrollees to leverage one another’s expertise—during and after the synchronous Zoom sessions—stands to (1) improve the PIAE experience still further and (2) cultivate a network of engaged alumni who will become program ambassadors and even instructors.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> For more on the power of network learning, see Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood. *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003. See also Prenger, Rilana, Cindy L. Poortman, and Adam Handelzalts. “Professional Learning Networks: From Teacher Learning to School Improvement?” *Journal of Educational Change* 22, no. 1 (Feb 1, 2021): 13-52.

- **Build in more time for teachers to share their expertise.** Established best practices for teacher professional development point to the importance of making space for teachers to share their expertise with one another.<sup>65</sup> This theme emerged in interviews with both populations. For instance, Emily Kirkpatrick, the Executive Director of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), indicated that teachers are attracted to “authenticity”—that they want to learn from other teachers who have real, relatable experience in the field. All pilot participants echoed this sentiment. In the words of one interviewee, “Our peers are incredible resources! I don't mean to say that it should be substituted for anything PIA provided, but, with this many experienced teachers, we aren't starting from square one. Why not use us to make the resources richer?”
- **Create ways for cohorts of PIAE enrollees to stay in touch and to develop a greater sense of group identity.** Two pilot participants (40%) explicitly expressed that they wished they could stay in touch with their colleagues from the PIAE pilot, and most Population 1 interviewees (75%) indicated that they already use virtual convening spaces to connect with teachers outside their schools. One pointed to an email forum for Advanced Placement English Literature teachers that functions like a support group of sorts, and another described herself as an active user of teacher Facebook groups (more on this in Recommendation 3). Emulating these convening spaces would enable teachers to extend the collaborative learning experience beyond Verse Video Education’s synchronous professional development sessions, and it could foster a sense of group identity among members. This stronger sense of group identity may in turn make program alumni more enthusiastic program ambassadors—and perhaps even future instructors.<sup>66</sup>
- **Adopt the term “professional learning” instead of “professional development” to signal that offerings value teacher expertise and agency.** Align with the NCTE’s preferred terminology in order to communicate that teachers play a central role in creating and sharing knowledge during PIAE experiences.

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<sup>65</sup> The National Writing Project does this especially well: “Fundamentally democratic, the NWP model builds on the assumptions that teachers have built expertise from experience and that what they know needs to be valued and disseminated. [...] In short, the [summer] institutes have a definite curriculum, shaped both by the expertise of institute fellows and by current knowledge in the field of literacy. The curriculum stresses learning as a social phenomenon and teaching as a collective responsibility.” See Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood. *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003: 15. See also Linda Darling-Hammond, Maria E. Hylar, and Madelyn Gardner. *Effective Teacher Professional Development*, 2017. See also Heather C. Hill and John P. Papay. *Building Better PL: How to Strengthen Teacher Learning: The Research Partnership for Professional Learning*, 2022.

<sup>66</sup> Many Poetry in America enrollees—especially those who are K-12 educators—have gone on to become instructors in various Poetry in America programs. The National Writing Project (NWP) builds this expectation into their model even more explicitly: most NWP participants go on to become teacher consultants, referred to as TCs, who are “professionally authorized by the strength of their network’s reputation and their own enhanced sense of efficacy to teach other teachers in their buildings and districts.” See Ann Lieberman and Diane R. Wood. *Inside the National Writing Project: Connecting Network Learning and Classroom Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003: 19.

### Recommendation #3 | Leverage other teacher professional networks while growing the PIAE network.

When describing the other professional networks to which they belong, most Population 1 interviewees (75%) actually suggested that Poetry in America piggyback on those networks—formal and informal—to advertise future professional development offerings.

- **Partner with well-established institutions that serve English teachers—or at least advertise to their members.** Several of the networks mentioned serve large national audiences of teachers. One interviewee, an Advanced Placement English Literature teacher, mused, “I wonder if you if there's any opportunity to connect with the College Board.” Another suggested tapping into the NCTE, which he described as “[t]he place where English teachers seem to congregate.” He also mentioned the National Association of Independent Schools as a convening space for private school teachers.
- **Connect with educator-focused Facebook groups.** One participant, who has participated in other, full-semester Poetry in America offerings, shared that she finds most of her professional development offerings via recommendations from other teachers in Facebook groups. In fact, she mentioned that she first encountered Poetry in America for Teachers (i.e., Verse Video Education’s full-semester courses for teachers, offered via the Harvard Extension School) in a post to one of these Facebook groups. She suggested that Verse Video Education find ways to connect with group moderators in order to advertise on these pages more consistently:

I would say, if there's some way that you can—I don't want to use the word “infiltrate,” because I don't think that that's really the [...] right way to approach it. But **I think there's some way that you can become participants in those types of groups, and then establish a rapport with the owners in the groups, and ask if you can share—that, I think, would go a long way.**

- Population 1 Interviewee

### Recommendation #4 | Schedule future sessions well in advance, and prioritize offering sessions over the summer and at transitional times of year.

Population 1 interviewee feedback was unanimous: summer is the best time for teacher professional development, followed by other, transitional times of year when teaching loads tend to be lighter. But attending sessions at these times requires planning, and interviewees indicated that the key to boosting enrollment is advertising far enough in advance.

- **Schedule one or more offerings during the summer months, and consider piloting offerings at “transitional” times of year.** Conduct sessions over the summer, including a back-to-school session at the end of the season. As Poetry in America builds out its professional development catalog, consider scheduling some sessions at the beginning

and end of the spring semester, as well. Due to regional differences in academic calendars, offering the same sessions at staggered times (i.e., in early August and late August, in January and February, and in mid-May and mid-June) would allow Poetry in America to see which sessions are more popular—and whether continuing this staggered scheduling approach is sustainable.

- **Begin advertising at least 90 days in advance of term-time sessions—with even more lead time for summer sessions and those scheduled during breaks.** Pilot interviewee feedback indicated that synchronous experiences need to be advertised well in advance in order to maximize attendance. Summer sessions should be advertised in January or February of that year, and term-time offerings should be advertised at least 90 days in advance of the session start.

**Recommendation #5 | Emulate the NCTE’s and Fishtank’s “middle-ground” strategies for getting offerings approved: continue relying on ASU’s accreditation, and seek inclusion in Rivet Education’s Professional Learning Partner Guide.**

While most Population 1 interviewees did not seem overly concerned with accreditation, and while Population 2 feedback on the utility of seeking individual state- and district-level approvals was mixed, having accreditation certainly does not make professional development offerings any less appealing to teachers.<sup>67</sup> In fact, inclusion on approved professional development lists stands to put PIAE offerings within reach of more teachers, as it could (1) promote greater awareness of the offerings and (2) unlock state- and district-level funding to cover tuition costs. Given Verse Video Education’s small staff size, focusing on high-impact, low-investment strategies for seeking approvals is most actionable.

- **Continue offering professional development programs through ASU.** ASU’s Career Catalyst program, which focuses on professional development and other continuing education offerings, has the infrastructure to navigate state- and district-level approval processes. Continue leveraging ASU’s accreditation, and, as gaps in coverage become apparent, work with ASU to seek accreditation in those markets.
- **Simultaneously seek inclusion in Rivet Education’s Professional Learning Partner Guide.** Because some states and districts “green-light” offerings listed in Rivet Education’s Professional Learning Partner Guide, consider submitting PIAE offerings for Rivet Education’s approval. While this approach necessitates investing staff time in completing the Partner Guide application, the potential to gain approval in multiple markets simultaneously likely justifies the investment.

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<sup>67</sup> Again, this particular group of educators—given that one of them works in higher education, and three of them work in New York City Public Schools, an important market in which many providers tend to seek accreditation by default—may not be representative of teachers broadly when it comes to the importance they placed on provider accreditation.

## Recommendations for Future Research

The small Population 1 sample size motivates the recommendations below. Enrolling larger cohorts in PIAE offerings in the future will enable more robust quantitative analysis; moreover, larger sample sizes will enhance the generalizability of findings to teachers broadly.

- **Track enrollment trends in PIAE courses offered at different times of year.** If Verse Video Education implements Recommendation 4 above, continuing to track enrollment trends will be essential. Knowing when and—as new PIAE courses debut—how often teachers are likely to enroll will help the program team decide whether it makes sense to continue (1) targeting organic teacher enrollments and (2) growing its catalog of educator professional development offerings.
- **Continue surveying enrollees in future offerings, and consider implementing experimental study designs if enrollments grow large enough.** Continue to administer exit surveys to program participants (ideally, coupled with interviews or focus groups) in order to observe trends and to ensure continued enrollee satisfaction. As enrollment numbers grow, it may be possible to randomize some interventions (i.e., to try new techniques or formats with some groups but not with others) in order to make causal inferences. If numbers permit and staff time allows, consider implementing such studies in order to identify best practices—and to attribute outcomes to those best practices with a higher level of confidence.
- **Enroll larger populations of Poetry in America for High Schools (PIAHS) dual enrollment facilitators in PIAE courses in order to study the impact of teacher PIAE participation on student PIAHS performance.** This study had originally sought to compare PIAHS students whose dual enrollment facilitators participated in PIAE with PIAHS students whose dual enrollment facilitators had *not* participated in PIAE. In other words, one of this study's original research questions centered on determining whether teacher PIAE participation positively impacted student performance in PIAHS. Unfortunately, the small PIAE pilot population did not enable thorough investigation of this question. However, three PIAE participants were current PIAHS facilitators (i.e., they were in Subgroup 1), and two of their groups did earn average grades that were considerably higher than the coursewide average across dual enrollment learners (91.3% A and 88.0% B, compared to a coursewide average score of 78.5% C).<sup>68</sup> While we cannot definitively attribute better-than-average dual enrollment student performance to Co-Teacher participation in the PIAE pilot, these preliminary findings are encouraging, and they suggest that further research is merited.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Verse Video Education, Inc., and Arizona State University. "Fall 2022 Poetry in America for High Schools Student Performance Data."

<sup>69</sup> All three teachers in Subgroup 1 were new to the PIAHS program—meaning that they had never served as dual enrollment program facilitators for PIAHS courses before. While we cannot attribute differences in student outcomes to teachers' PIAE participation, it is nonetheless intriguing that teacher experience in PIAE was not a potential confounding factor (i.e., students' better-than-average performance cannot be attributed to teachers' prior experience teaching in the PIAHS program).

## Conclusion

### STUDY RECAP

Conducted on behalf of the educational media nonprofit Verse Video Education, this study gauged participants' self-reported satisfaction with and outcomes following the Poetry in America for Educators (PIAE) pilot, a virtual hybrid teacher professional development program conducted in October of 2022. In addition, the study sought to identify ways in which Verse Video Education can boost teacher enrollment in this and similar programs in the future. Broadly, the study's findings indicate the following:

- **Participant satisfaction:** All participants were satisfied with their experience, and most regarded PIAE as superior to prior professional development experiences from other providers. Participants had small, actionable recommendations for program improvement.
- **Participant outcomes:** The program succeeded in achieving Verse Video Education's primary aims; moreover, it is already impacting most pilot participants' teaching practices.
- **Future enrollment:** While interviews with providers from other professional development organizations did not elucidate established best practices for boosting teacher enrollment in synchronous programming, PIAE interviewees consistently indicated that summer scheduling, as well as advertising programming well in advance, are key to signing on more teachers for synchronous professional development.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDY FINDINGS

Teachers are crucial to students' growth and development—perhaps more now than ever as they work to help students recover from unprecedented levels of academic and socioemotional learning loss following the COVID-19 pandemic. But teachers are in short supply, and educator turnover rates, as well as reported burnout and job dissatisfaction levels, are alarmingly high. Well designed teacher professional development programming offers a potentially scalable way to help teachers help students succeed—now and in the longer term.

This study's findings can help Verse Video Education improve the PIAE program design and grow its enrollment population in the future. Moreover, these findings contribute to the growing body of research in the professional development field, offering (for instance) insight into how hybrid virtual program delivery can enable optimal program design features to succeed—and perhaps even to scale. Future research by Verse Video Education and other providers should consider whether enacting scheduling and marketing recommendations from PIAE pilot participants has a measurable impact on enrollment numbers—because scaling high quality professional development *programs* stands to scale improved *outcomes* for teachers and students alike.

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## Appendix: Survey Questions

### Introductory Text for Survey

Introduction	<p>Thank you for participating in the pilot run of <i>Poetry in America for Educators: The City from Whitman to Hip Hop</i> at Arizona State University! We are eager to learn more about your experience in this program. We would appreciate your completing this survey, which should take no more than 10-12 minutes of your time.</p> <p>This survey is completely anonymous, and all questions are optional. Your candid feedback will help us to improve this and other professional development courses in the future. Thank you for helping us to design the best possible learning experiences for educators!</p> <p>Those who complete the survey will have the option to share their email if they would like to receive a \$20 DoorDash gift card as thanks for your participation.</p> <p><i>Note: This evaluation is being conducted as part of a capstone project for the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania.</i></p>
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### Survey Questions (aligned to questions/key indicators)

Evaluation Question	Indicator(s)	#	Survey Question
<b>OPENING QUESTIONS</b>			
This section asks about your relationship to the broader Poetry in America program, which includes a suite of professional development offerings and a dual enrollment program for high-schoolers.			
	Prior PiA PD experience?	1	Have you participated in prior Poetry in America professional development offerings in the past (e.g., through the Harvard Division of Continuing Education)? a. Yes b. No c. Unsure
	Dual enrollment facilitation in the coming year? (yes/no & which course)	2	Are you currently a Co-Teacher for the Fall 2022 Poetry in America Universal Learner (dual enrollment) Course? a. Yes b. No c. Unsure
	Prior PiA dual enrollment course facilitation experience?	3	Prior to the Fall 2022 semester, had you ever taught a Poetry in America Universal Learner (dual enrollment) Course? a. Yes b. No c. Unsure
<b>[IMPLEMENTATION] FEEDBACK ON THE PROGRAM</b>			

This section asks about your experience in the Poetry in America for Educators program overall. Please reflect on your level of satisfaction with this program, and how it compares to prior professional development experiences you may have had.			
<p>[implementation]</p> <p>EQ 1: How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program? How does this compare to past PD experiences?</p>	<p>-Participants' perceived level of satisfaction following the program run</p> <p>-Participants' perceptions of how engaging the program curriculum was</p> <p>-Participants' satisfaction with the hybrid program format</p> <p>-Share of participants who would recommend the program to a friend or colleague</p>	4-10	<p>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The pre-session/asynchronous workload for this experience was manageable.</li> <li>2. The pre-session/asynchronous content (videos, readings, prose in Canvas) was engaging.</li> <li>3. The synchronous (Zoom) commitment was manageable.</li> <li>4. The synchronous sessions (Zoom) were engaging.</li> <li>5. I enjoyed this program overall.</li> <li>6. I would take another Poetry in America for Educators course in the future.</li> <li>7. I would recommend this course to a colleague or friend.</li> </ol> <p><b>Scale:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Strongly Agree</b></li> <li>2. <b>Agree</b></li> <li>3. <b>Disagree</b></li> <li>4. <b>Strongly Disagree</b></li> </ol>
<p>[implementation]</p> <p>EQ 1: <b>How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program?</b> How does this compare to past PD experiences?</p>	<p>-Perception that the level of input/effort is comparable to the # of PD hours conferred</p>	11	<p><b>DROPDOWN / TEXT ENTRY</b></p> <p>How many total hours did you spend on the asynchronous prep work (inclusive of both sessions)?</p>
<p>[implementation]</p> <p>EQ 1: How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program?</p>	<p>-Participants' perceptions of how the program/curriculum differed from prior professional</p>	12	<p>How does the quality of this program compare with prior professional development experiences you've had?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Far better</li> <li>b. Better</li> <li>c. About the same</li> <li>d. Worse</li> <li>e. Far worse</li> </ol>

<b>How does this compare to past PD experiences?</b>	development experiences		f. N/A; this is my first professional development experience, or my prior experiences are not comparable.
[implementation]  EQ 1: How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program? How does this compare to past PD experiences?	-Participants' perceived level of satisfaction following the program run  -Participants' perceptions of how engaging the program curriculum was	13	<b>SHORT-ANSWER</b> What did you enjoy about the program's format? What worked well?
[implementation]  EQ 1: How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program? How does this compare to past PD experiences?	-Participants' perceived level of satisfaction following the program run  -Participants' perceptions of how engaging the program curriculum was	14	<b>SHORT-ANSWER</b> What didn't you enjoy about the program's format? What didn't work well?
[implementation]  EQ 1: How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program? How does this compare to past PD experiences?	-Participants' perceptions of how the program/curriculum differed from prior professional development experiences	15	<b>SHORT-ANSWER</b> Please share any additional feedback about how the program compares to prior professional development experiences you've had.
[implementation]  EQ 1: <b>How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program?</b>	-Perception of program value (professional incentive, value for money)	16	Are professional development hours useful to you? (E.g., do they contribute to salary points or professional advancement in your district or school?) a. Yes b. No c. Unsure d. N/A; I am not currently an educator.

How does this compare to past PD experiences?			
[implementation]  EQ 1: <b>How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program?</b> How does this compare to past PD experiences?	-Perception of program value (professional incentive, value for money)	17	Did you feel the price point for this program was reasonable? a. Yes b. No c. Unsure
[implementation]  EQ 1: <b>How satisfied were participants with their experience in the program?</b> How does this compare to past PD experiences?	-Perception of program value (professional incentive, value for money)	18	<b>SHORT-ANSWER</b> Please let us know if you have any additional feedback on the program's price or the credential conferred (15 professional development hours). Suggestions welcome!
<b>[OUTCOMES] FEEDBACK ON PROGRAM IMPACT</b>			
This section asks you to reflect on how the program has impacted you and/or your teaching practice.			
[outcomes]  EQ 2: What impact is the program having on educators? To what extent will this program impact participants' teaching practice? <b>What elements of the program did they find most/least useful, and what did they learn</b>		19-30	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics BEFORE participating in this program. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confidence reading poetry</li> <li>2. Confidence teaching poetry</li> <li>3. Confidence teaching complex texts other than poetry</li> <li>4. Confidence designing lessons that blend creative and critical reading and writing</li> <li>5. Confidence designing interdisciplinary lessons (e.g., blending history and literature)</li> </ol> Please rate yourself on the below characteristics AFTER participating in this program. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Confidence reading poetry</li> <li>7. Confidence teaching poetry</li> <li>8. Confidence teaching complex texts other than poetry</li> <li>9. Confidence designing lessons that blend creative and critical reading and writing</li> <li>10. Confidence designing interdisciplinary lessons (e.g., blending history and literature)</li> </ol>

the most/least from?			<p><b>Scale:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High Confidence</li> <li>2. Moderate Confidence</li> <li>3. Low Confidence</li> <li>4. No Confidence</li> <li>5. Unsure</li> <li>6. N/A</li> </ol>
[outcomes]  EQ 2: What impact is the program having on educators? <b>To what extent do participants plan to use what they learned in their own classrooms/schools?</b>	Perceived utility	31-35	<p>What is the likelihood that you will use the following elements from Poetry in America for Educators in your own teaching?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One or more poems covered</li> <li>2. One or more course videos</li> <li>3. The Four Pillars framework for literary analysis</li> <li>4. Some of the activities modeled in class (e.g., Mentor Texts, Focused Annotation, Generative Writing)</li> <li>5. Some of the critical writing concepts presented (e.g., on generating thesis statements, key conceptual terms, mid-level abstractions)</li> </ol> <p><b>Scale:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High Likelihood</li> <li>2. Moderate Likelihood</li> <li>3. Low Likelihood</li> <li>4. No Likelihood</li> <li>5. N/A</li> </ol>
[outcomes]  EQ 2: <b>What impact is the program having on educators? To what extent do participants plan to use what they learned in their own classrooms/schools?</b>		36	<p><b>SHORT-ANSWER</b></p> <p>Please share any additional feedback about whether/how this program will impact your teaching practice.</p>
		37	<p><b>SHORT-ANSWER</b></p> <p>Is there anything else you would like to tell us?</p>

### Survey Questions (closing demographic questions)

Indicator	#	Survey Question
<b>CLOSING DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS</b>		



This section seeks to gather a bit more information about you. As with the prior sections, all of the following questions are optional.		
Role of participant on campus	38	Which of the following best describes your role on your school's campus? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher</li> <li>2. Instructional Coach</li> <li>3. Administrator</li> <li>4. Counselor</li> <li>5. Other [please specify]</li> </ol>
Grade level of students	39	If you are currently teaching, which grade level(s) do you teach? Choose all that apply. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elementary/primary</li> <li>2. Middle school</li> <li>3. High school</li> <li>4. Post-secondary</li> <li>5. Other [please specify]</li> <li>6. N/A.</li> </ol>
Subject area	40	If you are currently teaching, what subject area(s) do you teach? Choose all that apply <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. English Language Arts</li> <li>2. Writing / Composition</li> <li>3. Social Studies / History</li> <li>4. Arts</li> <li>5. Science</li> <li>6. World Languages</li> <li>7. Math</li> <li>8. Special Education</li> <li>9. N/A</li> <li>10. Other [please specify]</li> </ol>
School info	41	If you are currently working at a school, which of the following best describes your school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Public</li> <li>b. Public Charter</li> <li>c. Private / Independent</li> <li>d. Institution of Higher Education</li> <li>e. N/A</li> <li>f. Other [please specify]</li> </ol>
School info	42	If you are currently working at a school, do you work in a Title I school? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Yes</li> <li>b. No</li> <li>c. Unsure</li> <li>d. N/A</li> </ol>
Years of teaching experience	43	<b>TEXT ENTRY</b> How many years of teaching experience do you have?
Perception of program value (professional)	44	Which best describes how your program tuition was covered? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. I paid out of pocket and do not plan to be reimbursed.</li> <li>b. My school or district paid or will reimburse me.</li> <li>c. The National Education Equity Lab paid.</li> </ol>

incentive, value for money) (Connects to EQ 1, but likely sensitive to come in part 1 of survey)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Other</li> <li>e. Prefer not to answer</li> <li>f. Unsure</li> </ul>
Gender	45	<p>How do you currently describe your gender identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Female</li> <li>b. Male</li> <li>c. Non-binary</li> <li>d. Gender non-conforming</li> <li>e. I prefer to self-describe [text entry]</li> <li>f. Prefer not to answer</li> </ul>
Race	46	<p>I identify as (select all that apply):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. American Indian or Alaska Native</li> <li>b. Asian</li> <li>c. Black or African-American</li> <li>d. Hispanic or Latino</li> <li>e. Middle Eastern or North African</li> <li>f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</li> <li>g. White</li> <li>h. Prefer to self-describe</li> <li>i. Prefer not to answer</li> </ul>
<b>CLOSING TEXT</b>		
<p>Thank you very much for taking the time to share your feedback on the Poetry in America for Educators pilot! If you would like to receive a \$20 DoorDash gift card, please enter your email below. <i>(Note: The email address you enter here will be separated from your feedback prior to analysis to ensure that your answers remain anonymous.)</i></p>		
Email	47	<p><b>TEXT ENTRY</b> Please provide the email address to which your gift card should be sent.</p>

## Appendix: Codebook

Question #	Question Text	Variable Label	Variable Type	Question Type	Response Options	Other Notes
Q1	Have you participated in prior Poetry in America professional development offerings in the past (e.g., through the Harvard Division of Continuing Education)?	Q1_Past PiA	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Yes 2 = No 0 = Unsure	Recorded
Q2	Are you currently a Co-Teacher for the Fall 2022 Poetry in America Universal Learner (dual enrollment) Course?	Q2_Current CT	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Yes 2 = No 0 = Unsure	Recorded
Q3	Prior to the Fall 2022 semester, had you ever taught a Poetry in America Universal Learner (dual enrollment) Course?	Q3_Prior CT Experience	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Yes 2 = No 0 = Unsure	Recorded
Q4_1	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - The pre-session/asynchronous workload for this experience was manageable.	Q4_1_Asynch Workload	Ordinal	Scale	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree	
Q4_2	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - The pre-session/asynchronous content (videos, readings, prose in	Q4_2_Asynch Content Quality	Ordinal	Scale	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree	

	Canvas) was engaging.					
Q4_3	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - The synchronous (Zoom) commitment was manageable.	Q4_3_Synch Workload	Ordinal	Scale	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree	
Q4_4	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - The synchronous sessions (Zoom) were engaging.	Q4_4_Synch Quality	Ordinal	Scale	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree	
Q4_5	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I enjoyed this program overall.	Q4_5_Overall Enjoyment	Ordinal	Scale	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree	
Q4_6	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I would take another Poetry in America for Educators course in the future.	Q4_6_Take Another Course	Ordinal	Scale	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree	
Q4_7	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I would recommend this course to a colleague or friend.	Q4_7_Recommend Course	Ordinal	Scale	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree	
Q11	How many total hours did you spend on the pre-session/asynchronous prep work (inclusive of both sessions)?	Q11_Hours on Asynch Work	Continuous	Text Entry		

Q12	How does the quality of this program compare with prior professional development experiences you've had?	Q12_MC Comparison to Prior PD	Ordinal	Multiple Choice	1 = Far better 2 = Better 3 = About the same 4 = Worse 5 = Far worse 0 = N/A; this is my first professional development experience, or my prior experiences are not comparable.	Recorded
Q13	What did you enjoy about the program's format? What worked well?	Q13_TE Program Positives	Qualitative	Text Entry		
Q14	What didn't you enjoy about the program's format? What didn't work well?	Q14_TE Program Negatives	Qualitative	Text Entry		
Q15	Please share any additional feedback about how the program compares to prior professional development experiences you've had.	Q15_TE Comparison Prior PD	Qualitative	Text Entry		
Q16	Are professional development hours useful to you? (E.g., do they contribute to salary points or professional advancement in your district or school?)	Q16_MC PD Hrs Utility	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Yes 2 = No 0 = Unsure 3 = N/A; I am not currently an educator.	Recorded
Q17	Did you feel the price point for this program was reasonable?	Q17_MC Price Point	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Yes 2 = No 0 = Unsure	Recorded

Q18	Please let us know if you have any additional feedback on the program's price or the credential conferred (15 professional development hours). Suggestions welcome!	Q18_TE Hrs and Price	Qualitative	Text Entry		
Q19_1	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics BEFORE participating in this program. - Confidence reading poetry	Q19_1_Read Poetry BEFORE	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recoded
Q19_2	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics BEFORE participating in this program. - Confidence teaching poetry	Q19_2_Teach Poetry BEFORE	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recoded
Q19_3	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics BEFORE participating in this program. - Confidence teaching complex texts other than poetry	Q19_3_Teach Cplx Texts BEFORE	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recoded

Q19_4	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics BEFORE participating in this program. - Confidence designing lessons that blend creative and critical reading and writing	Q19_4_Creative Crit LPs BEFORE	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recorded
Q19_5	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics BEFORE participating in this program. - Confidence designing interdisciplinary lessons (e.g., blending history and literature)	Q19_5_Interdisciplinary LPs BEFORE	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recorded
Q20_1	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics AFTER participating in this program. - Confidence reading poetry	Q20_1_Read Poetry AFTER	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recorded
Q20_2	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics AFTER participating in this program. - Confidence teaching poetry	Q20_2_Teach Poetry AFTER	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recorded

Q20_3	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics AFTER participating in this program. - Confidence teaching complex texts other than poetry	Q20_3_Teach Cplx Texts AFTER	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recorded
Q20_4	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics AFTER participating in this program. - Confidence designing lessons that blend creative and critical reading and writing	Q20_4_Creative Crit LPs AFTER	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recorded
Q20_5	Please rate yourself on the below characteristics AFTER participating in this program. - Confidence designing interdisciplinary lessons (e.g., blending history and literature)	Q20_5_Interdisciplinary LPs AFTER	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Confidence 2 = Moderate Confidence 3 = Low Confidence 4 = No Confidence 0 = Unsure 5 = N/A	Recorded
Q22_1	What is the likelihood that you will use the following elements from Poetry in America for Educators in your own teaching? - One or more poems covered	Q22_1_Use Poems	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Likelihood 2 = Moderate Likelihood 3 = Low Likelihood 4 = No Likelihood 0 = N/A	Recorded
Q22_2	What is the likelihood that you will use the following elements from Poetry in America for	Q22_2_Use Videos	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Likelihood 2 = Moderate Likelihood	Recorded



	Educators in your own teaching? - One or more course videos				3 = Low Likelihood 4 = No Likelihood 0 = N/A	
Q22_3	What is the likelihood that you will use the following elements from Poetry in America for Educators in your own teaching? - The Four Pillars framework for literary analysis	Q22_3_Use 4 Pillars	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Likelihood 2 = Moderate Likelihood 3 = Low Likelihood 4 = No Likelihood 0 = N/A	Recorded
Q22_4	What is the likelihood that you will use the following elements from Poetry in America for Educators in your own teaching? - Some of the activities modeled in class (e.g., Mentor Texts, Focused Annotation, Generative Writing)	Q22_4_Use Activities	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Likelihood 2 = Moderate Likelihood 3 = Low Likelihood 4 = No Likelihood 0 = N/A	Recorded
Q22_5	What is the likelihood that you will use the following elements from Poetry in America for Educators in your own teaching? - Some of the critical writing concepts presented (e.g., on generating thesis statements, key conceptual terms, mid-level abstractions)	Q22_5_Use Writing Concepts	Ordinal	Scale	1 = High Likelihood 2 = Moderate Likelihood 3 = Low Likelihood 4 = No Likelihood 0 = N/A	Recorded
Q23	Please share any additional feedback about whether/how this program will impact your teaching practice.	Q23_TE Impact Teaching Practice	Qualitative	Text Entry		

Q24	Which of the following best describes your role on your school's campus? - Selected Choice	Q24_MC Role	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Teacher 2 = Instructional Coach 3 = Administrator 4 = Counselor 5 = Other [please specify]	
Q24_5_T EXT	Which of the following best describes your role on your school's campus? - Other [please specify] - Text	Q24_5_TE Role	Qualitative	Text Entry		
Q25	If you are currently teaching, which grade level(s) do you teach? Choose all that apply. - Selected Choice	Q25_MC Grade Level	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Elementary/primary 2 = Middle school 3 = High school 4 = Post-secondary 5 = Other [please specify] 0 = N/A.	Recorded
Q25_5_T EXT	If you are currently teaching, which grade level(s) do you teach? Choose all that apply. - Other [please specify] - Text	Q25_5_TE Grade Level	Qualitative	Text Entry		
Q26	If you are currently teaching, what subject area(s) do you teach? Choose all that apply - Selected Choice	Q26_Subject Area	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = English Language Arts 2 = Writing / Composition 3 = Social Studies / History 4 = Arts 5 = Science 6 = World Languages	Recorded

					7 = Math 8 = Special Education 0 = N/A 9 = Other [please specify]	
Q26_10_TEXT	If you are currently teaching, what subject area(s) do you teach? Choose all that apply - Other [please specify] - Text	Q26_10_TE Subject Area	Qualitative	Text Entry		
Q27	If you are currently working at a school, which of the following best describes your school?	Q27_School Type	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Public 2 = Public Charter 3 = Private / Independent 4 = Institution of Higher Education 0 = N/A 5 = Other [please specify]	Recorded
Q28	If you are currently working at a school, do you work in a Title I school?	Q28_Title I	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Yes 2 = No 0 = Unsure 3 = N/A	Recorded
Q29	How many years of teaching experience do you have?	Q29_TE Years Teaching	Continuous	Text Entry		
Q30	Which best describes how your program tuition was covered?	Q30_Tuition	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = I paid out of pocket and do not plan to be reimbursed. 2 = My school or district paid or will reimburse me. 3 = The National Education Equity Lab paid.	Recorded

					4 = Other 5 = Prefer not to answer 0 = Unsure	
Q31	How do you currently describe your gender identity? - Selected Choice	Q31_Gender	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = Female 2 = Male 3 = Non-binary 4 = Gender non-conforming 5 = I prefer to self-describe [text entry] 6 = Prefer not to answer	
Q31_5_T EXT	How do you currently describe your gender identity? - I prefer to self-describe - Text	Q31_5_TE Gender	Qualitative	Text Entry		
Q32	I identify as (select all that apply): - Selected Choice	Q32_Race Ethnicity	Categorical	Multiple Choice	1 = American Indian or Alaska Native 2 = Asian 3 = Black or African-American 4 = Hispanic or Latino 5 = Middle Eastern or North African 6 = Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 7 = White 8 = Prefer to self-describe 9 = Prefer not to answer	
Q32_8_T EXT	I identify as (select all that apply): - Prefer to self-describe - Text	Q32_8_TE Race Ethnicity	Qualitative	Text Entry		

## Appendix: Population 1 Interview Protocol

### OPENING SCRIPT

Hi, I'm Caitlin. Thank you so much for your time today. I'm conducting this interview as part of an evaluation of our Poetry in America for Educators pilot. I'll begin by laying out some information about what I'm hoping to discuss and learn, and then I'll give you an overview of what to expect during our conversation.

### Goals for Conversation

First, some goals. I'd love to learn a little bit more about your experience in the Poetry in America for Educators pilot specifically. Then, the bulk of our conversation will focus on what you value and enjoy in professional development experiences—and how you learn about them and decide to participate. One of our major goals is to boost program enrollment in future years, so I'm hoping to learn more from you about how you and your colleagues get connected with professional development opportunities.

### Logistics

Next, some housekeeping and information about what you can expect today:

- I want to start off by assuring you that your name will not be connected to anything you say in any materials that are shared with Poetry in America or ASU leadership, or materials that are published in any capacity.
- You're welcome to share thoughts or ideas that go beyond the questions I ask: the questions are meant to guide, rather than to limit!
- I anticipate our conversation will last no more than 45 minutes (including my whole spiel right now!!).
- And, finally, before we dive in, can I have your permission to record this session? (I would love to focus on our conversation, rather than taking notes the whole time.)

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### SECTION 1: BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

*Okay, let's get started.*

1. **Could you begin by telling me what subject area(s) and grade level(s) you teach?**
2. [If more warmup helpful] What is your favorite text/topic to teach?

### SECTION 2: SATISFACTION WITH THE PILOT FORMAT (ALIGNED TO EQ 1 AND EQ3)

*Shifting gears a bit, I'd like to talk about the Poetry in America for Educators pilot. We got a lot of useful data on our exit survey—thank you for filling that out!--and so I won't repeat those questions here. But I would like to learn more about your thoughts on format especially.*

**3. Thinking about this professional development experience specifically, how did you feel about the ratio of synchronous (Zoom) time to asynchronous time (time doing things on your own in Canvas)? And how valuable is virtual synchronous engagement to you in a PD experience?**

- *[Optional followup/if not answered]* Were you able to complete the asynchronous work in Canvas prior to—or even after—the live sessions? If so, how much of it would you say you got through?

4. *[If not answered]* One of the options we are considering is providing a fully asynchronous experience (10 PD hours) with an optional synchronous (Zoom) add-on component (5 hours). Would that format appeal to you? To your colleagues?

### **SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAXIMIZING TEACHER PARTICIPATION (ALIGNED WITH EQ3)**

*Shifting gears again, let's move from the pilot specifically to professional development experiences broadly.*

**5. There are a lot of professional development options out there. What features of a professional development experience are *most* important to you and your colleagues? What makes you want to enroll?**

**6. What would you recommend as the best way to reach interested teachers? (E.g., word of mouth, advertising in certain types of places, integrating with student curriculum/learning experiences)**

- *[If followup is needed]* How do you and your colleagues hear about most of the PD opportunities you participate in?

**7. When is the best time for you to participate in PD? (Days of the week, times of the day, seasons of the year...)**

- *[If not covered]* How far in advance do you need to know about PD offerings to make attendance feasible?

**8. *[If not covered]* Is there another PD experience you've found especially valuable? What was it, and who offered it? Can you tell me about it?**

### **SECTION 4: CONCLUDING QUESTIONS**

*Okay, just a few more questions.*

9. Do you have any other suggestions for how we could get more teachers to enroll in our professional development offerings? (E.g., pricing, credentialing, marketing, scheduling.)

10. Would any other professional development topics, etc, be useful to you?

**11. Is there any other feedback, etc., you would like to share?**

## Appendix: Population 2 Interview Protocol

Poetry in America has long offered a set of full-semester K-12 educator professional development courses for graduate credit (or 90 PD hours). These video-based courses are largely asynchronous, with some synchronous virtual engagement. They are offered according to a predictable schedule and continue to draw consistent enrollment. We've heard from teachers, though, that they can't always commit to a full-semester for-credit experience, and that they'd love for us to offer some shorter-form PD experiences. We are eager to learn from others who have experience in this space. If there are matters you can't speak to, that's completely fine—I'm appreciative of anything you can share!

- **Design:** This set of questions speaks to what your organization's PD experiences look like, just to provide some context for our conversation.
  - Are there synchronous components? Asynchronous components?
  - Are your experiences in-person or virtual? A mix?
  - Are they interactive, or more presentation-based?
  - How long are the experiences? What kinds of credentials do they confer?
  - How many participants *can* these experiences accommodate? And how many participants *do* these experiences typically accommodate?
- **Challenges**
  - What are the challenges you encounter in recruitment?
  - What are the obstacles you perceive in connecting teachers with the right PD?
- **Predictors**
  - What are the key factors that predict robust participation in teacher PD or prevent that participation? How much is cost a factor?
- **General**
  - Are there any other major "lessons learned"? Advice or knowledge you wish you'd had when first implementing your PD offerings?