Learning to Teach Something in Particular: The Common Core and Teacher Education

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Three headlines:

1. The Common Core, the new INTASC standards, and interest in teachers’ clinical education are huge resources for the improvement of teacher education.

2. To realize the potential of the Common Core, we will need to rebuild the curriculum for learning to teach fundamentally, including designing new pedagogies and assessments of capability for practice.

3. We will also need to build the capability of teacher educators to teach that curriculum effectively.
Standards for plumbing

- Install copper and copper alloy piping
- Build a plumbing trap
- Vent a sanitary drainage system
- Disassemble and rebuild a centrifugal compressor
- Maintain joints, connections, supports, and hangars
- Install and maintain storm drainage systems
Standards for medical practice

• e.g., Conduct a chest examination:
  • Observe respiratory efforts and note presence/absence of respiratory distress
  • Confirm midline tracheal position with gentle palpation anteriorly
  • Percuss the chest on left and right
  • Auscultate the chest using using the diaphragm of the stethoscope on both right and left sides
No equivalent in teaching

- Objectives for coursework, student teaching, and other clinical experiences are imprecise and vague and vary significantly from one program to the next.
- Students of teaching rarely probe and practice the work of teaching particular content in much depth.
- Performance expectations for graduates of teacher education are underspecified and weakly assessed.
Vague standards

“The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies to engage students in challenging academic content.”

rather than

“The teacher uses probing questions to provoke students’ engagement in the main themes in Romeo and Juliet in order to introduce the play.”

or

“The teacher poses a focused task to engage students in considering how to apply the definition of a fraction.”
High-leverage practices and high-leverage content

- **High-leverage practices** are instructional tasks and activities that powerfully promote student learning and are fundamental to competent beginning teaching.

- **High-leverage content** is those topics, practices, ideas, and texts that are foundational to the K-12 curriculum, including the Common Core, and essential for beginning teachers to understand and be able to teach.
Examples of high-leverage practices

• Explaining specific content ideas and processes
• Choosing and using representations, examples, and models of core content
• Setting up and managing small-group work
• Recognizing and identifying common patterns of student thinking in a content domain
• Selecting and using specific methods to assess students’ learning on an on-going basis
• Conducting a meeting with a parent or caregiver
Examples of high-leverage content for elementary math teachers

- Place value
- Computational procedures with whole numbers and decimals
- Fractions
Examples of high-leverage content for secondary ELA teachers

- Writing a persuasive essay that supports a clear claim
- Using textual evidence to support analysis and argumentation in relation to a specific text
- Reading and analyzing *Romeo and Juliet*
Learning to teach something in particular: secondary ELA

- Conducting whole-class discussions of the prologue and other sections of *Romeo and Juliet*
- Using small group work as a format for helping students analyze character motivation in *The Scarlet Letter*
- Working with individual students to help them develop their thinking in relation to a persuasive essay
- Giving a verbal explanation of sentence structure with reference to several strategically-chosen examples
Teacher educators
THANK YOU!
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Slides will be posted on Deborah Ball’s website
Google “Deborah Ball”