



TeachingWorks

UNIVERSITY of MICHIGAN SCHOOL of EDUCATION

Learning to Teach: The Practice Curriculum *Introduction*

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TeachingWorks

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What great teachers often say about teaching

“Teaching has always come naturally to me.”

“I have learned what I do from experience; I like to pass on what I know to student teachers.”

“I can’t explain what I do -- teaching is really an art and you have to follow your intuition a lot.”

“I have developed my way of doing things that works for me and my style.”

What's wrong with this?

1. Undermines the idea that teaching is a profession that can be developed through careful unpacking of the practice and a common technical language
2. Perpetuates the belief that teaching is individual
3. Reinforces the predominance of “style” over skill

If teaching is individual and must be figured out by each person on the job, then there is little hope of ensuring that all young people receive skillful instruction.

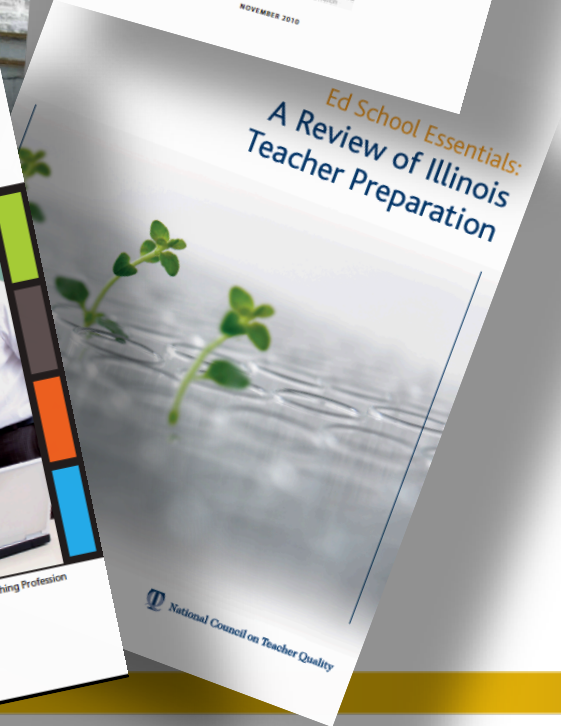
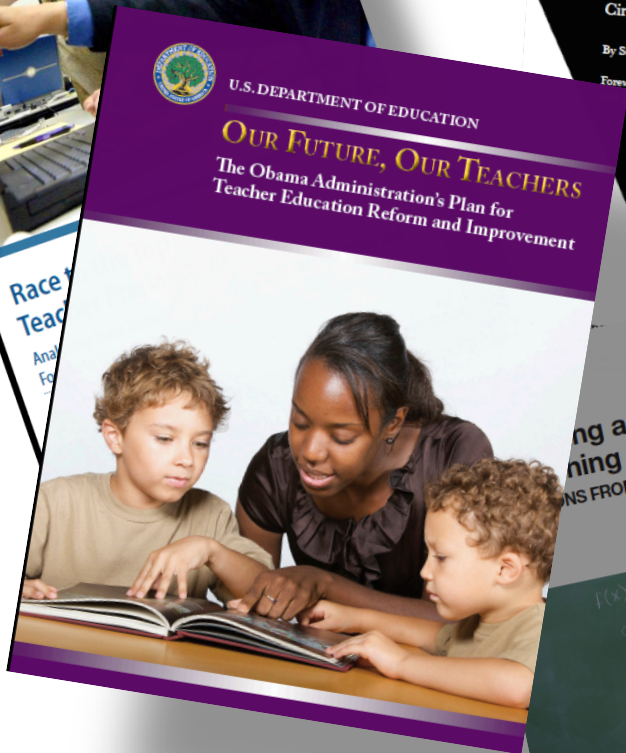
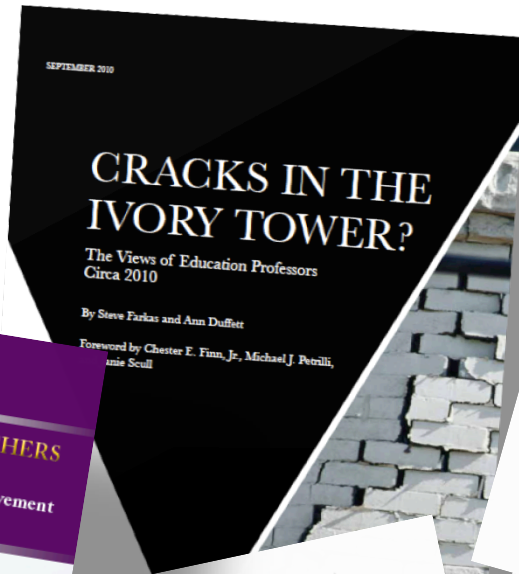
No professionally-grounded system for teachers' training

1. No common curriculum for the professional training of teachers--specific, professionally-agreed upon learning objectives for new or practicing teachers
2. Over 2,000 independent providers of initial teacher training, and an uncountable number of providers of professional development
3. No common standard of performance for entry to independent practice with (on) young people
 - Primacy of personal experience
 - 62% of beginning teachers say they feel unprepared for practice;
 - Teachers report doing most of their learning alone on the job

ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS: France, Finland, Singapore



- All democracies, too
- Education is a societal national commitment
- Common K-12 curricula and criterion-referenced exams
- Prospective teachers study the common curriculum in detail and practice how to teach it
- Inspection system evaluates teachers' instructional capability in reference to the common curriculum



Teachers should use data to inform instruction.

Teachers should use a variety of instructional strategies to engage all students.

Teachers should know their subjects deeply.

Teachers should care about all students and create a positive culture in the classroom.

Teachers should hold high expectations for all students.

Key questions for today

1. How can we operationalize these statements for the purposes of training teachers and assessing teaching performance?
2. How can we do this in a way that is conducive to *collective* and *cumulative* work to study and improve teaching, teacher training, and research on teaching?



Training to do the work of plumbing

SPECIFIC CAPABILITIES

- 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



DETAILED TRAINING FOR PRACTICE

- Detailed performance expectations
- 5-year apprenticeship
- 1700-2000 hours on-the-job training
- 246 hours classroom instruction
- 1-year probationary period with on-the-job evaluations
- Extensive training required to be a master plumber

Features of strong training for responsible practice

1. Clear specification of skills, capabilities, and qualities of performance necessary for basic 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

A concern for preparing teachers for practice, but . . .

- tendency to describe instructional competence in large global terms
- no consensus about a set of specific instructional practices that are essential for beginners to be able to carry out
- impoverished vocabulary for describing, teaching, and assessing teaching

EXPLORATION #1:

Naming the work of teaching

- View short video clip of fourth grade math lesson:

What are the specific things that the teacher is doing?

- How closely can we name these elements of the work?
- How much common technical vocabulary do we have?
- How much do we agree on the core elements of instruction to describe and distinguish carefully?

Link to video

- <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/78024>

Possible elements to name

- Making transitions
- Getting and holding the floor
- Introducing a mathematical term
- Creating a safe classroom learning environment
- Designing and sequencing lessons for specific mathematical goals
- Engaging students in experimentation to develop probability concepts
- Posing questions
- Assessing students' prior knowledge and their learning
- Launching a task
- Providing positive reinforcement

Introducing a mathematical term

1. “What numbers can you get?” (concept)
2. “We call those outcomes.” (new term)
3. “Possible results of an experiment.” (definition)
4. Puts up poster. (signals importance, supports remembering and using term)
5. “How many outcomes are there?” (practice)

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

It is possible to identify a common core for teaching, consisting of a set of teaching practices that:

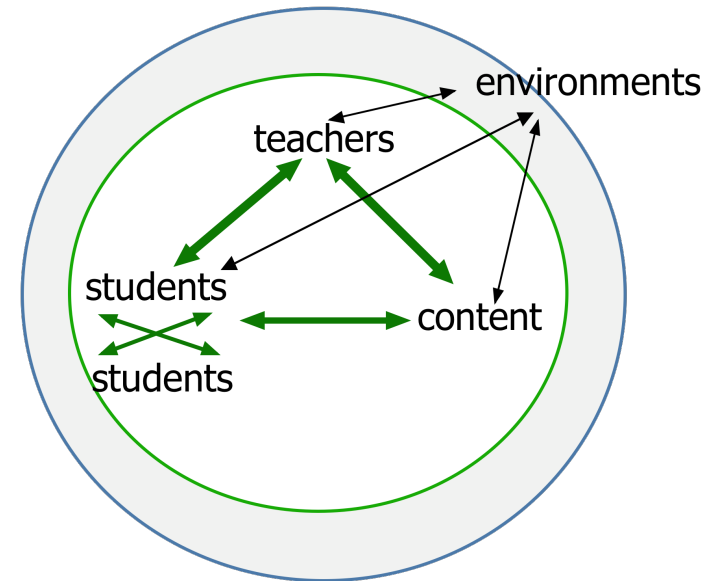
- are crucial for responsible teaching across contexts
- are specific enough to be named, identified, and taught
- can be assessed

What is “teaching”?

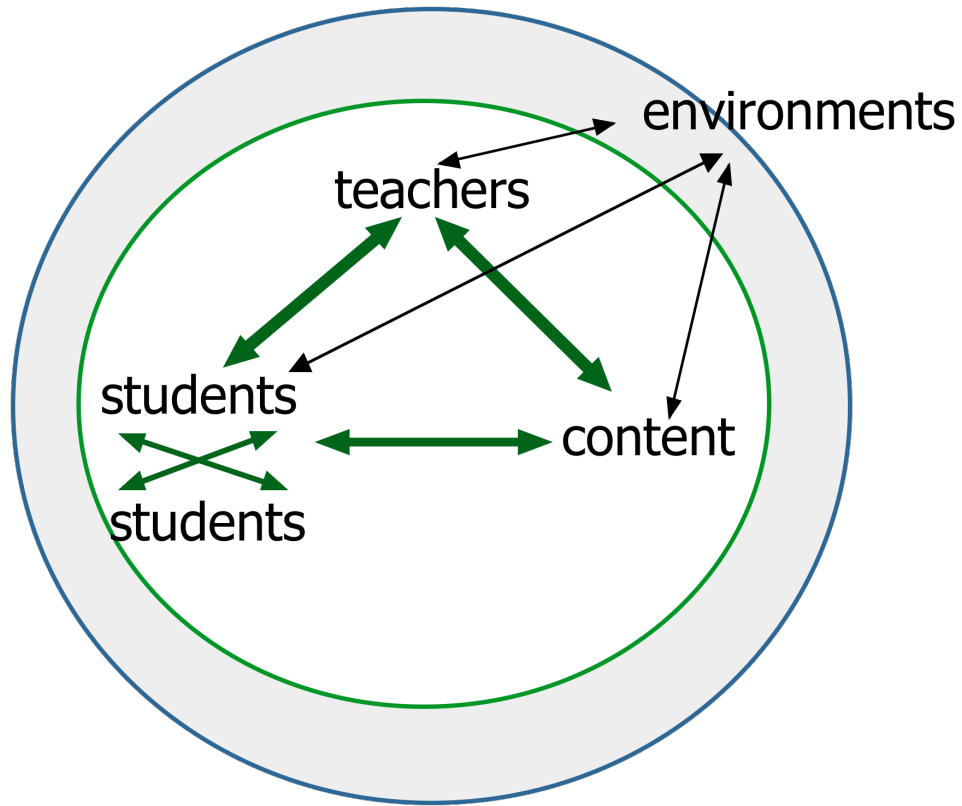
It is not:

- What teachers do
- The cause of students’ learning
- “Natural”
- Primarily intuitive and improvisational

Teaching is what is *co-produced* by students and teachers in contexts, around specific content and curriculum.



What is “responsible” in teaching?



Takes responsibility for:

1. deliberately maximizing the quality of the interactions . . .
2. . . in ways that maximize the probability that students learn
3. . . worthwhile content and skills

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

It is possible to identify a **common** core for teaching, comprising a set of teaching practices that are:

- ① **crucial** for responsible teaching across contexts
- ② **specific** enough to be named, identified, and taught and **assessed**.

A common core for teaching

① CRUCIAL FOR RESPONSIBLE INSTRUCTION ACROSS CONTEXTS

- Practices that every teacher must be able to carry out effectively to be responsible in teaching
- Applicable across teaching contexts
- Useful and useable by researchers and people who train teachers across the country

② SPECIFIC AND ASSESSABLE

Not “Use a wide variety of instructional strategies effectively,” but:

- *Make content explicit through explanation, modeling, representation, and examples*
- *Lead a whole-class discussion*
- *Elicit and interpret student thinking*
- *Establish norms and routines for classroom discourse and work*

Why is this worth doing?

- Develop more practice-focused teacher training, including powerful materials and other resources
- Develop more consistent teacher training that will lead to greater equity in the supply of effective teaching
- Build a professionally-based licensure system
- Provide infrastructure for R&D in teaching and teacher training



IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

The 2011-12 TeachingWorks seminar series

Learning to Teach: The Practice Curriculum


- The WHAT of the practice curriculum:
 - What do teachers need to be able to do to begin teaching responsibly?
 - How can we identify a specific, assessable, and common set of practices to serve as the core of the practice curriculum for preparing teachers?
- Less in the foreground across this year's series:
 - What teachers need to *know*
 - What teachers need to be *like*
 - *How* to teach practice to teachers

Overview

1. History and contemporary context
2. Problems inherent in identifying the practice curriculum for learning to teach
3. Problems from an assessment perspective
4. Overview of the remainder of the series
5. Introduction to TeachingWorks

Goals for today

1. Orient the work for the year across the series
2. Provide context for the challenges of the endeavor of identifying a curriculum for teaching practice
3. Raise questions to guide our investigation throughout the series

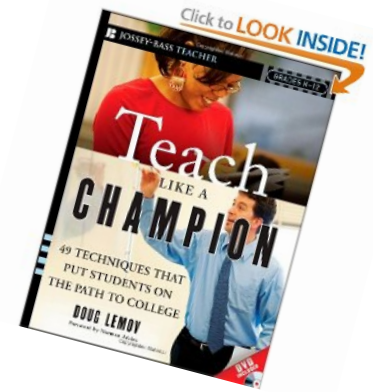


① **Historical and contemporary contexts**

Historical precedents

- Teaching developed as an easy-to-enter occupation; authority for hiring and evaluation to local schools and communities
- Highly individualized; primacy of the personal; no infrastructure for collective profession (Lortie)
- Normal schools: Opportunities to practice the work of teaching in “practice” or “model” schools; some attention to the *practices* that teachers needed to learn
- Prior studies and efforts: 1920s: Commonwealth Teacher Training Study; 1970s and 1980s: Competency-based teacher education; microteaching
- Professional organizations: 1980s – present: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC)

Contemporary context



RELATED UNDERTAKINGS:

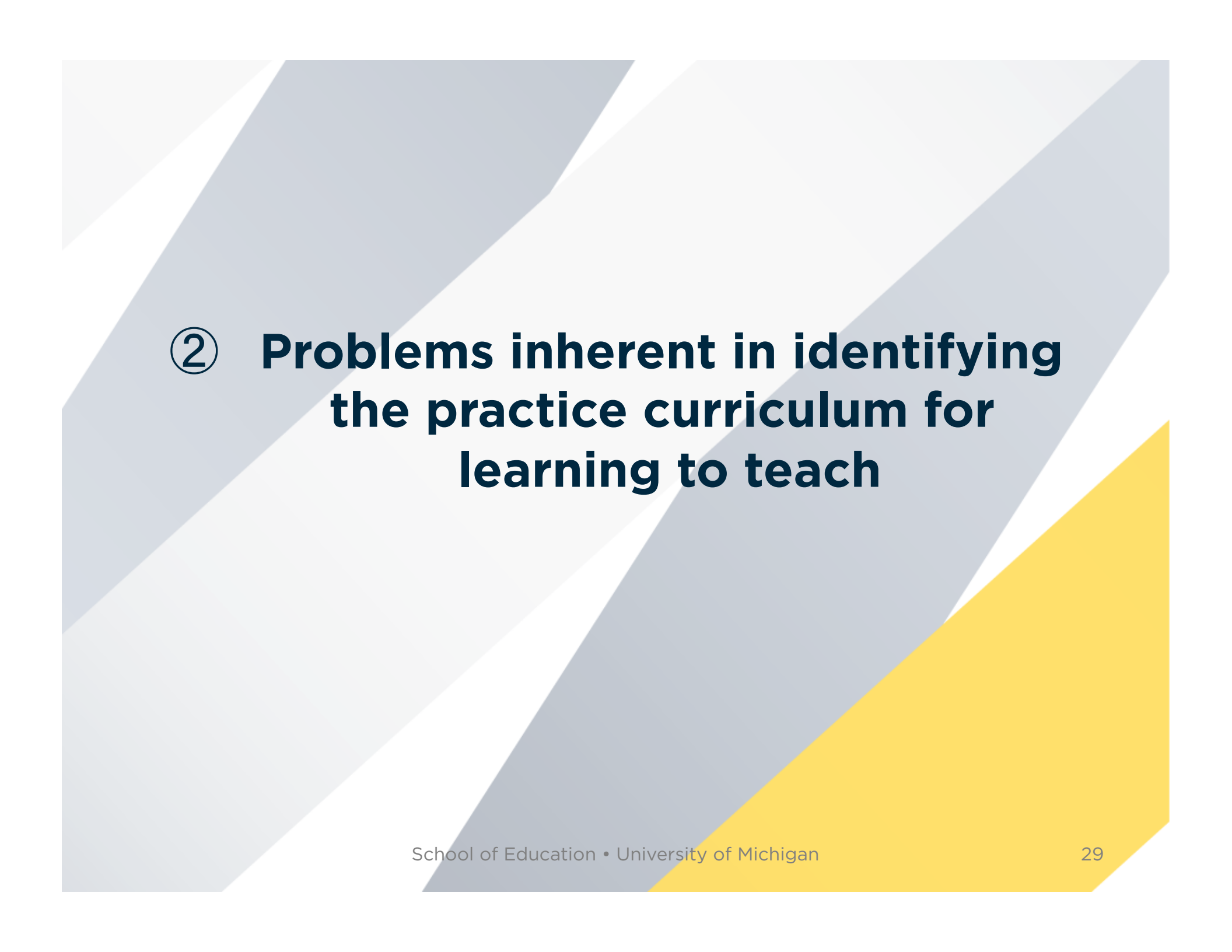
- Charlotte Danielson framework
- Robert Marzano framework
- Doug Lemov: 49 Techniques
- InTASC standards
- Gates Foundation “Measures of Effective Teaching” project
- California’s 13 teaching performance expectations

POLICY ENVIRONMENT:

- Proliferation of reports on teaching and teachers
- International comparisons focused on teachers and teaching
- Concern for teacher evaluation
- Weak or no evidence to show effects of certification

REFORM EFFORTS:

- Focus on teaching quality
- Numerous new teaching pathways and programs
- Spread of new assessments
- Strong hand of philanthropy and entrepreneurs
- Common Core State Standards



② **Problems inherent in identifying
the practice curriculum for
learning to teach**

Key problems of developing a common core for teaching practice

1. Developing a common and sufficiently precise language for the work of teaching
2. Articulating teaching tasks at a useful grain-size
3. Determining what is worth trying to teach about practice, and when

1. Problems of language

1. Many different terms in use for the same (or similar) elements of the work:
 - Cooperative learning, small group work
 - Warm up, “do now,” sponge
 - Discussion, dialogue, whole group lesson
2. Inadequate discrimination for critical elements of the work:
e.g., questions, explaining, review
3. Confounding of evaluative and other labels for teaching overall with straight description of specific aspects of the work: e.g., Student-centered, constructivist, direct, teacher-centered, inquiry-oriented, reform-oriented
4. Other parts of the work lack terms altogether

Challenges of conceptual clarity in creating language for teaching

1. Distinguishing practices of teaching (e.g., using homework effectively) from practices for learners (e.g., using study skills)
2. Determining what are principles (e.g., holding high expectations) and what are practices (e.g., using whole class discussions to engage students in high-level thinking and analysis)

EXPLORATION #2: Language of practice

- Watch the video clip again
- Use transcript to support
- Try to name specific elements of the work
- How much common language do we have?

Link to video

- <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/78024>

How much common language do we share? Why does this matter?

- Collective improvement depends on a common understanding of what we are trying to improve
- Imprecise terminology can obscure important elements of the work of teaching
- Difficult to make the practice visible and to make important distinctions without common technical language

2. Problems of appropriate “grain-size”

- Many lists of standards and competencies for teachers contain items at a grain-size that is too large to be useful for training and assessment (e.g., *using a variety of instructional strategies*)
- When named at a small grain-size (e.g., *cold-calling; making I-statements; choosing examples*), important to connect to purposes; not atomize teaching into tiny moves and skills
- Purposes should relate to goal of learning and improving teaching practice--i.e., seek to identify elements at a size and in a form useful to teaching practice

3. Determining what is worth trying to teach, and when

1. What is crucial for initial training, and what can wait?
 - Which inadequacies or weaknesses in professional capability put students at risk?
 - Which are not dangerous to youth although beginning teachers are likely to need more experience to become proficient at them?
2. What is the sequence of developing professional skill as a beginning teacher?
 - Are some aspects of practice prerequisite to others?
 - Are some especially learnable early in professional training?
 - Are some elements best learned simultaneously?

③ Problems from an assessment perspective

Professionally-insufficient licensing and evaluation systems for teaching


- Most licensure-level assessments focus on written assessments of knowledge rather than performance of practice
- Others are portfolio-based, reflection-oriented, and tend to be under-detailed
- In all cases, unclear and mixed warrants for their validity: common professional sense, aspirational, rarely linked to student learning
- Rubrics for evaluating practicing teachers generally focus on cross-cutting domains of teaching rather than specific practices: e.g., reflection, planning, instruction

Needed: A new generation of assessments of teaching practice

- Useful for: diagnostically-based improvement; licensure; hiring decisions; licensure renewal and advancement
- Based on specific core practices for teaching specific K-12 content (keyed to the Common Core)
- Scored based on how well candidates use a particular practice to reach particular content-specific instructional goals
- Based on actual performance appropriate to the practice being assessed: e.g., planning versus leading a discussion versus diagnosing common patterns of student thinking
- Conducted in real classrooms, in performance centers, through simulations (“standardized patient” or computerized); some live and some scored through records of practice

Implications for identifying the practice curriculum

- Crucial to identify elements of the work of teaching that can be assessed in performance situations
 - Leading a discussion
 - Managing small-group work
 - Holding a conference with a parent
 - Identifying common patterns of student thinking
- Will not work just to hope important elements of teaching come up in the course of regular practice and can be evaluated then



⑤ **Overview of 2011-12 Seminar Series**
Learning to Teach: The Practice Curriculum

Fall seminars

- Brent Maddin, Relay Graduate School of Education
Monday, November 14, 3:00 p.m. EST
- Annie Lewis, Teach for America
Monday, December 12, 2:00 p.m. EST

Winter and spring seminars

- Morva McDonald and Elham Kazemi, University of Washington
College of Education
Thursday, January 19, 2012, 3:00 p.m.
- Brandeis Johnson, The New Teacher Project
Tuesday, February 14, 2012, 3:00 p.m.
- Pam Grossman, Stanford University
Thursday, March 15, 3:00 p.m.
- Michael Goldstein, MATCH Teacher Residency
Tuesday, April 10, 3:00 p.m.
- Bob Bain and Betsy Davis, University of Michigan
Wednesday, May 23, 3:00 p.m.

⑥ Introducing TeachingWorks

What is TeachingWorks?

- A national organization housed at the University of Michigan School of Education
- Focused on improving the standard of teaching practice by building strong professional infrastructure for the training, development, and assessment of 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



TeachingWorks

www.teachingworks.org