WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "SAFE TO PRACTICE"?

AND WHAT IS ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITY?

Deborah Loewenberg Ball

Teaching & Learning 2014 Conference

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RAISING UP TEACHING AS THE #1 POLICY IMPERATIVE OF OUR TIME

1. 50,000,000 children and youth in our nation's schools
2. Schooling: Our society's commitment to individuals' lives and to the future of our country
3. Evidence of the power of skillful teaching
4. Overwhelming lack of public respect for the work of teaching

→ **This is a public policy problem of vital moral, practical, and political urgency.**

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WHAT HOLDS PROMISE?

- Research shows the power of skilled teaching, as well as the damage done by ineffective teaching, especially across more than one year
- Advances in knowledge about skillful teaching
- Widespread consensus about the importance of "teacher quality"

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WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS?

- We don't prepare teachers nearly well enough.
- The U.S. has no system for ensuring that teaching is skillful.
- We treat skillful teaching as something remarkable, rather than the right of every child.
- There is widespread skepticism that teaching can be taught.
- The teacher workforce is massive, with high turnover.

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WHAT WOULD WE HAVE TO DO?

1. Stand up for the power of teaching, and the moral imperative.
2. Understand the context and history of the teaching profession and preparation for teaching in the U.S.
3. Articulate a specific common curriculum for initial preparation and make entry to independent practice selective and based on skill.

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WHY IS THIS THE CASE? TWO BIG THREADS FROM OUR NATION'S HISTORY

- The development of the occupation of teaching in the U.S.: eased entry, cellular structure, and easy replacement
  - → Lack of shared codified professional knowledge, lack of shared standards for teaching quality
  - → Lack of investment in professional training
- The development of localism: cultural diversity, parental rights
  - → Democratic political authority and governance of schooling
  - → Highly varied and inequitable opportunities and outcomes for students

A widely shared view of teaching as individual and learned on the job

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① STAND UP FOR THE POWER OF SKILLFUL TEACHING AND FOR THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

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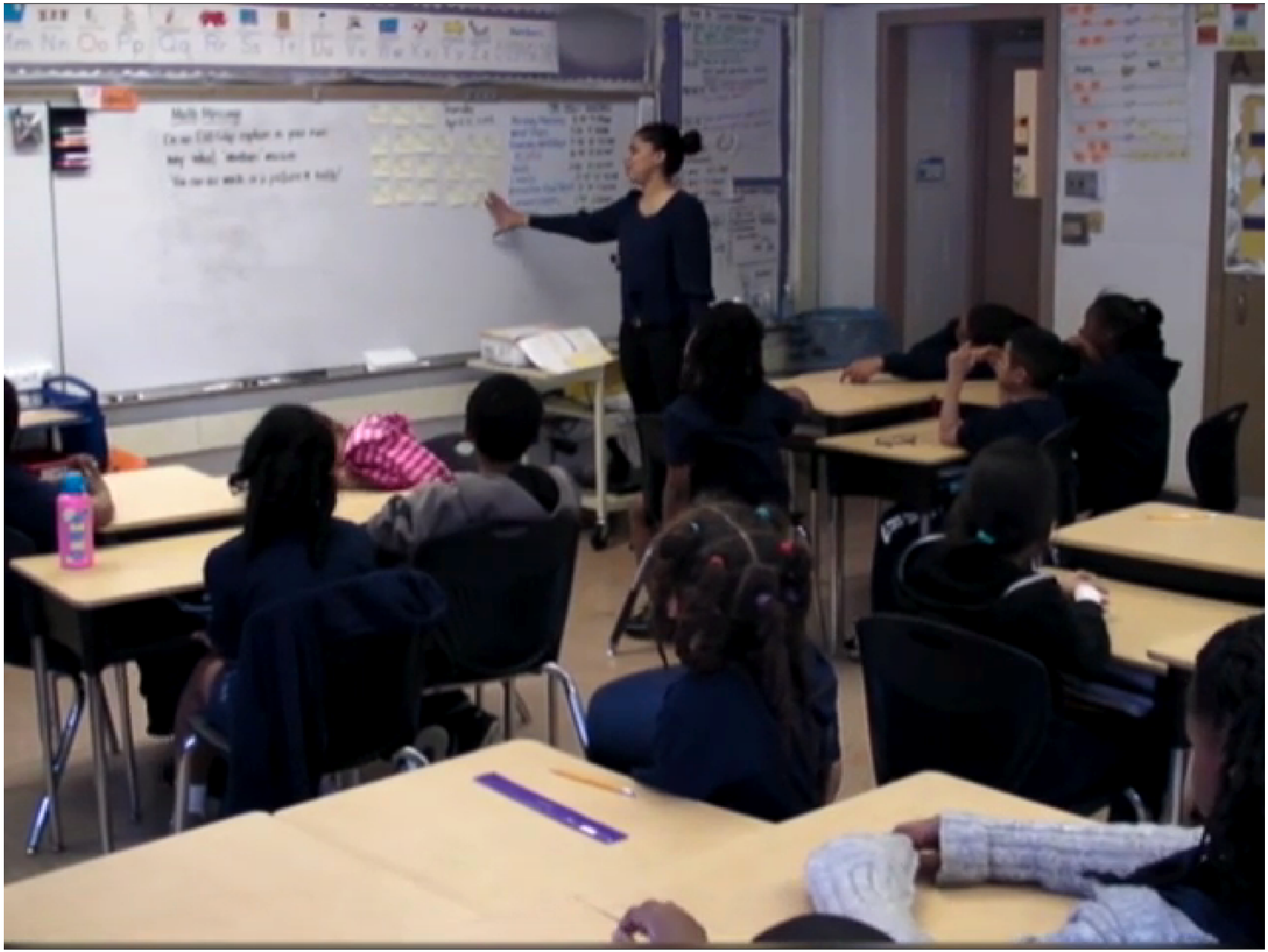
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A GLIMPSE OF BEGINNING TEACHING

1. What is skillful about this teaching? What is less so?
2. What does the video reveal about the challenges of beginning teaching with respect to:
   - knowing the content?
   - knowing students?
   - specific instructional capabilities?

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EXAMINING BEGINNING TEACHING

SKILLFUL

- Using an equitable problem context
- Engaging many learners
- Moving around classroom space
- Using strong voice and presence

LESS SKILLFUL

- Managing the mathematical-pedagogical issues with the context
- Focusing on the key mathematical point
- Eliciting student thinking
- Talking mathematics in teaching

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WHAT ABOUT TEACHING THIS LESSON COULD BE TAUGHT?

- To understand the core mathematical idea of "average" and what there is to understand
- To appraise the appropriateness of the context and to replace it with a better but mathematically similar one
- How to conduct a discussion about students' data and steer to the key mathematical point(s) (Sleep, 2010)
- Ways to engage all learners in the activity

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② UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION AND PREPARATION FOR TEACHING IN THE U.S.

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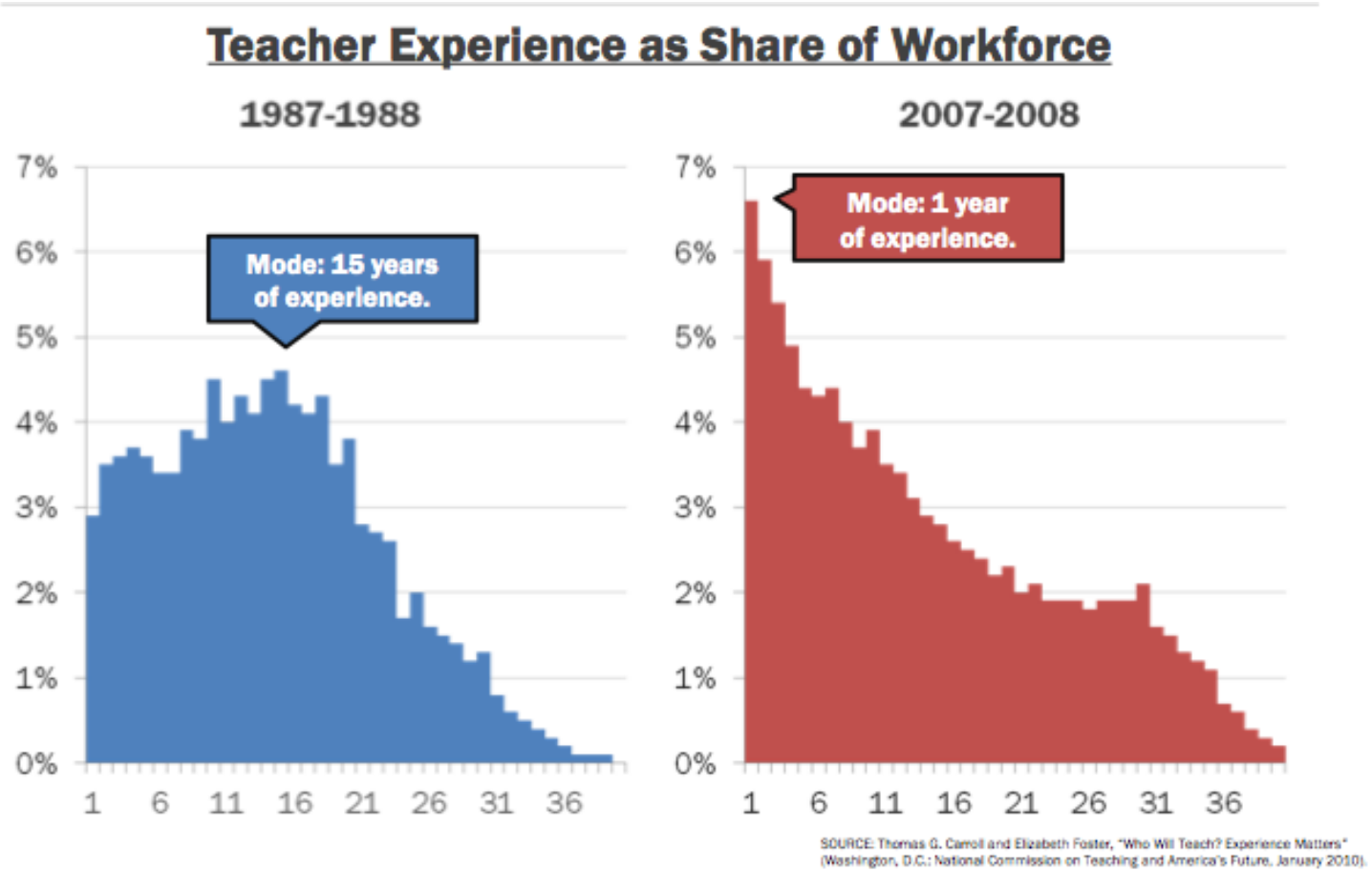
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KEY FEATURES OF THE CONTEXT

1. The concentration and impact of beginning teaching
2. The sprawl and roots of the U.S. approach to teacher preparation

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BEGINNING TEACHING ON THE RISE



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ENTRY-LEVEL TEACHING AS A CRITICAL FOCUS

- More U.S. schoolchildren have a first-year teacher than a teacher with any other number of years of experience.
- Most beginning teachers say they are underprepared for teaching.
- Distribution of beginning teaching is concentrated disproportionately in low-income and high-minority schools.

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NO PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM FOR TEACHER PREPARATION OR CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

- Over 3,000 independent providers of initial teacher training
- No common specific curriculum for preparation for initial teaching
- A reliance on conventional academic credentials as the standard content knowledge
- No common standard of performance for entry to independent practice with (on) young people

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THE CONSEQUENCES ARE SERIOUS FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND QUALITY

Could we change this? What would have to be done?

Solving this is a moral imperative.

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③ ARTICULATE A SPECIFIC COMMON PROFESSIONAL STANDARD FOR INITIAL TEACHING AND TEACHER PREPARATION, AND MAKE ENTRY TO TEACHING SELECTIVE AND BASED ON SKILL

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WHAT SHOULD INITIAL TRAINING AND LICENSURE DO?

1. Take as the central imperative the **rights of children**
2. Focus on preparing entry-level teachers who are ready to care for the **academic, social, emotional, and physical safety** of children, and to conform to standards of **ethical practice**
3. Provide assurance to parents and to the public that the beginning professional has met the standards necessary to be given **initial responsibility for students' learning**

In other words, ensure that the beginning teacher meets the standard of "safe to practice"

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MOVING FORWARD TO A PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM OF TEACHER PREPARATION

1. *Build on basic agreements about domains of teaching and evidence about content knowledge for teaching:* Identify **key practices of teaching** and **high-leverage content** essential for responsible beginning practice
2. *Build on commitment to clinical preparation:* Develop **specific approaches to training** beginners to carry out those practices, along a **continuum of contexts** for learning and practicing practice
3. *Build on commitment to performance assessment:* Develop **performance assessments of specific practices and content** and make them required for entry

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HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICES

High-leverage practices (HLPs) are instructional tasks and activities that powerfully promote learning and are fundamental to skillful teaching.

Based on work done at the University of Michigan School of Education in the redesign of our teacher education program, and at TeachingWorks, an organization housed at U-M whose mission is to improve the quality of teaching and learning by transforming teachers' education.

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EXAMPLES OF HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICES

- Leading a whole-class discussion
- Eliciting and interpreting individual students' thinking
- Explaining and modeling core content
- Formulating and posing questions
- Establishing norms and routines for classroom discourse and work that are central to the content
- Recognizing particular common patterns of student thinking and development in a subject-matter domain
- Setting up and managing small group work
- Selecting and using specific methods to check understanding and monitor student learning during and across lessons
- Composing, selecting, adapting quizzes, tests, and other methods of assessing student learning of a chunk of instruction
- Conducting a meeting about a student with a parent or guardian

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CONTENT KNOWLEDGE **FOR TEACHING*

- Knowing the content that the students are supposed to learn
- Knowing ways to unpack, represent, and make that content learnable
- Knowing how students think about the specific content
- Knowing ways to teach the specific content

(Ball, Thames, and Phelps, 2008, *JTE*)

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ETHICAL PRACTICE AND THE COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

- Inequity is reproduced inside of instructional practice.
- Teachers have leverage at strategic points in their work.
- This depends on joining concerns for equity with the daily and minute-to-minute work of teaching.

(Ball, Shaughnessy, Mann, & Farmer, 2014)

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CLINICAL TRAINING

- Deliberate guided learning from skilled teachers (clinical rounds)
- Study of videos and other primary records of practice
- Rehearsals
- Rubrics for providing detailed feedback
- Systematic clinical experience with supervision and feedback, staged across time

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BUILDING NEW ASSESSMENTS OF TEACHING PRACTICE

- Based on actual performance of specific high-leverage practices
- Tied to teaching specific academic content
- Conducted in a variety of settings for practice, depending on what is being assessed
- Built as part of an ongoing program of R&D

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RAISE THE BAR FOR ENTRY TO INDEPENDENT ENTRY-LEVEL PRACTICE

- Agree on common high-leverage practices and content knowledge, as well as ethics, necessary for safe and skillful practice
- Determine how these can be most validly assessed to assure probability of safe practice: on-demand, other (portfolio, etc.)
- Build common supports to help candidates develop the requisite skill and capabilities
- Carry out ongoing research and development to improve validity and precision of licensure system

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A SYSTEM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL, ADVANCED, AND SPECIALIZED LEVELS OF TEACHING PRACTICE

1. A staged series of licenses based on levels of skill and expertise: initial, continuing (renewal of initial), professional (to be renewed periodically); advanced (Board-certified) practice; various Board specializations
2. Different complexities of teaching assignment depending on licensure level
3. Professional systems of infrastructure for support, development, and advancement

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REPRESENTING TEACHING AS SKILLFUL WORK THAT DEMANDS AND DESERVES TRAINING

- Share examples that display the complexity of the work (and that "regular" people can't do)
- Stand up for the importance of rigorous licensure for beginning to teach
- Help to develop shared knowledge useful for initial and continuing professional training

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IT WON'T BE EASY

1. The scale of the enterprise is vast and the U.S. has weak educational infrastructure.
2. It will take a movement to build a rigorous system of professional training for the responsibility of teaching our nation's youth, in order to achieve fairness in common access to skilled teaching.
3. It focuses on **teaching**, not **teachers.** It focuses on building capacity, not finding talent and firing.
4. It is not the "American way"—it is detailed (even prescriptive), not individually discretionary, common.

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