High-Leverage Teaching Practices in Teacher Education and Assessment

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November 2, 2012 • Muncie, Indiana
Overview

1. Core components of practice-focused teacher education

2. Identifying high-leverage practices
   - Evolution of our work at U-M
   - What are high-leverage practices?
   - How do they relate to other, similar-sounding efforts?

3. High-leverage practices in the U-M program
   - New curriculum
   - Assessments
   - Other aspects of the program

4. TeachingWorks
1. Core components of practice-focused teacher education
Core components of practice-focused teacher education

1. Curriculum: Focused on specific skills and practices of teaching, and on the knowledge and orientations that support them

2. Instructional activities and settings: Repeated opportunities to practice specific teaching skills, with close, prescriptive coaching, in settings that support professional learning

3. Assessment: Periodic and culminating performance assessments that provide information about novices’ developing competence
What it would take

- Building a common K-12 curriculum, or a means toward it
- Identifying teaching practices essential for beginners, and developing a common curriculum of teacher training focused on them
- Developing common standards for novice practice, with common assessments of performance
- Developing capacity for the teaching of practice: resources, training, shared professional knowledge
- Working in continuous cycles of improvement
2. Identifying high-leverage practices
Evolution of our work at U-M

- Our context: resources and challenges
  - Strong program and history of commitment to TE
  - But no consensus around core practices and too few opportunities for students to practice

- Curriculum Group launched in 2006:
  - What teaching practices are most important for beginners?
  - Key problems:
    - Developing consensus around core practices
    - Choosing elements of practice most important for beginners
    - Articulating those elements at an effective grain-size
Specifying and developing consensus around core teaching practices

- Absence of robust professional knowledge base
- Link between particular teaching practices and student learning not always clear
- Weak common language for describing and studying teaching
Choosing elements of practice most important for beginners

- Given vast scope of teaching practice and brevity of professional training, what is most important?
- Are some aspects of practice fundamental to advanced elements?
- Are there elements of practice that are best or only learned through formal training (rather than experience)?
- What makes a “safe” beginner?
Articulating core practices at an effective grain size

- How to decompose the intricate practice of teaching into parts that are small enough to be learnable but still meaningful?
- Does it matter if core practices are of different “grain-sizes”?
- What do do about practices that cut across multiple elements of the work?
Managing these problems at the University of Michigan

- Enlisted the experience and imagination of a broad range of practitioners and researchers to create a comprehensive “map” of the work of teaching
- Specified and used criteria for identifying those aspects of the work that are the most “high-leverage” for beginners
- Deliberately chose tasks and activities at grain-sizes useful for a curriculum of learning to teach
Examples of considerations

- **Considerations central to the practice of teaching:**
  - High probability of making a difference in teaching quality and effectiveness
  - Effective in using and responding to differences among pupils
  - Useful broadly across contexts and content

- **Considerations central to teacher education:**
  - Can be assessed
  - Can be taught to beginners
What do we mean by “can be taught to beginners”?

- Tasks or activities that prospective or new teachers can try out right away, perhaps by practicing on each other
- Not principles or goals, but PRACTICES
- Consider the difference:

  The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies… (InTASC standard #8)

  Leading a whole-class discussion (HLP # 2)

  or

  Setting up and managing small-group work (HLP #X)
A grammar of practice

- Practices versus principles or standards
- Practices versus learning goals for K-12 pupils
- Practices versus learning activities for K-12 pupils
  - Parsed at a grain-size that keeps them connected to specific academic content and to specific purposes of instruction
  - Articulated in detail
3. High-leverage practices in the U-M program
What is TeachingWorks?

- A national organization focused on improving the standard of teaching practice, by building strong professional infrastructure for quality teaching

- Engaged in four main arenas of work:
  1. Advancing the development of a common professional core for teaching
  2. Creating and distributing resources for a comprehensive practice-based curriculum
  3. Building training for those who work with teachers
  4. Conducting and using research on teaching, on professional training and assessment of teaching, and relations to students’ learning

- Based on work done at the University of Michigan in our own programs and also in partnership with other programs and organizations
Great teachers aren’t born.
THEY’RE TAUGHT.