# Developing guiding principles for the Socially-Just Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (SJ-TPSR) approach: lessons learned from a collaborative self-study

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper, we developed guiding principles for the Socially-Just Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (SJ-TPSR) approach, focusing on how these principles were formed and what they entail. Drawing on a 12-month collaborative self-study (consisting of eight teacher educators across three countries), we identified key lessons learned from the enactment of the SJ-TPSR approach. Our discussion provides four guiding principles for enactment: (i) Foster reflexive practice through collaboration and/or theoretical grounding; (ii) Integrate a clear and explicit personal and social responsibility learning intention; (iii) Prioritise responsiveness over fidelity; and (iv) Place the learners (and their social justice matters) at the centre of the SJ-TPSR approach. These principles offer guidance for the enactment of the SJ-TPSR approach, supporting its capacity to advance social justice within educational settings. Our hope is that in providing empirically informed guiding principles, the reader feels encouraged and motivated to enact the SJ-TPSR in their own context.

## Introduction

The Socially-Just Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (SJ-TPSR) approach (Scanlon et al., 2022; 2024) is a reimagining of Hellison's (2011) Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model through a social justice lens. While TPSR has long been a pedagogical model for promoting personal and social responsibility (PSR),

the SJ-TPSR approach is an adaptation providing one example of how we (as a field) might build on an effective pedagogical model to respond to the pressing need for equity and social justice in physical education (Lynch et al., 2022). Having conceptually designed the SJ-TPSR approach, there was a need to critically examine how we, as teacher educators, were making sense of this innovation in practice (Iannucci et al., 2023). By collectively enacting and discussing our experiences, we sought to understand how social justice matters can be meaningfully integrated into physical education contexts (Flory & Walton-Fisette, 2015). The purpose of this paper was to draw on lessons learned from physical education teacher education (PETE) teacher educators enacting the SJ-TPSR approach to co-construct guiding principles to support pedagogical decision-making in future enactments of the approach. We offer these as guiding principles – rather than a set of definitive rules – that may provide potential to support the enactment of the approach and provide teacher educators, pre-service teachers (PSTs), and in-service teachers with practical direction to inform their practice. We begin this paper by briefly discussing the SJ-TPSR approach before moving onto the use of the term 'guiding principles' and methodology of the research. We then share our lessons learned that informed the guiding principles of the SJ-TPSR. We encourage readers to engage with the Special Issue 'Reimagining Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) within Health and Physical Education Curriculum: Exploring the Transformative Potential of the Socially-Just TPSR Approach' (Scanlon et al., Under Review) to push their thinking around the SJ-TPSR approach and the TPSR model from a critical perspective; honouring Hellison's (2011) questions: What's worth doing: Is it working? and What's possible?
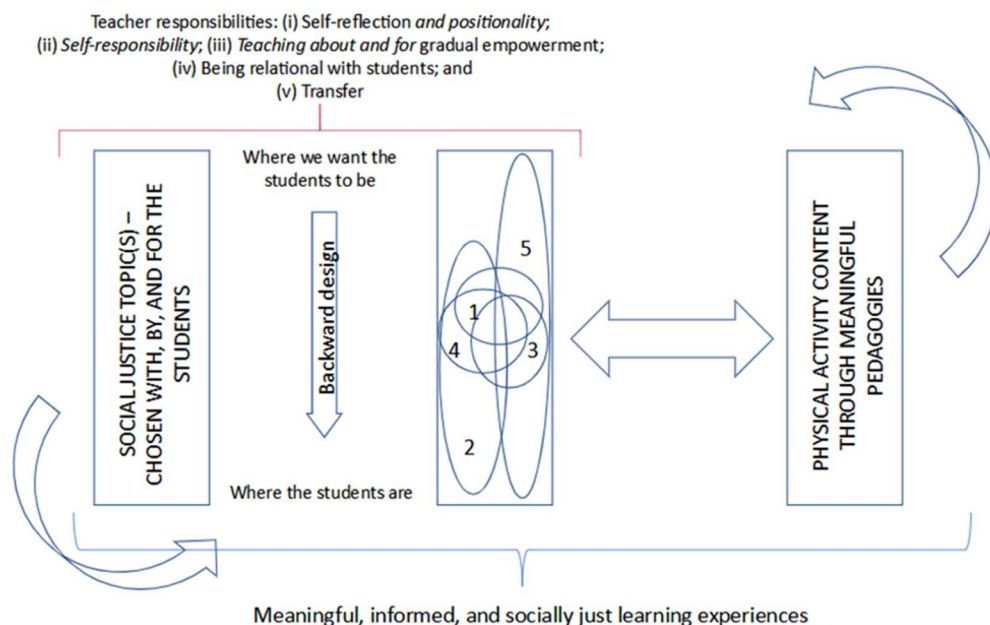


**Figure 1.** A visual representation of the Socially-Just Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (SJ-TPSR) approach.

## The SJ-TPSR approach

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the SJ-TPSR approach. It is suggested that educators should first reflect on their own 'teacher responsibilities', ensuring they are prepared to engage meaningfully with the approach. Educators should reflect on their positionality, biases and perspectives, for example, to understand how they might impact their pedagogical decision making (e.g. position in society in relation to others and how that biases what we know and understand). The first step is to select a social justice topic/matter in dialogue with the learners allowing the topic to be grounded in their context (e.g. the systems, systemic issues/inequities that exist where they live and teach), prior knowledge, and needs. Attention to their backgrounds, lived experiences, and the local issues that affect them involves open dialogue to ensure the topic/matter resonates meaningfully. This collaborative approach ensures the topic resonates with learners, aligning with Walton-Fisette et al.'s (2019) idea that pedagogies for social justice must be context-specific. The educator then integrates the topic into lessons using backward design, starting with identifying what we want learners to learn, designing an assessment that measures the extent to which learning occurs, and then designing the learning experiences that align with intended learning outcomes.

The middle strand, represented by shapes and numbers, focuses on the reconceptualisation of Hellison's (2011) five (arguably, hierarchical) levels of PSR (i.e. respect, effort and cooperation, self-direction, helping others and leadership, and transfer outside the gym) into 'spaces,' allowing for more fluid, non-linear movement between them. The idea of spaces (rather than levels) is designed to reduce division, enabling learners to demonstrate responsibility in different ways and at different times within a single lesson or learning experience, rather than progressing through rigid levels. For example, a student negotiating their beliefs about respecting pronouns may move between multiple spaces in any one class – at times demonstrating sensitivity, and other times excluding classmates – as they encounter additional views and perspectives, as well as peer pressure (this could also come from the teacher, not just their peers). Conceptualising personal and social responsibility through spaces allows for learners to move fluidly in and out of different spaces depending on the context, experience, and need. Rather than representing behavioural progressions, each space is a domain of engagement that acknowledges development is non-linear, and that learners may simultaneously inhabit multiple spaces. This framing invites learners to question power, identity, and systems within and across spaces, rather than waiting to 'arrive' at a certain level before engaging meaningfully. For example, a learner might be deeply engaged in advocating for inclusion, even if they are not consistently participating in activities. As such, spaces refer to non-linear, context-responsive domains of engagement (e.g. respecting others, giving effort and cooperating, gaining independence, and helping others), through which learners navigate personal and social responsibility in relation to their experiences, identities, needs, classroom interactions and reflections. The last point in the figure emphasises that the SJ- TPSR approach can stand alone or underpin various pedagogical models, ensuring that social justice is integrated into every aspect of physical education. In other words, the SJ-TPSR can be combined with other pedagogical models. The SJ-TPSR approach can be used to underpin the enactment of the Sport Education model. The arrows in Figure 1 are a reminder that ongoing reflection is an integral part of the approach.

This socially-just reconceptualisation of the TPSR model is grounded in multiple intersecting theoretical frameworks. For example, drawing on critical pedagogy, the approach positions learners as active agents capable of questioning power, identity, and systemic inequities. Informed by sociocultural learning theory, it acknowledges that learning is context-dependent and co-constructed through social interaction. Consistent with humanistic education, it values autonomy, reflection, and personal growth. Additionally, the shift from hierarchical 'levels' to fluid 'spaces' reflects a non-linear, post-structural orientation that better captures the diverse and dynamic ways learners engage with personal and social responsibility.

In response to calls for making social justice pedagogies more tangible in physical education, the SJ-TPSR approach was conceptualised (Scanlon et al., 2022) as a way to integrate social justice work within teaching and learning in physical education. Social justice work, in the context of this research and the SJ-TPSR approach, refers to educational practices that critically examine power, privilege, and systemic inequities, and aim to foster equity and inclusion. This might involve engaging learners in discussions and activities around gender norms in sport, exploring whose voices are amplified or silences in physical education contexts, and designing lesson that actively challenge exclusionary practices. The SJ-TPSR approach positions social justice not as an add-on to the curriculum, but as a central pedagogical commitment that shapes what is taught, how it is taught, and why it matters. However, how the SJ-TPSR approach can be effectively enacted in differing contexts remains unclear, highlighting the need for further empirical research to inform practice. Therefore, in this paper, we draw on lessons learned from physical education teacher educators across three continents as they enacted the SJ-TPSR approach in their contexts. We identify lessons learned that informed our development of guiding principles to support the pedagogical decision-making in enacting the approach.

## The use of the term 'guiding principles'

Inspired by Casey's (2024) reflections on assumptions and stances, whereby he reflects on assumptions and stances he previously made (or misinterpretations of such), we are somewhat hesitant in constructing principles of practice or principles for enactment. Instead, in this paper, we deliberately frame our focus around 'guiding principles' rather than pedagogical principles (e.g. Ní Chróinín et al., 2017). While pedagogical principles inform teaching practice at the instructional level, guiding principles operate at a broader conceptual and ethical level, offering direction that informs less about the 'how' teaching occurs but more so why and towards what ends. Given that SJ-TPSR extends beyond specific teaching strategies to encompass broader commitments to equity, inclusion, and advocacy, a guiding principles framework is more appropriate. By articulating a set of guiding principles, we aim to provide a shared foundation for educators as they engage with the complexities of teaching through a SJ-TPSR approach.

The SJ-TPSR approach aligns with Hellison's emphasis on real-world application and continual refinement. Hellison (2011) talked about 'theory-in-practice' when discussing the development of the TPSR. From the early seeds of TPSR in his first publication *Humanistic Physical Education* (1973) to *Beyond Balls and Bats: Alienated and (Other) Youth in the Gym* (1978) to a more recognisable form of the existing TPSR model

(2003, 2011), Hellison applied what he learned from practice to develop TPSR in ways that would support student learning and teacher enactment. Like this, deepening understandings of how to teach for social justice requires examination in context. The teacher who has designed and enacts the SJ-TPSR approach in conjunction with the learners will have a different enactment to another teacher in a different context; context matters. Given that each teachers&rsquo; enactment of SJ-TPSR will differ based on their setting and learners, a set of guiding principles provides a flexible but values-driven direction. We found it helpful, in conceptualising this paper, to use the term 'guiding' as a noun to allow movement in how much and how far the stated principle can/should/will guide. We emphasise these are guiding principles because these are not set in stone but can be adapted, adopted, or altered to suit the context in which they are enacted. As such, guiding principles should be thought of as a multi-directional bridge at the intersection of theory and practice. They are always moving towards enactment in practical settings and moving backwards to the theoretical (re)development. Guiding principles should inform the practice, and what is learned by the educator through enactment with PSTs and/or pupils should be used to (re)inform the theory.

Drawing on our experiences, we collectively interrogate the enactment of the SJ-TPSR approach in various countries and teacher education programs; providing a rich opportunity for developing guiding principles. We acknowledge that others within the field might argue for alternative guiding principles, but we hope that our suggestions provide a useful starting point for such dialogue.

## Methodology

Developing guiding principles for the enactment of a new approach to teaching and learning (i.e. the SJ-TPSR approach) requires creativity, critical analysis, diversity of perspective and experience, commitment to ongoing adaptation, as well as a deep understanding of the context in which teaching occurs. Self-study, and more specifically collaborative self-study, is well suited for these purposes. For example, Ovens and Fletcher (2014) describe self-study as 'a critically reflective approach to understanding teaching practice grounded in the everyday practicalities of [educators] own unique situations' (p.3) as they 'seek to better understand what can work in teaching, how it works, and why it works' (p.189). There is a growing literature base for collaborative self-study which embraces individual self-reflection and development within collaborative efforts (Carse et al., 2022). Carse and colleagues (2022) advocate for the need for authentically collaborative experiences in teacher education. Given that 'there is no clear form' of either self-study or collaborative self-study (Bullock & Butler, 2022, p. 318), we will outline the flexible and iterative process we used to engage in collaborative self-study.

### Participants and setting

Eight teacher educators across three countries engaged in this collaborative self-study. Dylan, an originator of the SJ-TPSR approach, had previously used the approach in an outdoor education module (Scanlon et al., 2024). This was the first time that all other authors had integrated the approach into their teacher educator practice. All participant details are in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Participants.

| Enactor | Country | Critical friend | Teacher education level | Module / unit / course focus | No. of PSTS | Length of module / unit / course |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dylan | Australia | Cassandra | Post-Primary / Secondary (undergraduate) | (i) Focus on inclusivity and diversity (ii) Focus on pedagogical models | 20 | (i) 11-week (1.5 h a week practical) (ii) 11-week (3 h a week practical) |
| Jeff | Canada | Kellie | Post-Primary / Secondary (undergraduate) | Methods course focus on teaching Zone Games (territorial/invasion games) | 20 | 13-week (39 h) |
| Antonio | Ireland | Maura (and Tony) | Post-primary / Secondary (Postgraduate Masters in Education) | Focus on teaching physical education | 20 | 12 weeks (48 h) |
| Tony | Ireland | Maura (and Antonio) | Primary education | Focus on curriculum, methodologies & assessment | 28 | Seven weeks (50-minute weekly) |
| Macro critical friend: Carla | | | | | | |

Fletcher and colleagues (2016) concluded that ' … critical friendship can be used as a powerful tool to support the development and enactment of pedagogical innovations in teacher education practice' (p. 316). Macro-critical-friendship adds an additional layer of reflexivity from an outsider's perspective – interacting, interpreting, providing support and critique of assumptions and insights gained (Fletcher et al., 2016). Carla – an expert in the field of social justice – was a macro-critical friend. This one macro critical friend who overlooked all three communities of learners while in each community there was a micro critical friend (please see Table 1). Cassandra (to Dylan), Kellie (to Jeff), and Maura (to Antonio and Tony) served as micro-critical-friends – those with an intimate knowledge (insider's perspective) of the geographical context. We have outlined the positionalities of the authorship alongside their values and experiences related to social justice and TPSR in Table 2.

## Data collection and analysis

Data was collected from five consecutive and sometimes overlapping self-studies within courses that ranged from 10- to 13 weeks in duration (see Figure 2). Sources included (1) micro- and macro meeting recording transcripts, (2) individual written critical reflective journals, and (3) teaching artefacts (for example, learning plans and worksheets) all of which were analysed using individual and collaborative coding processes.

Macro-critical friend meeting recording transcripts were the primary source of data analysed in this research. They include 10 macro meetings (1–1.5 h long) and each micro-group had fortnightly meetings for the enactment period (30 min – 1 h long). Providing stimuli for micro- and macro-critical friend meetings included post-teaching individual critical reflective journals and teaching artefacts. Each journal entry was shared with all others in the collaborative self-study inviting reflections and provocative questions. These multiple levels of interrogation (i.e. initial post-teaching individual reflection, written dialogue via collaborative responses and provocations on each individual

**Table 2.** Positionalities of authorship related to social identities, values and experience with social justice, values and experience with TPSR.

| Name | Positionalities |
| --- | --- |
| Dylan | **Social identities:**<br>White, Irish immigrant in Australia, LGBTQ+, first-generation university student, grew up moving through different social classes.<br>**Values related to social justice:**<br>At the very core of my values related to social justice revolve around humanising others, understanding others through self-awareness and social awareness work, empathetic approaches, belief in the strength of diversity.<br>**Values related to TPSR:**<br>Belief in the core values of TPSR; educating young people on empowering themselves, having respect for themselves and others, developing responsibility, a focus on reflection.<br>**Experience with social justice:**<br>Emphasis on teaching about social justice in my teaching career in teacher education; being and becoming an activist teacher educator; engaged in activist activities in personal life in the everyday and global (e.g. LGBTQ+ rights, pro-Palestine rights).<br>**Experience with TPSR:**<br>Been teaching TPSR and SJ-TPSR in different modules/units at two teacher education programs. |
| Maura | **Social identities:**<br>white, Irish, straight, female, middle class<br>**Values related to social justice:**<br>I value equal and fair opportunities for all individuals<br>**Values related to TPSR:**<br>The values I see related to TPSR are respect, responsibility, integrity, empathy and fairness. It is crucial to foster these values build positive relationships.<br>**Experience with social justice:**<br>Only recently, 3 years, engaged in teaching for through and about social justice. But it is something I have been aware of and experienced all my life, having a sister with additional needs (Ability), playing women's rugby (gender) and studying and working in Northern Ireland (religion).<br>**Experience with TPSR:**<br>I have been teaching a module underpinned by TPSR in Outdoor and Adventure activities for over 10 years. This is taught through experiential learning with pre-service teachers though I have worked through the model with in-service teachers too. |
| Kellie | **Social identities:**<br>White, English-speaking, able-bodied, neurotypical, Canadian citizen; Grew up in a low-income family; First-generation high school graduate<br>**Values related to social justice:**<br>Views shaped by both privilege and marginalisation; Values justice, fairness, and equity<br>**Values related to TPSR:**<br>Believes students can develop responsibility and leadership; Focus on reflection, inclusion, and action<br>**Experience with social justice:**<br>Committed to inclusive, empowering learning spaces; Co-creator of the SJ-TPSR approach.<br>**Experience with TPSR:**<br>20+ years using TPSR in schools and universities |
| Cassandra | **Social identities:**<br>White, English-speaking, able-bodied, neurotypical, heterosexual Canadian citizen living abroad; Middle-class background.<br>**Values related to social justice:**<br>Actively acknowledges the influence of privilege on professional and personal life<br>**Values related to TPSR:**<br>Values and promotes reflection, inclusion, action, and relational pedagogy; Uses TPSR as a platform for ethical, strengths-based teaching that supports individual and community growth.<br>**Experience with social justice:**<br>Engaged in ongoing unlearning and critical reflection to better align practice with social justice commitments; Evolving understanding of education through a social justice lens, influenced by students, colleagues, and critical scholars (e.g. Freire, bell hooks)<br>**Experience with TPSR:**<br>Two years (sort of) implementing the TPSR model in a disadvantaged school, motivated by personal values aligned with holistic and affective learning. |

*(Continued)*

**Table 2.** Continued.

| Name | Positionalities |
| --- | --- |
| Antonio | **Social identities:** |
| | White, middle age, heterosexual, catholic, man. No known disability. |
| | **Values related to social justice:** |
| | Utmost respect, tolerance for diversity. Empathy as a core value. |
| | **Values related to TPSR:** |
| | Huge potential for raising awareness on PSTs and school students on the importance of individual and social responsibility. |
| | **Experience with social justice:** |
| | Teaching about and through social justice pedagogies in undergraduate and graduate programs. Co-leading social justice related research. |
| | **Experience with TPSR:** |
| | Teaching about and through TPSR in undergraduate and graduate programs for 10 years. Member of TPSR related research. |
| Carla | **Social identities:** |
| | I identify as a non-white, queer academic living and working in Australia. I was born and raised in a low socioeconomic area in Brazil |
| | **Values related to social justice:** |
| | My approach to social justice is strongly informed by Freire's philosophy, particularly the concepts of *conscientização* (critical awareness) and *praxis* – the ongoing cycle of reflection and action for social change. I believe in the collective power of communities to negotiate and transform social injustices. |
| | **Values related to TPSR:** |
| | I deeply value the principle of responsibility that underpins the TPSR model. Supporting young people to take responsibility for themselves, others, and their communities is essential to building more equitable and caring societies. |
| | **Experience with social justice:** |
| | I have over a decade of experience working in the social justice space, particularly with marginalised populations. My work centres on co-creating knowledge with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those from refugee and forced migration contexts. |
| | **Experience with TPSR:** |
| | I have engaged deeply with the TPSR literature and initially planned to use the model in my doctoral research. However, through critical reading, I found that the model, as I encountered it, lacked sufficient emphasis on systemic social justice. |
| Jeff | **Social identities:** |
| | Cisgender white male, Canadian English-speaking, able-bodied; Raised in and continue to live in middle-class income as a single parent; post-secondary educated. |
| | **Values related to social justice:** |
| | Strong belief in equal and equitable opportunity |
| | **Values related to TPSR:** |
| | Focus on: Inclusion, Experience, and reflective practice (teacher and student) |
| | **Experience with social justice:** |
| | Infancy as it relates to my knowledge or true understanding; Have committed to continue to listen, learn, and implement a SJ approach in my teaching; Have committed to continue to listen, learn, and implement a SJ approach in my teaching. |
| | **Experience with TPSR:** |
| | Quite familiar with the theory; Little to no experience in applying as a whole framework; Have been using parts and pieces in my teaching in both K-12 and University settings |
| Tony | **Social identities:** |
| | white, able bodied heterosexual male. Irish citizen, raised in an English-speaking home, Irish speaker whose own children were educated through Irish. First generation university graduate. |
| | **Values related to social justice:** |
| | equity of access, opportunity and self-determination, regardless of background or identity. Recognises diversity and inclusion, respecting that individuals may require specific support to achieve their potential |
| | **Values related to TPSR:** |
| | recognises the potential of learners developing personal responsibility to self-improvement, leadership and respect for others |
| | **Experience with social justice:** |
| | was part of the staff that reconceptualised our Froebel undergraduate and postgraduate programs to include social justice as a central tenet of our Maynooth University degrees. As a former primary teacher whose M.Ed research explored teacher attitudes to adapted physical education, equality of opportunity is a central value that informed practice. |
| | **Experience with TPSR:** |
| | had attended some workshops, but never taught TPSR as an explicit approach heretofore. |

(*Continued*)

**Table 2.** Continued.

| Name | Positionalities |
|---|---|
| Niamh | **Social identities:**<br>White, English-speaking, able-bodied, neurotypical, heterosexual; Irish citizen; immigrant to Australia; Grew up in a Catholic, middle-income family; Both parents are university-educated.<br>**Values related to social justice:**<br>Views education as a powerful tool for social change. Pedagogy aims to empower learners to act as agents of change, whether that is through community engagement, inclusive teaching practice, or challenging inequities in their future teaching.<br>**Values related to TPSR:**<br>Values creating learning environments where students are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour, set personal goals, and take responsibility for their learning and conduct<br>**Experience with social justice:**<br>Committed to equity and inclusion in education<br>**Experience with TPSR:**<br>Experience teaching through TPSR in tertiary contexts (undergraduate and masters units) |
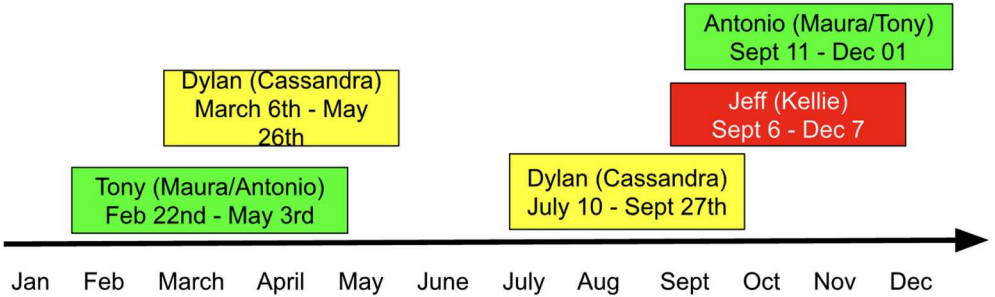


**Figure 2.** Timeline of five collaborative self-studies in which the SJ-TPSR approach was enacted.

critical reflective journal entry, followed by a micro- and macro-critical friend discussion) served to deepen our understanding so that we could refine practice and develop guiding principles.

Guided by Charmaz's (2014) constructivist grounded theory, data sources were analysed through individual and collaborative coding processes. First, we individually engaged deeply with the data through an inductive line-by-line open coding process in which broad patterns and categories were identified and constantly compared. Next, we shared our initial coding, collaboratively consolidating, refining, and prioritising categories into coherent themes – lessons learned and guiding principles – through the lens of the research question. In the next section, we present our findings as lessons learned from enacting the SJ-TPSR approach, before moving onto the discussing how these lessons contributed to the development of guiding principles for its implementation.

## Findings – lessons learned

The findings mirror the complexity of practice; where an aspect of practice that may have been a facilitator for one teacher educator was a hindrance for another. We attempt to capture this complexity in the findings by framing them as 'lessons learned' and

translating these empirical experiences into guiding principles. While we frame these as 'lessons learned', we do not suggest that learning is complete or confined to the past. Rather, we recognise that learning is an ongoing, evolving process. These insights we present here offer a cross-section of that process, capturing a moment in our collective engagement with the SJ-TPSR approach while acknowledging that understanding and practice will continue to develop over time. In analysing these lessons learned and maintaining collegiality and support as core elements of this co-creation process, we have constructed guiding principles for the enactment of the SJ-TPSR approach. These are empirically grounded, and the intention is for those seeking to enact the SJ-TPSR approach, that these will *guide* the educator (rather than *direct* the educator). We are trying to learn from others (e.g. Casey, 2024) in constructing these guiding principles whereby we are attempting to balance being clear in our language and intention but also leaving room for flexibility and movement for the enactment context. It is also important to remember that these lessons learned and guiding principles are not separate entities, they are multi-directional, interdependent, and overlap in many cases. Below are the interwoven eight lessons learned which we outline before presenting the subsequent four (unfinished and always ongoing) guiding principles.

### Lesson 1: the SJ-TPSR teacher responsibilities provide a strong foundation for SJ-TPSR enactment

Similar to Hellison's TPSR, the SJ-TPSR approach has a number of teacher responsibilities. These include: (i) self-reflection and positionality; (ii) self-responsibility; (iii) teaching about and for gradual empowerment; (iv) being relational with the students; and (v) transfer/advocacy. In this study, there was a consensus amongst teacher educators that the teacher responsibilities can be the starting point of enactment. For example, the responsibility of doing 'positionality' work (i.e. exploring your own privilege, bias, and social justice identity) prior to enacting the SJ-TPSR was emphasised by many of the teacher educators. Cassandra and Dylan reflected,

> Cassandra: Before you even go to implement [the SJ-TPSR approach], I would say to take a term, take a semester, take a unit, and [let that] be a reflection [period] about your positionality and then once you start to understand how your own positionality is impacting the [pedagogical] decisions that you&rsquo;re making, then you can start to see [opportunities] where [your practice] could be more socially just. Then you can start to enact it [SJ-TPSR] … It [teacher educator reflection on practice, positionality, and social justice] connects to [PSR] because for the teacher to understand their positionality and to start to think about how they're planning for gradual empowerment etc., they require their own self-awareness.

> Dylan: And social awareness. Self-responsibility … the [self-]responsibility not only to react in the moment, but to have the responsibility to educate yourself to react in future moments … that is also social awareness.

As alluded to in this extract, the positionality work as the starting point influences the rest of the teacher responsibilities and the enactment of the SJ-TPSR approach, for example, understanding the relationship between 'self' (social justice identity) and 'practice'. Furthermore, by grounding SJ-TPSR enactment in the teacher responsibilities, the educator engages in their own learning and development of PSR skills, e.g. self-awareness and

social awareness. In this way, teacher educators are authentically engaging with the approach, in much the same way as learners would be expected to: developing PSR through self-reflection, and making connections to self, others, and social justice.

### Lesson 2: teacher educator strategies to bring theory into SJ-TPSR

The teacher educators for this collaborative self-study were purposely chosen; some had expertise in social justice and others in TPSR. Therefore, comfort levels with either social justice or TPSR varied. At times, this created somewhat of a disconnect between the 'social justice' and 'TPSR' elements of the SJ-TPSR approach. Antonio reflects on this tension,

> There was a tension in between the two pieces: the social justice piece and the TPSR … It is something that … is still having some tension in relation to my own confidence piece with the social justice piece and the extent to which I feel kind of comfortable or confident to talk with the [PSTs] in relation to these aspects … Initially when we first started this study, I saw the social justice piece as almost an add on attached to TPSR … two pieces.

As Antonio pointed out, a disconnect existed between the 'social justice' and 'TPSR' elements of the SJ-TPSR approach. While this may have been a confidence issue, strategies needed to be developed to bridge this evident gap for other teacher educators as well. As the order of self-studies within the collective group followed on from each other (please see Figure 2), micro self-study groups were able to take the previous findings of other micro self-studies and explore these in their own practice. For example, Dylan explored this tension – the gap between the 'SJ' and 'TPSR' – in his second self-study. Through positionality work, Dylan adopted a theoretical lens for the 'social justice' part of SJ-TPSR; that being, a humanising pedagogy (del Carmen Salazar, 2013). This theoretical lens guided Dylan in his designing of learning experiences, choosing of PSR skills, and the language/practices enacted throughout the SJ-TPSR. The choice to do this – choose a theoretical lens – was met with further questions by community members, for example, Antonio pushed Dylan's thinking in the 'why' behind choosing humanising pedagogy as a theoretical lens,

> Would you see yourself, teaching through SJ-TPSR adopting other pedagogy that doesn't treat [PSTs] as humans or doesn't prioritise care and love? (Antonio's comment on Dylan's reflection – week 2)

After collecting feedback from the PSTs on their experiences of the humanising lens, Dylan wrote this reflection,

> Overall, the feedback was positive and the humanising lens for social justice came through strongly. I can hear you [self-study colleagues] ask 'But how does this relate to the TPSR part of SJ-TPSR?'. Well, I think it does very strongly, and it comes down to my PSR learning intention and the PSR skills I want the PSTs to develop as a result of the humanising lens; those being, understanding diversity, building empathy, respecting diversity and others etc. These are all PSR skills ('TPSR') which are guided by the humanising lens ('SJ'). If my lens was something different, for example, abolishment teaching, then my PSR skills might include, for example, advocacy among others. I think this could be something super important for the enactment of the SJ-TPSR approach – in your positionality work (part of the SJ-TPSR teacher responsibilities), you [may benefit from having] a

theoretical lens and this lens is what influences the PSR skills and brings together SJ and TPSR. After meeting with Cassandra, we spoke about the importance of the '-' (dash) in the SJ-TPSR and it is this work that is emphasising that '-'. BIG LEARNING POINT FOR US:) (Dylan's written reflection – week 7)

### Lesson 3: collegial collaboration can mitigate feelings of uncertainty and doubt

As somewhat expected, the teacher educators found enacting the SJ-TPSR approach challenging. Those who were enacting for it for the first time, there was the challenge of learning as enacting. Jeff reflects,

> This is a course I've taught numerous times … [and] now all of a sudden, putting in something new presents sort of this new level of uncertainty … it's something new that I'm not an expert [in] … I'm sort of learning about this as I go (Jeff, focus group).

Given this was something 'new', there was a confidence issue at play, but the support of the group members eased such issues highlighting the importance of collaborative enactment. Antonio and Maura capture this,

> Antonio (week 3 – written reflection): They do have some group discussions, but they are still not confident to 'unmute and shout', and interestingly I am not that fully confident either, so that creates an 'awkward' situation. I feel like we, well I, still didn't put full focus on social justice matters and TPSR (for now), and that can trigger that 'low engagement'. I'm even thinking if I've been a bit tokenistic in that sense … To what extent this gradual introduction of SJ matters and TPSR is building momentum for the next few weeks where we will fully focus on SJ-TPSR (all together)?

> Maura (response to Antonio): I think it is like many new things – how do we introduce it – all together, whole part whole, incrementally there are so many options and maybe we go with what suits us and goes some way to meeting [PSTs'] needs. It is impossible to be all to everyone but acknowledging that something is better than nothing if done correctly is a positive.

### Lesson 4: spaces increase opportunities for the development of personal and social responsibility (PSR) through co-construction processes

The SJ-TPSR spaces were used differently across the self-studies; some used them explicitly in their teaching while others used them implicitly in their learning experiences and design planning. There was a struggle across the groups in translating the vision of complex, fluid 'spaces' to practice. The extract from the written reflection below shows this different use – Antonio who taught using both spaces and levels, Dylan who focused on the spaces (but struggled to move from hierarchical language around the spaces), and Tony who only taught the spaces (given his PSTs did not know about the original TPSR model),

> Antonio (written reflection – week 7): It was interesting to see how I am navigating the transition from using the hierarchical levels to a more democratic use of spaces. The way I've always been teaching TPSR and the notion of levels is through: (1) awareness talk with a focus on the levels … I always hang on the wall a laminated and colour printed version of each level and their descriptors; (2) physical activity, developed through asking PSTs to design their own games; (3) group reflection, by coming back to

'home base' to reflect to what extent the levels have been addressed (or not) on the lesson. The way I did it now, don't ask me why, but I still hung on the wall the laminated printed version of the levels, I didn't focus on them in the awareness talk nor in the group reflection. The focus was now on the whiteboard where I had the spaces, and I asked the PSTs to share examples from the lesson, where the spaces were prominent (or not) and engaged in some whole class discussion.

Dylan's response: When I was doing my self-study on this with Cassandra, we found it difficult to move away from level / hierarchical language and Kellie commented how we have this engrained in our minds and questioned if [PSTs], who know nothing about TPSR and levels, would they have the same hierarchical approach if introduced to the SJ-TPSR spaces. Interesting!

Tony's response: Interesting question – my [PSTs] were only learning about SJ-TPSR, so we didn't look at the levels actively. I'm looking forward to hearing more from Antonio how the [PSTs] responded in class with both on display!

One thing that was consistent across the groups who focused on the spaces was the notion of co-design and co-constructions. The teacher educators co-designed and co-constructed the spaces with the PSTs so that they were relevant and meaningful to that specific context. This process highlights the complexity of spaces when viewed as interconnected entities rather than distinct levels (Scanlon et al., 2022). Given the organisation of the collaborative self-studies, the teacher educators planning and design of the learning experiences for the spaces was also co-constructed as teacher educators prompted, challenged, pushed each other's thinking and planning around the spaces through collaborative reflection. Tony and Antonio captured this in Tony's written reflection in week 3:

Tony (written reflection – week 3): Having the [PSTs] co-construct the spaces during the group meeting phase with individual circled sheets was productive, and this individual activity could be a useful springboard for the next day. I have attached their collective responses and hope that this may produce pair/group dialogue to more meaningfully connect the physical activity with the Social Justice matters in the upcoming gymnastics session (March 22nd) after Study Week.

Antonio's response: Love this activity, Tony! very insightful comments and thoughts from your [PSTs] – some questions for consideration: (1) individual vs group activity, (2) were links between the different spaces made? (if not) should be prompted? (3) is it relevant to brainstorm about all the levels at the same time or gradually? (4) should we start with any space in particular?

### *Lesson 5: familiar pedagogical practices can be used to balance unfamiliarity with the SJ-TPSR approach*

Teacher educators across all three micro groups turned to familiar pedagogical approaches to balance their unfamiliarity with the SJ-TPSR approach. These were mostly student-centred pedagogies aligned with SJ-TPSR and strengthened its enactment (although in many cases, this was not planned). Tony, for example, drew on child-centred pedagogy and student directed discussion-based pedagogy. Tony reflects on this and how it supported his enactment of the SJ-TPSR, in particular, the five-phase learning plan,

> There might be sessions where I would have an awareness talk, but I would largely have that
> student directed. When it worked best was when I got them into group discussion around
> the awareness talk phase, because they engaged more … they were able to bring an [under-
> standing] of the primary school classroom [because] they were on [school] placement [and
> they were able to bring that into] focus for that particular social justice matter [discussed] …
> I am teaching on [primary teacher education course] so we are very much about modelling
> child-centred and activity-based learning. And I think what was really interesting for me,
> there was the whole piece around the relational talk, which would be very central to devel-
> oping relationships with our [PSTs].

Others drew on familiar pedagogical approaches which can be considered social justice
pedagogies (e.g. democratic pedagogies) to support the enactment of the SJ-TPSR
approach. Teacher educators leaned on their teaching philosophy as a place of comfort
and used the pedagogical approaches associated with their philosophy as means of enact-
ing the SJ-TPSR.

### Lesson 6: the importance of flexibility when enacting the SJ-TPSR approach

Each of the self-studies taught in different contexts (i.e. different geographical contexts,
different teacher education [primary / post-primary] contexts, etc.) which determined
the possibilities and constraints of the enactment of the SJ-TPSR. For example, length
of lessons: Dylan had a three-hour lesson a week whereas Tony had a 50-minute
lesson. Given these differences, there is a need for flexibility when enacting the SJ-
TPSR approach. In the macro meetings, we discussed how choosing parts of the SJ-
TPSR to enact was an effective and manageable approach. In other words, *being*
flexible and taking one aspect of the approach and building on it weekly. Kellie, respond-
ing to Antonio's written reflection (week 10), questioned what type of 'change' this
encourages:

> Kellie: What I am wondering is: 1) Is the 'change' in [PSTs] really 'modest'. If we look at
> where they began, and where they are now, are there ways in which it is quite 'significant'
> – not in the quantitative research way, but in terms of possibilities and opportunities for
> their current learning, future practice, and future learning of their [PSTs]? Where did
> you want them to be at the end of the term? In what ways did they get there, not quite
> get there, get beyond there?

> Maura (responding to Kellie's comment): This is really important Kellie – we believe and
> something we stated after Tony's enactment – in such a short time with so much to
> cover with these groups (PME/PMEPs), what is our aim with the [SJ-TPSR] approach –
> it can be modest or significant – it is all perspective, but either way, there is a movement
> towards understanding and enacting the approach.

Tony advocated how the approach needs to be flexible, but the core social justice empha-
sis needs to remain:

> I think the discussion around the future shape of the SJ-TPSR approach will need to be cog-
> nisant of the specific educational context and that such a reflexive approach could then be
> more responsive to the needs of different classes which would surely be in keeping with the
> democratic and socially just emphasis (Written reflection – week 7).

The contextual environment of the enactment – the human elements (e.g. PSTs), the tan-
gible/material elements (e.g. the physical classroom/gym hall), and the non-tangible (e.g.

the collective emotions, the length of designated time) – all need to be taken into consideration when enacting the SJ-TPSR approach. As such, flexibility is needed or in other words, as Tony put it, 'What I have learned is that we probably need to customise our pedagogy [to the enactment context]'. Further research should explore the impact the SJ-TPSR can have on educator practice and student learning.

### Lesson 7: go slowly and go small by taking baby steps

One lesson that supported all teacher educators in this journey was to 'go slowly and go small by taking baby steps' in enacting the SJ-TPSR. This stems from advice from Deborah Tannehill (Scanlon et al., 2022) and was emphasised throughout all the communities and macro meetings. Given this advice, the teacher educators took different approaches to taking baby steps. Some 'sprinkled' the approach into their practice: 'It doesn't have to be big swings every time either. That's where the sprinkle part comes in. I think it's just always bringing [PSTs] back to that socially just [TPSR] … approach&rsquo; (Jeff, micro critical friend meeting 3). Others took a phased approach whereby they introduced aspects of the SJ-TPSR approach and built on this with other aspects through associated learning experiences. Antonio provides advice for us as he takes a merging approach (i.e. using the five-phase learning plan and building – or merging – other aspects of the SJ-TPSR onto this):

> Keep calm, move on, and don't be too harsh with yourself … A conversation I had with Cassandra … convinced me to continue with the merging piece. The SJ-TPSR learning plan could be the backbone of my labs-approach and build within other more technical aspects of the teaching [each week] (Antonio, written reflection – week 1).

The importance of this lesson was also captured in the support the teacher educators had for each other in enactment – through conversations, micro and macro meetings, reading each other's reflections and learning from each other. This support encouraged the enacting educator to embrace different ways of enacting that felt comfortable and how we could learn from each other's enactment in our own. This in ways gave us permission to go slow and at our own pace of enactment. Tony and Kellie reflected:

> Tony (written reflection – week 4): I also had the chance to look at the reflections of Dylan and Cassandra which were informing my planning to an extent.

> Kellie (in response to Tony's written reflection): Great to see that now that others have started [their self-study], you can (and are taking the initiative to) benefit from their experiences too.

> Tony (focus group): The value of being able to spy on/be inspired by others exploring the SJ-TPSR approach and the benefit of the group discussion and comments to prompt reflection on action and assist in directing direction for the next class.

### Lesson 8: SJ-TPSR is a move away from a fidelity focus to a contextual oriented approach

The issue of fidelity was one conversation that continued to exist throughout the year long enactment of all the self-studies. Questions were raised about the appropriateness of cherry picking elements of the SJ-TPSR approach, what are the non-negotiables of

the SJ-TPSR, and what the SJ-TPSR looks like so that it can be recognisable in practice. Cassandra reflects:

> Maybe this is just exactly where we are in our conversation is thinking about like, what is the non-negotiables [of the SJ-TPSR approach]? What is a socially just TPSR approach? And what isn't? You know, this morning, Dylan and I were talking about, like, where do you draw the line? As we expand it and think differently about it or sort of depart a little bit from it, at what point have we departed too far, and it's no longer socially just TPSR? Like what needs to be included for it to still have that name? (Cassandra, macro – critical friend meeting)

It was these conversations that led us – the research team – to develop related guiding principles. The intention was to move away from a fidelity approach to enacting the SJ-TPSR approach and to a contextual orientated approach to enacting. We believe the latter takes into consideration the social justice core of the approach (i.e. social justice *is* contextual) and allows the educator to use the approach (or aspects of the approach) as an entry point into teaching for social justice.

## Discussion – guiding principles

The purpose of this paper was to draw on lessons learned from physical education teacher education (PETE) teacher educators enacting the SJ-TPSR approach to co-construct guiding principles to support pedagogical decision-making in future enactments of the approach. Based on the above lessons learned (and related experiences), guiding principles were constructed – we present the four guiding principles here.

### Guiding principle 1: foster reflexive practice through collaboration and/or theoretical grounding

Reflexivity does not need to be a solitary act, but rather a process that is deepened through collaboration and/or strengthened by theoretical engagement. Drawing on concepts such as praxis (i.e. 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' [Freire, 1970, p. 50]), we encourage educators to engage in early and ongoing (self – and collaborative-) reflection when enacting the SJ-TSPR approach. The SJ-TPSR teacher responsibilities are designed to support reflexivity. Our experiences and lessons learned suggest that engaging in positionality work can be enriched when done collaboratively. This work involves exploring your own biases and identifying your own social justice teacher identity (i.e. 'teachers' relationships to social justice beliefs and principles and their interrelationship with a range of issues&rsquo; [Boylan & Woolsey, 2015, p. 63]). We recognise how hard positionality work can be and suggest having a community in exploration and enactment can greatly support the educator and the process, particularly as the educator faces challenges and barriers. Goodyear and Casey's (2015) work, which explores how communities of practice support innovation that results in pedagogical change, support this as they advocate for the use of communities of practice for educators enacting new pedagogical approaches as the community is the key to 'moving beyond the initial point of innovation' (p. 187).

When collaboration with colleagues is not possible or safe, engaging with theory through theoretical positioning can serve as an alternative or complementary approach to positionality work, which is essential for fulfilling teacher responsibilities. As Dylan learned through his

enactment, having a theoretical framework helped him to explore his positionality and the impact of his biases on his practice and the language he uses while teaching. Determining a theoretical lens on social justice also provides insights into and strengthens the educator's stance on social justice, and from what perspective, which can assist in choosing certain pedagogies, PSR skills, and topics of dialogue. For example, does the educator engage with theoretical positions of Freire, feminist perspectives, a humanising approach, Indigenous knowledges, and what influence does this have on how they will approach the teaching and learning of social justice? We encourage the reader to explore these and other theoretical avenues to broaden their understanding of social justice and to provide them with a theoretical pathway in enacting the SJ-TPSR approach. We can turn to research by Baker et al. (2025) for guidance as their research explored sense making processes of (mis)alignment of social justice beliefs, theory, and pedagogy through collaborative storytelling. This process of mapping beliefs, theory and practice 'encourages critical reflection and self-awareness, allowing … educators to connect their personal beliefs, theories and experiences with their teaching practices' (Baker et al., 2025).

### Guiding principle 2: integrate a clear and explicit personal and social responsibility (PSR) learning intention

One way to strengthen the integration of social justice and TPSR is to include a clear and explicit PSR learning intention. A starting point here may be the CASEL framework (https://casel.org/) which identifies several social and emotional skills or for a more physical education specific refence, this book may help: 'Teaching Social and Emotional Learning in Physical Education' (Wright & Richards, 2022). It is important however to be conscious of choosing PSR skills which contribute to social justice goals, for example, in the social awareness competency, a PSR skill could be 'empathy' or 'appreciating diversity'. In teaching these skills, there is a need to have intentional learning experiences (guided by an aligned learning intention) whereby the skill is taught and not presumed to be learned as an omission by participating in a learning experience. Iannucci et al.'s (2023) work on teaching social and emotional learning may be useful here. As a result of a self-study exploring the teaching of social and emotional learning in PETE, the authors leave several recommendations which may be useful for the teaching of PSR skills in the context of SJ-TPSR. They recommend:

> '[i]Establish a scaffolded learning experience: Progress PSTs' learning of SEL by starting with foundational concepts and gradually increasing complexity. This method allows PSTs to build on prior knowledge and skills, fostering a deeper understanding and ability to apply SEL in diverse educational contexts. [ii]Enhance explicit modelling of SEL: Model SEL skills explicitly within PETE programmes making the implicit aspects of social and emotional competencies clear and teachable. This includes defining SEL terms, breaking down complex skills into teachable components, and demonstrating SEL in action within the learning environment&rsquo; (p.14).

### Guiding principle 3: prioritise responsiveness over fidelity (i.e. adherence and inflexibility): an entry point into teaching for social justice

Every aspect of the SJ-TPSR approach is designed with the flexibility and adaptability to meet the needs of diverse learners and contexts – from having learners select

meaningful social justice matters, to meeting learners where they are in their social justice understandings, to the ongoing reflection that informs future development of the approach. Educators and learners can take solace in the fact that the SJ-TPSR approach prioritises responsiveness over fidelity. For example, social justice can be an unfamiliar place for both educators and learners. As such, educators may want to prioritise particular aspects of the SJ-TPSR approach that feel comfortable as they enter a space of discomfort when learning to teach for social justice. Being responsive to learners should be prioritised over any illusions of fidelity to the SJ-TPSR approach. Social justice is contextual. Responsiveness to the needs and socio-cultural context(s) of the learners, by building trusting relationships with them (del Carmen Salazar, 2013) to learn about their social justice matters, has had positive impacts on learning (Hellison, 2011; Scanlon et al., 2024). As an entry point into teaching the SJ-TPSR approach, and building on previous research (Scanlon et al., 2024), the practices adopted in this paper's research provide weight to the notion of incremental change when introducing unfamiliar pedagogies. We advocate for taking 'baby steps' by adopting a phased approach so that the educator (and learners) does not become overwhelmed.

### Guiding principle 4: place the learners (and their social justice matters) at the centre of the SJ-TPSR approach

Placing the learners and their social justice matters (i.e. their context) at the centre of the pedagogical decision making can benefit the authentic, meaningful nature of the learning experiences. Landi et al. (2016, p. 409) argue how 'other models (e.g. Cooperative Learning, Sport Education, TPSR, etc.) might well enrich programs and shift practice in positive ways, if they are customised for the contexts and students for which they are employed'. This requires relationship-building with the learners; learning about their (cultural) backgrounds, their (social justice) identities, and what (social justice) matters exist in their lives. We have had success with a humanising approach to teaching (del Carmen Salazar, 2013) but acknowledge that there are other theoretical alignments that might assist with this. A humanising approach encourages learning with and from our learners about social justice in their context (which may be different to our own context and requires a level of self-responsibility [teacher responsibility 2]). If this mind shift is made and learners are placed at the centre of the SJ-TPSR approach as it was intended (Scanlon et al., 2022), we may achieve Freire's (1970) vision: from teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher to teacher-student with student-teachers. The importance of this guiding principle is captured in underpinning all other guiding principles.

### Conclusion as beginning of the journey

Our hope is that in providing empirically informed guiding principles, the reader feels encouraged and motivated to enact the SJ-TPSR in their own context. This may be a journey of uncertainty, uncomfortableness, and discomfort, but also one of inspiration, relationship-building (with yourself and your learners) and ultimately, hope for a more

just world. While this paper was situated in PETE, the guiding principles for SJ-TPSR can also be applied in school physical education settings. This is an opportunity for physical education teachers to interpret these, translate these for their own context, and enact these in that context. We believe further research needs to be done in this space. We encourage the reader to add to and shape these guiding principles through engaging with the SJ-TPSR approach through self-reflection, discussion with colleagues, and researching their practice (giving weight to the multi-directional nature of the guiding principles). We conclude this paper with an invitation to begin the journey.

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