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

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November 15, 2013 • Notre Dame, IN



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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AN INDUSTRY OF MEDIOCRITY?

"There are 3.3 million public school teachers in America, and they probably can't all be trained by start-ups. Raising up the standards of our university programs should be an urgent priority. But one reason for the widespread mediocrity is that universities have had a cozy, lucrative monopoly. It's about time the leaders of our education schools *did* feel threatened."

Bill Keller, *New York Times*, October 20, 2013
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/21/opinion/keller-an-industry-of-mediocrity.html

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WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS? ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
1. Teacher candidates are weak and programs are too easy; university-based teacher education is inherently mediocre	1. Make teacher preparation tougher: encourage programs outside of universities, increase admissions selectivity, extend field experience; use stringent teacher evaluation to weed out bad teachers
2. The country views teaching as something one must learn from experience, and that good practice is personal	2. Create and agree on a common professional standard of initial performance for entry to beginning teaching

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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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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
  - → 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?

Solving this is a moral imperative.

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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 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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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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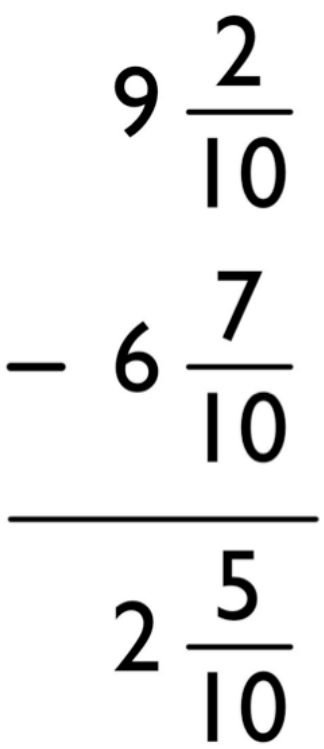
BUILDING NEW ASSESSMENTS OF TEACHING PRACTICE

- 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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DOES THIS STUDENT UNDERSTAND?



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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TEACHER INTERN #1



$$\begin{array}{r} 8 \\ 9\,\frac{12}{10} \\ -\,6\,\frac{7}{10} \\ \hline 2\,\frac{5}{10} \end{array}$$

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TEACHER INTERN #2



$$\begin{array}{r} 8\,\cancel{9}\,{}^{1}2\tfrac{}{10} \\ -\;6\tfrac{7}{10} \\ \hline 2\tfrac{5}{10} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 2\tfrac{2}{5} \\ -\;1\tfrac{3}{5} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

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LEADING A WHOLE-CLASS DISCUSSION IN MATH



- A specified discussable math problem that is curriculum-independent
- Supports for setting up the task
- Goals for the discussion
- Rubric for assessing quality of the discussion



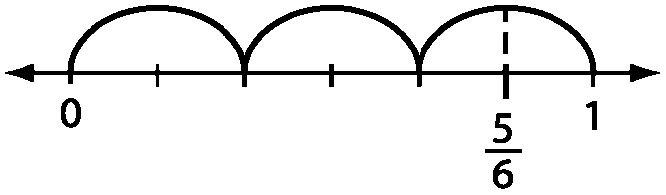
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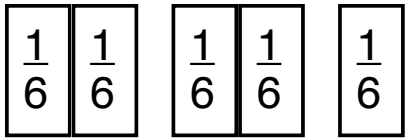
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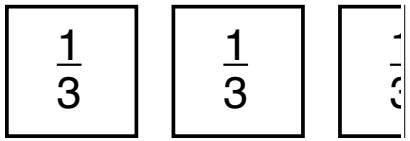
ANALYZING AND "TALKING" REPRESENTATIONS

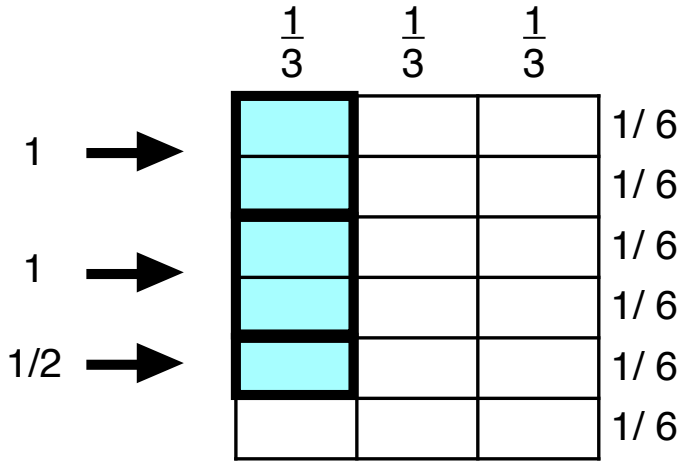
Which of these can be used to represent $\frac{5}{6} \div \frac{1}{3}$?

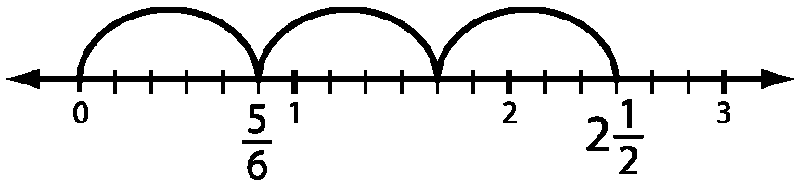
Show how you would "talk" an explanation of each.











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INTERPRETING LEARNERS' THINKING: ANALYZING ERRORS

What mathematical steps could have produced this answer?

(a)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 405 \\ 108 \\ \hline 1485 \end{array}$$

(b)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 225 \\ 100 \\ \hline 325 \end{array}$$

(c)

$$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ \times\ 25 \\ \hline 1250 \\ 25 \\ \hline 1275 \end{array}$$

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LISTENING TO AND INTERPRETING LEARNERS' IDEAS



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MODELING HOW TO ELABORATE IN WRITING



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WHAT SHOULD LICENSURE ASSESSMENTS CLAIM?

- That a candidate has the requisite skills and knowledge to carry out responsible practice in the classroom as a beginning teacher
  - That a candidate's performance on the on-demand assessments predicts the individual's performance in the classroom

(A research agenda: Do candidates who pass these assessments perform better in the classroom over their first year than those who do not? Do their students learn better/more?)

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MAKING "SAFE TO PRACTICE" THE STANDARD FOR INITIAL LICENSURE

- 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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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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