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Assessment for and about Teaching and Learning

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Assessment for and about Teaching and Learning

Here in Illinois and in twenty-one other states, faculty members in many teacher preparation programs are helping to pilot edTPA. This Teacher Performance Assessment was created by many in the profession. edTPA is a national performance assessment originally designed at Stanford University in conjunction with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and other teacher educators and PK-12 teachers. While edTPA includes a review of each teacher candidate's authentic teaching materials, including videos of their teaching, as the culmination of their preparation program, it occurs to me that gathering this data provides a great action research project to demonstrate reflection on their ability to effectively teach specific subject matter to all students.

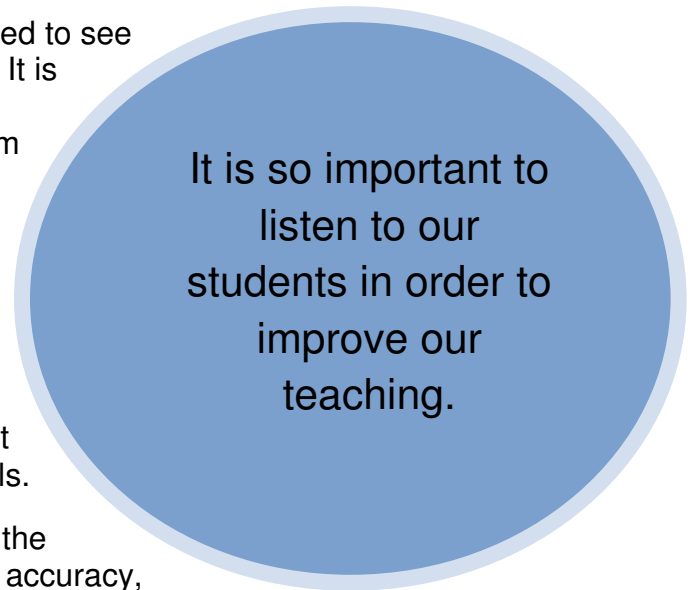
I am in the midst of co-creating a new alternative licensure program at the National College of Education. This new program will meet various standards and thread elements of the edTPA throughout the coursework and PK-12 classroom experience. The teacher candidates in this program will be teachers of record for two years as they work toward their Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degrees. Becoming reflective practitioners is a major goal we have for our candidates. What better way to accomplish this than to have them begin with deep, thoughtful deliberation of authentic assessment of their own teaching and learning. Instructing teacher candidates in how to do action research on their own teaching is not only beneficial in the short term, as they make the transition to full time teaching within classrooms of their own, it is a wonderfully useful tool to continue to assess what is working and what needs altering throughout one's teaching career.

As many of us know, practicing teachers are heavily assessed and under much scrutiny in various ways. Increasingly, teachers are evaluated on how well their students do in their classes. Of course, much of this type of evaluation is based on their students' test scores. Do these measures really tell us if a teacher is making a positive difference to the individual students? A well-constructed action research project would garner much richer data for deeper analysis.

I was listening to our local Public Radio station earlier this month and heard an interesting program that included interviews with Ronald Ferguson and Thomas Kane, who began the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) project. Kane (2012) tells us "We're studying ways to provide feedback to teachers beyond relying on test scores alone. With the help of three thousand teacher volunteers we've captured thousands of lessons on digital video and scored them using several different classroom observation instruments; collected student-achievement data on state tests and on more cognitively challenging supplemental assessments; and asked students to weigh in on the quality

of their classroom experiences using the Tripod student survey developed by Harvard's Ron Ferguson.”

It was about ten years ago when Ferguson decided to see how well students could evaluate their teachers. It is so important to listen to our students in order to improve our teaching. It seems we can learn from this national study and utilize the ideas to develop worthwhile action research studies of our own teaching and learning. Focusing on the student survey appears to collect meaningful data for improvement. The main thing that Ferguson and Kane tell us from their national work is to listen to students. They have found that these student surveys may be the best way to assess and encourage good teaching skills.



Amanda Ripley (2012) tells us “if you asked kids the right questions, they could identify, with uncanny accuracy, their most—and least—effective teachers.” There are thirty-six items in the survey. Five of those that most correlated with student learning are:

1. Students in this class treat the teacher with respect.
2. My classmates behave the way my teacher wants them to.
3. Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time.
4. In this class, we learn a lot almost every day.
5. In this class, we learn to correct our mistakes.

For teachers contemplating studying their own teaching practice, consider such a survey and listen to what your students have to say regarding the effectiveness of your teaching.

In this issue we are pleased to offer a splendid array of articles focusing on ways teacher candidates and novice teachers reflect on their teaching and learning. In their article, “Practitioner Inquiry: Exploring Quality in Beginning Teacher Researchers' Work,” DiLucchio and Leaman, who teach an action research course, examined how to enhance reflective activities of new teacher researchers by questioning them about the process of action research while engaged in university coursework. Their results suggested important implications to others teaching action research to new teachers, particularly the artificial constraints of the course time-frame and how this might limit teachers' processes, reflective activity, and even the quality of their work. However, the authors also noted that these teachers often rely on the substantive feedback of their university instructors to assist them in the critical reflection process, suggesting the importance of modeling reflective practices in our own work as university instructors and/or veteran teacher and action researchers.

Haugabook Pennock introduces the article she co-wrote with Schwartz in the following, perfectly apt and riveting way: “I feel as if I was conscious of race since elementary

school. I was fortunate enough to attend elementary and junior high schools that were very diverse in a big city. However, moving to a smaller predominantly white town at the start of high school revealed something shocking to me; that I and other African-Americans were viewed more as anomalies than as inclusive members of society. My peers treated me strangely, and the curriculum, including science, seemed starkly bare of any 'color'." The research the article, "Using Video Clips to Implement Multicultural Topics of Science and Nature of Science into a Biological Content Course for Pre-Service Teachers- An Action Research Project," goes on to describe a model using video-tape to help preservice teachers learn to infuse color into the biology curriculum.

Wu explores Universal Design for Learning in the article, "Promoting Interface and Knowledge Sharing: A Joint Project between General and Special Education Preservice Teachers." We learn about the findings of a joint unit plan critique project between two preservice teacher cohorts seeking teacher certification in general education and special education respectively. Three main questions are considered: 1) What common affordances does this joint project have for the general and special education preservice teachers? 2) What unique affordances does it have for each of the groups? 3) What do the preservice teachers learn about the use of visuals, technology, and UDL principles to create accessible math lessons for all students? We learn how the preservice teachers gain deeper understanding of professional collaboration and use of technology while using visual resources to differentiate instruction for all students.

With further inquiry into special education, Lava explores a collaborative consultation model and its efforts to support the work of a co-teaching partnership in the article "Inquiry into Co-Teaching in an Inclusive Classroom." In this article we learn how a fourth grade team developed a professional relationship while they honed their collaborative instructional practices.

Campbell provided an overview of the "Action Research Project" in the Clark county school district in Las Vegas, Nevada. This six-year old initiative was developed to support teachers understanding of teaching and learning, and is being modeled throughout other districts in Nevada.

Finally, we invite you to the Action Research Network of the Americas' (ARNA) inaugural conference. Please see the save the date flyer at the end of this issue.

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