



# (How) Can We Assess Teaching to Support Improvement in Practice

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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# Kristof, NYT
# September 13, 2012

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/opinion/kristof-students-over-unions.html?ref=opinion

"The most important civil rights battleground today is education, and, likewise, the most crucial struggle against poverty is the one fought in schools."



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# How could we get skillful teaching for all students?

## COMMON POLICY ANSWERS

- Increase selectivity
- Pay for performance
- Abolish tenure
- Increase accountability (high stakes teacher evaluation)

## What is the underlying problem?

## And therefore how could we address it?



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# Assumption #1: Teachers aren't working hard enough, and don't put enough effort into their teaching.

- Teachers face 25 – 40 students with different academic and social needs for 7 hours a day.
- Many factors shape whether students learn.
- Multiple challenges arise which teachers are supposed to figure out how to solve on their own.



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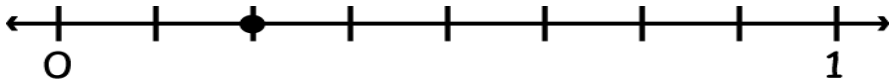
# Assumption #2: There are many bad teachers because we have not recruited the best people into the classroom.

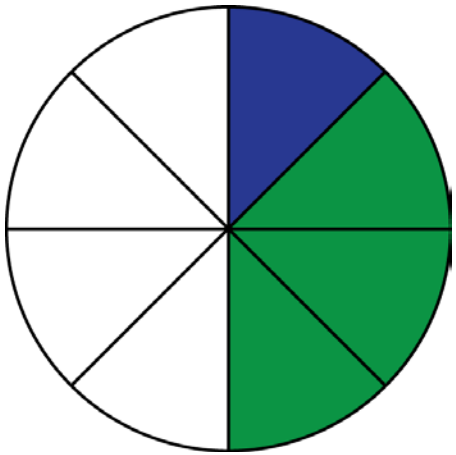
- Even very academically successful people struggle to make content learnable, to engage all students, and to manage the classroom.
- The problems that teachers have to manage are not solved by being "smart" or through common sense.



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# Learning to identify fractions





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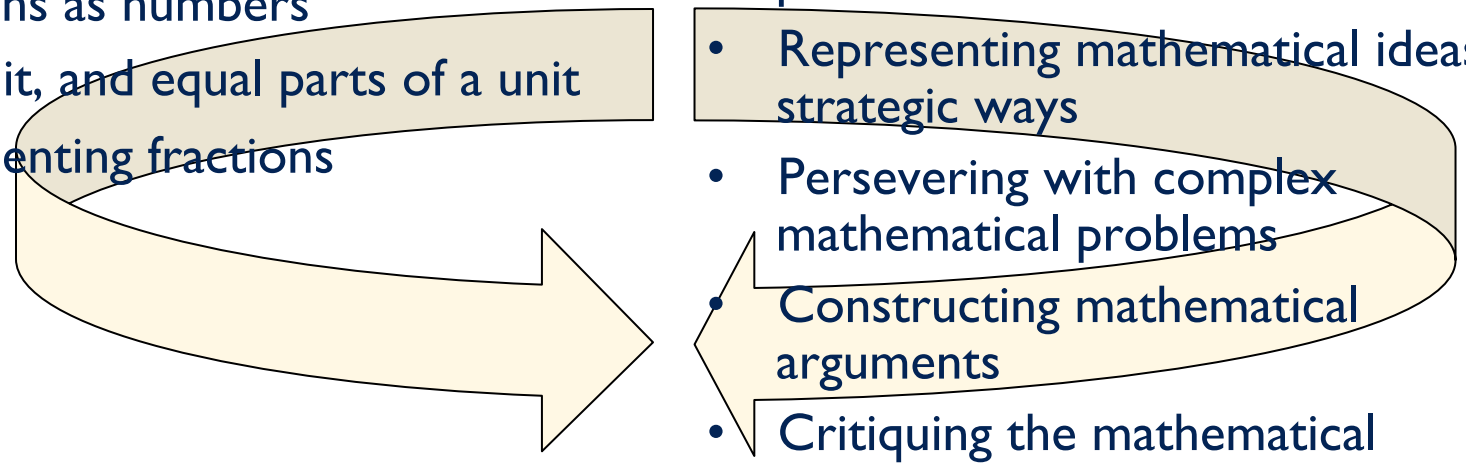
# THE COMMON CORE:
## What is entailed in being mathematically skillful?

### Concepts and procedures

- Fractions as division
- Fractions as numbers
- The unit, and equal parts of a unit
- Representing fractions

### Mathematical practices

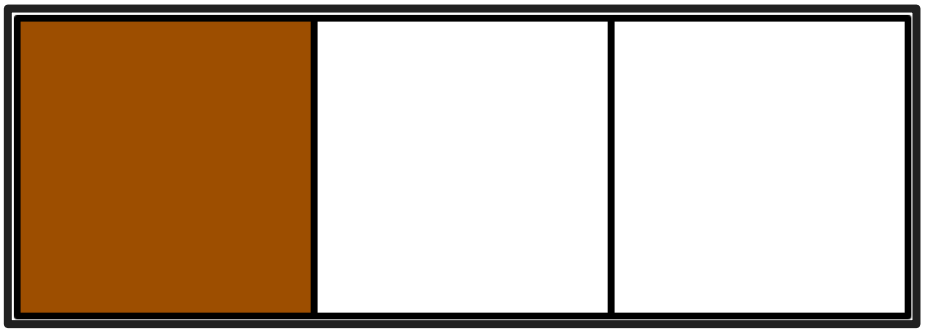
- Making sense of and interpreting problems
- Representing mathematical ideas in strategic ways
- Persevering with complex mathematical problems
- Constructing mathematical arguments
- Critiquing the mathematical arguments of others
- Look for and make use of mathematical structure

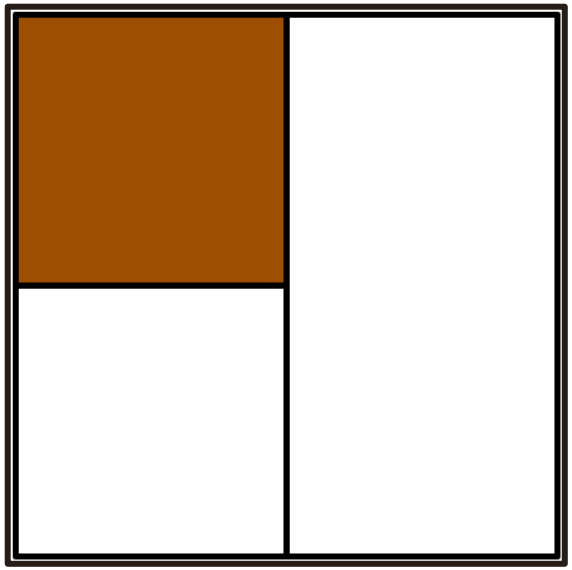




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# How much of the rectangle is shaded brown?







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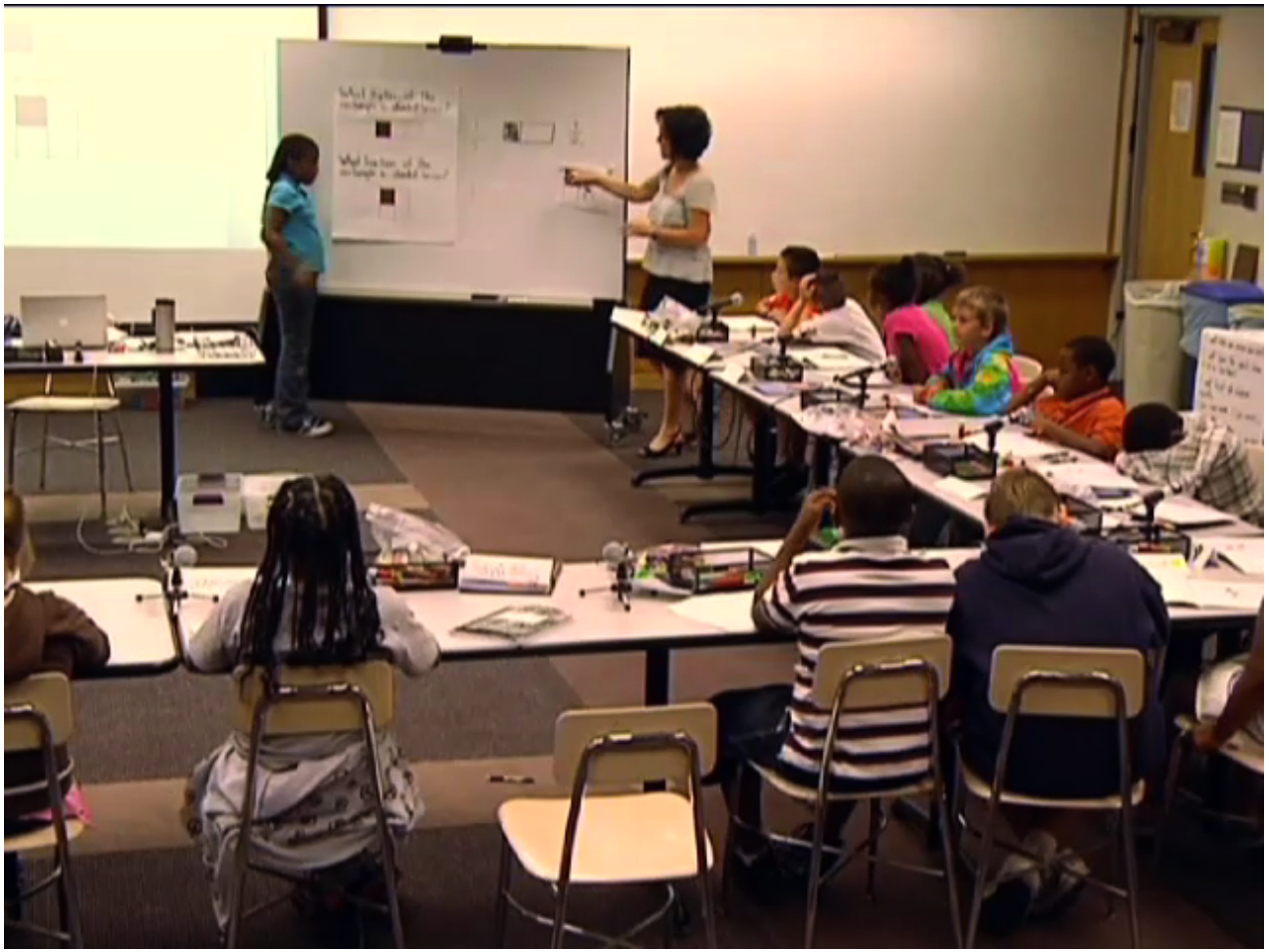
# What is the problem?

- Understanding fractions as areas is a fundamental concept.
- Many fifth graders have developed misconceptions about fractions.
- Students in the class have different ideas (e.g, Mackenzie, Diamond, Shai).



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# What is involved in teaching this skillfully?





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# What is involved in teaching this fractions concept skillfully?

- Understanding the mathematics — from children's perspectives, not from an adult perspective.
- Establish norms and routines for mathematical work.
- Elicit students' mathematical thinking.
- Respond to common patterns of students' mathematical thinking.
- Design and use targeted mathematics tasks.
- Lead productive group discussions about mathematics.



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# A different framing of the problem of how to make skillful teaching commonplace

FROM RECRUITMENT AND INCENTIVES TO CAPACITY-BUILDING AND IMPROVEMENT

- Improve initial training and raise performance standards for entry to independent practice.
- Create systems of feedback for improvement.
- Establish and provide targeted professional training.



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# The evolving policy approach

**Theory of action**
**Teacher quality would be improved if we held schools accountable for their impact on students' learning.**

## TYPICAL APPROACH

- Principal observation one or two times a year, with or without comments
- Pay increases automatic based on years of experience, not tied to evaluation (above)

## NEW POLICY APPROACH

- Principal (or other trained person) observes each teacher systematically using an observation checklist, approx. three times a year; plus "walk-throughs"
- Student growth (50% of evaluation)



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# Why evaluation matters…

- The evidence that skillful teaching has significant impact on students' learning
- The need for a more systematic way to support improvement of teaching and learning

# What the challenges are…

- Risk of emphasizing compliance over usefulness
- Lack of shared professional language and practice sets up big risks of subjectivity and capriciousness



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# First viewing:
# On your own

Videoclip from classroom lesson

*Use transcript.*

- What feedback would you give this teacher about the teaching you observe here?
- Although you would like to have more information, would you rate the teaching here as "highly effective," "effective," "ineffective," "highly ineffective"?



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# Second viewing: Supported by a tool

## Danielson's Framework for Teaching

- Does the teacher's lesson reflect important concepts in the discipline (i.e. mathematics)?
- Does the teacher offer clear and accurate explanations?
- Does the teacher correctly answer students' questions?
- Does the teacher offer feedback that furthers his students' learning?

## Marzano Observation Protocol

- Does the teacher identify critical information?
- Does the teacher organize students to interact with new knowledge?
- Does the teacher break new information into "chunks" and stop to make sure his students understand each chunk?
- Does the teacher engage his students in elaborating on new information?
- Does the teacher signal to his students when to record new information?
- Does the teacher ask his student to reflect on their learning?



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# Second view:
# Video of classroom lesson

Videoclip from classroom lesson

- How do the Danielson and Marzano rubrics support or inform your evaluation of the teacher?
- Does your feedback or rating differ based on the rubrics?



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# What feedback would be helpful to this teacher?

1. Connecting examples to core content
2. Use of the board
3. Mathematics content: The rule for computing with signed numbers

. . .



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# The tool, and using the tool

- Do observation tools focus on elements of practice that can provide useful diagnostic information and feedback?
- What does the observer need to know or understand to use it well?
- What is useful feedback on teaching practice?
- Is focused high-quality training available to work on elements identified as in need of development?



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# Evaluation in Michigan: MCEE charge

The MCEE will submit to the State Board of Education, the Governor, and the state legislature a report that identifies and recommends all of the following:

1. A student growth and assessment tool.
2. A state evaluation tool for teachers.
3. A state evaluation tool for school administrators.
4. Changes to the requirements for a professional teaching certificate.
5. A process for evaluating and approving local evaluation tools for teachers and administrators that are consistent with the state evaluation tool for teachers and administrators and the act.



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# MCEE vision

The Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness will develop a **fair**, **transparent**, and **feasible** evaluation system for teachers and school administrators. The system will be based on **rigorous standards** of professional practice and of measurement. The goal of this system is to contribute to **enhanced instruction**, improve **student achievement**, and support ongoing **professional learning**.



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# The challenges

1. Choosing tools that are valid, fair, and feasible
   - Measure the things we actually care about
   - Measure things that are appropriate to try to account for
   - Measure these things validly and reliably
   - Affordable and doable
2. Building a system that focuses on improving practice
   - Provides useful feedback
   - Is linked to effective learning opportunities



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