IT'S A MORAL IMPERATIVE:
SKILLFUL TEACHING CAN'T BE LEFT TO CHANCE

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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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OUR PROBLEM

1. Evidence of teaching effects has led to increased attention to the importance of teachers.
2. Broad skepticism exists about the efficacy of teacher education and professional development.
3. Education professionals are often not effective advocates for teacher education and professional development.
4. The result: A predominant focus on **teacher quality** rather than **teaching 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)

③ How ongoing improvement-focused evaluation can advance the professional practice of all teachers

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NO PROFESSIONALLY GROUNDED SYSTEM FOR TEACHERS' TRAINING

1. No common curriculum for the professional training of new or practicing teachers
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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THE 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 WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE

- **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**

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

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FEATURES OF STRONG TRAINING FOR RESPONSIBLE INDEPENDENT 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 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, 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

- 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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CLINICAL TRAINING IS MORE THAN FIELD EXPERIENCE

Shift focus from **how much** → to **what** and **how**

1. Focus on the **curriculum** for teaching practice
   - What skills, techniques, capabilities
   - Ways to teach practice
2. Deliberate thinking about **settings** appropriate to the learning goals: e.g., video and cases, simulations, labs, real students and classrooms

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PRACTICING DEFIBRILLATION



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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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DOES THIS STUDENT UNDERSTAND?

$$\begin{array}{r} 9\ \frac{2}{10} \\ -\ 6\ \frac{7}{10} \\ \hline 2\ \frac{5}{10} \end{array}$$

POSSIBILITIES?

1. The student does understand the underlying concepts.
2. The student subtracted "up" and made a basic calculational error.
3. The student overgeneralized from base 10 whole number subtraction.

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MODELING



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4. *Build an improvement-focused system of teacher evaluation:* Develop a fair, transparent, and feasible **statewide system of teacher evaluation** based on rigorous standards of professional practice and of measurement

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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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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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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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