



(How) Can All Children Get Great Teaching?

Deborah Loewenberg Ball

April 13, 2013

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards • Board of Directors Meeting

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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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Our problem

1. Evidence of teaching effects has spurred increased interest in importance of *teaching*.
2. Broad skepticism exists about the efficacy of teacher education and professional development.
3. Education professionals are often not effective advocates for teacher education.
4. The result: A predominant focus on recruitment, outcomes, and sorting — instead of training. This does not augur well for redressing educational inequity and uneven quality.

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Overview of today's argument

1. Why improved *initial professional training* is crucial in improving teaching quality, and its place in an overall strategy for improving student learning
2. Elements of strong training for responsible entry-level professional practice (and examples)

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Questions

1. Could a professional system be developed for the entire continuum of practice?
   - Selection into training
   - Initial training
   - Licensure for initial practice
   - Continuing professional development and improvement
   - Continuing certification (Board certification?)
   - Certificates of advanced competence or specialization
2. How could this be done, coordinated, by whom, and with what authority? How could such a system be built for ongoing improvement?
3. How could the work we are doing at TeachingWorks best contribute to this? How does the work of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards figure in this agenda?

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No professionally grounded system for teachers' training

1. No common curriculum for the professional training of teachers for new or practicing teachers — i.e., specific practices and skills that are professionally agreed upon
2. A reliance on academic standards and preparation for content knowledge
3. Over 3,000 independent providers of initial teacher training, and a vast array of professional development providers
4. No common standard of performance for entry to independent practice with (on) young people

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Great teachers aren't born.

THEY'RE TAUGHT.

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Our bet

That a real system for **initial professional training** and **entry to responsible beginning practice** could be designed and implemented **at scale** in this country.

Also important to make this work:

- Professionally relevant standards for entry to training
- Common national curricula
- Better assessments of students' learning
- School settings in which the improvement of instruction is prioritized and effectively supported
- Improvement-oriented systems of evaluation of instruction
- And other things!

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What we would have to do

Create the will and the capability to shift

- From the "license" we have allowed ourselves (or enabled others to use)
- To a professional approach to licensure

What would this take?

- Respect for teaching seriously as skilled professional work
- Determination to specify that work

This would be a major cultural shift for us.

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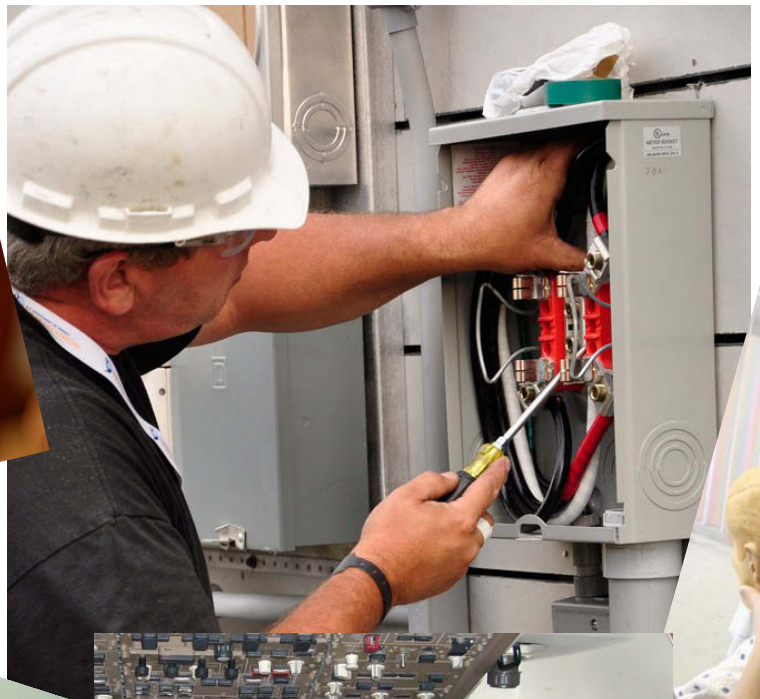
What should initial training and licensure do?

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

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Features of strong training for responsible practice

1. Clear **specification of knowledge, skills, capabilities, and qualities of performance** necessary for independent practice
2. Detailed **developmental clinical training**, progressing from observing to simulations to supervised apprenticeship to supervised independent practice
3. **Performance assessment** of individual competence before allowing independent practice

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Crucial next steps for the profession

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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Three challenges to specifying a common, detailed professional core

① Broad faith in teaching as "natural"

② Underdeveloped professional language

③ Particularity and context-dependence of skillful teaching practice

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High-leverage instructional 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 it is to improve the quality of teaching and learning by transforming teachers' education.

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High-leverage practices . . .

1. Are necessary for basic and responsible academic instruction in the Common Core State Standards and other academic subjects
2. Are fundamental to managing effectively the environment of teaching practice
3. Are specific enough to be named, identified, and taught (useful for professional training and development)
4. Can be assessed directly

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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, and 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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Clinical training is more than field experience

Shifting the conversation from how much to what and how

1. Focus on the curriculum for teaching practice
   - What skills, techniques, capabilities
   - Ways of representing, decomposing, and approximating practice (Grossman and McDonald)
   - Practices of teaching those: analyzing, modeling, rehearsing, coaching, etc.
2. Settings appropriate to the learning goals, including video and cases, simulations, labs, real students and classrooms

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Practicing defibrillation



Practicing a guided reading lesson



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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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Toward a professional system of training for teaching practice

What do we need to make the practice of teaching broadly learnable in ways that are reliable, equitable, and responsible?

What challenges will we face?

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Common resources for building professional practice

1. Develop a common technical and professional language for critical elements of the work (e.g., questions)
2. Build broadly shared and accessible collections from practice (student thinking, classroom episodes, "textbook cases," unpacking of common core content) from a wide and representative set of contexts and communities
3. Develop ways to work on practice collectively that help to define what is common, what is contextual, what is personal/stylistic

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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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What *is* TeachingWorks?

- A national organization housed at the University of Michigan School of Education
- Based on work done at the University of Michigan in our own programs and also in partnership with other programs and organizations
- Focused on ensuring that every child gets skillful teaching every single year by building strong professional infrastructure for the training, development, and assessment of teaching practice

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Four main arenas of work

① Supporting the development of a common curriculum for teaching
② Building resources for teaching practice, and performance assessments of specific high-leverage practices that appraise a teacher's readiness for independent practice
③ Providing training for those who work with teachers
④ Advancing the case for the importance of effective professional training

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