TOWARD RESPONSIBLE BEGINNING TEACHING

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Billie Grace Goodrich Distinguished Lecture

October 10, 2013 • University of Tennessee, Knoxville



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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IT'S A MORAL IMPERATIVE

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

Nicholas Kristof, *New York Times*, September 13, 2012
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/opinion/kristof-students-over-unions.html?ref=opinion

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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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OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S ARGUMENT

① Foundations: How we got here, why improved initial professional training is crucial to 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 What would it take to make "responsible beginning teaching" an assumption?

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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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WHY IS THIS THE CASE? TWO BIG THREADS FROM OUR 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

→ School management and unionization

→ 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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THE CONSEQUENCES ARE SERIOUS FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND QUALITY

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

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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 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 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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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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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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WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO ESTABLISH A PROFESSIONAL SYSTEM FOR ENTRY TO TEACHING?

1. A common standard for the capabilities required, and a common tool for determining readiness for practice
2. Resources for the teaching of teaching, including specific pedagogies, video libraries, and instructional materials and methods for teaching particular high-leverage practices or content knowledge for teaching
3. The development of teacher educators

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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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