

FEEDBACK THAT SUPPORTS REFLECTION ON TEACHING

Both coursework and fieldwork are characterized by instructional conversations that provide candidates with ongoing feedback and support for structured reflection on teaching. All of the programs aim to teach candidates how to become “reflective practitioners,” in the words of Donald Schön.¹² Reflection is associated with every activity. Candidates learn to pause and consider what they are doing or have just done and to what effect. Often, they collect data or receive perspectives from others to aid in that reflective process. The same is true for cooperating teachers, supervisors, and faculty alike. Reflection encourages members of each teaching community to monitor how they are progressing, identify how they can improve, and learn to shape future choices and actions. Reflection allows individuals to direct their own learning by providing a structure for diagnosing where they are and identifying the supports needed to continuously learn—a skill needed in the dynamic twenty-first century.

A common practice in all of the programs is to build reflections into coursework assignments. An example of an assignment from the High Tech Methods course shows how “Putting It into Practice” is meant to shape candidates’ own reflective mind-sets.

This assignment presents a goal and a challenge for the first day of class, emphasizes that engagement with students in a supportive classroom environment is an ongoing process, and models the sorts of questions that a teacher might ask about the first day. It begins the year by providing very specific scaffolding for the reflection process, which will become routine by year’s end. Attention is given not only to issues of procedure and student participation, and to the teachers’ objectives and intended achievements, but also to the teachers’ hopes and fears. Reflecting on their own emotions is essential to preparing teachers to identify the emotions and needs of their students and to respond appropriately. Getting to know students, communicating classroom norms, and preparing to create a supportive environment all contribute to constructing the sort of classroom community in which deeper learning can occur.

This assignment also illustrates how the methods course explicitly focuses on inclusion of student voice in the feedback and reflection process, another facet of High Tech High’s instructional philosophy and a key aspect of deeper learning. As the course syllabus states, “We believe that school-aged students should be involved in the process of helping teachers improve their practice. We will be experimenting with some ways to include young people’s voices in our class.” High Tech High candidates learn how

Put It into Practice: The first day of school

Goal: Use the first day of class to begin developing a strong classroom community and positive relationships with students.

Challenge: This is the first opportunity for you to connect with your students and begin to develop a positive classroom culture. Think about all of the emotions that you are feeling around the first week of school. How might your students be feeling about coming to a new school or returning after the summer? How can you use the first day to get to know your students better and help them learn more about other students in their class? How can they begin to get to know you and understand your goals for the class? How can you find out what they are excited or nervous about in regard to your class? How can you engage them in the work of your discipline in a way that gets them excited to come back for more? These are questions that cannot all be answered on just the first day of school, as it takes time to create a supportive and collaborative environment in the classroom. However, the first day sets the tone for the rest of the year and is an awesome opportunity to start connecting with your students.

Reflection: Write a one-page reflection after implementing the lesson in your class that addresses some of the following questions: What did you do the first day of class? What were your goals for the lesson? What went well? What would you improve if you had the chance to do it over again? How did you get to know your students and provide opportunities for them to get to know each other? How did students learn about supports and services? What are the expectations of the classroom teacher and the student who has special needs? What did students learn about classroom expectations and norms? Were students able to contribute? Why or why not? Did you have the opportunity to begin developing any routines that students can expect? How does this lesson fit into the larger context of what you hope to accomplish during the first week (or first few weeks) of school? What do you think will be your greatest struggle in fostering a supportive learning environment for students? What are your fears? What support can we help provide through this course?

to receive feedback and input from their students regularly and how to co-construct projects and other learning activities with the young people in their classes.

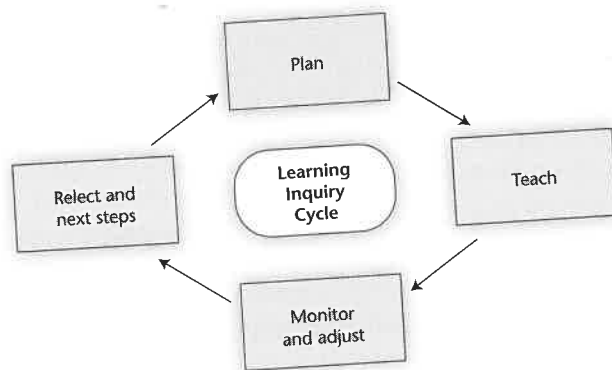
CU Denver uses the Teaching/Learning Inquiry Cycle (TLIC), drawn in part from the framework developed by the Teacher Education by Design (TEDD) project of the University of Washington’s College of Education.¹³ The tool helps both university and school-based faculty frame teaching as a cycle of (1) planning, (2) teaching, (3) monitoring and adjusting, and

(4) reflection and development of next steps. The cycle, as conceptualized by CU Denver, is depicted in figure 4.1 and includes four steps that site supervisors, site professors, and clinical teachers routinely use to guide teacher candidates' actual teaching experiences.

A second tool used throughout the program reinforces the Teaching/Learning Inquiry Cycle (TLIC) in diverse classrooms. It is a classroom observation protocol called the Quality Responsive Classroom (QRC). The QRC process begins with having candidates identify a teaching goal around which they will focus their cycle of inquiry. They then engage in a four-step QRC process: (1) questioning/wondering, (2) action steps, (3) collection of data/evidence, and (4) reflection. The tool allows observers to collect data about students, the teacher, and the classroom learning community that help the teacher candidates reflect systematically on the extent to which their instruction is enabling deeper learning in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. The QRC and TLIC, used in conjunction with one another, then give candidates tools that help them "drive their own professional learning in an intentional way that can improve their professional practice in order to better meet the needs of their students."¹⁴

Programs also provide candidates with feedback and reflection through the supervision of clinical work. All the programs carefully structure supervisory relationships to provide routines and feedback that aid in this process. As programs plant ongoing opportunities for teacher candidates

FIGURE 4.1 Teaching/Learning Inquiry Cycle



Source: CU Denver, Urban Community Teacher Education Program, "Windows of Development Key," http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/SchoolOfEducation/CurrentStudents/Resources/program_docs/Teaching-Learning%20Inquiry%20Cycle%20_TLIC_%20Assessment%20GEN_SPEDx.pdf.

to inquire, observe, and reflect on their experiences, they create habits of mind that translate to reflection in the classroom after they have graduated. Doing so, graduates refine their teaching practices, and to help their schools and communities improve to better meet students' needs. One Bank Street candidate emphasized that the abundance of reflection in the college's courses "definitely helped me move into fieldwork, because every day I would think about my day, what worked, what didn't work, how can I touch this student, this one didn't really participate and why. It's all about the questioning and asking a lot of them."

Another shared how the reflection that she experienced translated to her teaching:

[Reflection is] what we are asking children to do. Even four-year-olds. "Do you think that was a good choice?" That's a reflection. Think about what we learned today. Learn from the person sitting next to you. We're the students here. And then we're going to the classroom and being teachers, so we need to learn what it feels like to be a student, and that's what makes you a good teacher. . . . They make you understand what it is to be a student and if you know that secret, you can teach.

Frequently, this process is supported by videotapes of teaching that allow more considered feedback, study, and reflection. For example, at High Tech High schools, the multitiered system used to evaluate interns' teaching practices includes:

- video recording multiple days of the intern's teaching
- posting and sharing the recorded lessons with the intern for his/her review
- having the intern's students complete the YouthTruth survey, an instrument designed to assess student perceptions of their classroom experiences¹⁵
- a reflection created by the intern of his/her teaching practice, using information from the videos and survey
- a discussion between the intern and the school director (principal), who acts as the intern's formal supervisor, supported by subject-matter mentors who also work with candidates

We interviewed Robert, a school director who has been with High Tech High for nine years as a teacher, director, and graduate student, and who

also teaches in the intern program. During the interview, Robert described how, during his discussion with the intern, they watch one of the recordings, selected by the intern, and discuss the results from the YouthTruth survey. He noted that he uses prompts such as “What did you notice?” “What strikes you?” and “What questions do you have?” to start a dialogue about the intern’s practice.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the intern identifies four themes that emerge as strengths, two themes that surface as areas of growth, and any questions he or she has for the students. This information is shared with the students and discussed. There is then one additional discussion between the intern and the school director about what the intern has learned from the process.

The support interns receive from the school director is augmented by their assigned mentor—a veteran teacher in the same building who is teaching in a similar area and grade level. The interns observe their mentors as models for exemplary practice and meet with them weekly. Mentor teachers are expected to observe interns formally four times per school year and provide substantive opportunities for the intern to reflect on his or her practice. Interns produce a written reflection every year that addresses the areas of relationships, reflective practice, and authentic work, which gives them another opportunity to reflect on their practice and to receive and respond to feedback.

In most of these programs, instructional conversations occur when program faculty actively engage at field sites. For example, many Alverno faculty and teacher candidates explained to us how faculty look for candidates’ use of the project-based, student-centered strategies discussed in courses when they visit the candidates on-site. Faculty give candidates specific feedback on their performance in their field placement to help them refine their practice, using the same rubric the cooperating teacher and candidate use. A student teacher explained:

My faculty supervisor knows me as a student and he is able to push me . . . He knows how to tailor his feedback so that I have something to work on. . . . Over the course of the semester [my faculty supervisor] fills out the same rubric; it’s for me to fill out as a self-assessment, and it is the same one my cooperating teacher fills out. It is important that I’m getting feedback on the exact same criteria so that I can see different perspectives on how I can improve. . . . I think this is a much more robust way to look at someone going into this profession, because you

can give me an A on your observation, but what does your A mean? So, this [rubric] is very clear.

One of the Bank Street advisors noted that “coursework doesn’t mean much if you’re not using it in an active way,” a statement with which all of the programs would agree. Coursework provides teacher candidates with the theories, frameworks, and vocabulary that they can use to analyze and bring meaning to their fieldwork experiences. The coursework models the student-centered deeper learning practices that teacher candidates develop in their fieldwork, and then receive feedback and reflect on in conference group.

This principle is seen in other programs as well. For instance, at Alverno, the ability-based assessment system is based on candidates’ ability to learn from clear, specific feedback. Faculty both give feedback and model how to receive feedback as a means to improve. One instructor explained that the faculty are “constantly talking, reviewing, revising, adapting to what meets our learners’ needs.” Faculty reflect with each other and seek feedback from candidates. The instructor described how she shares with her students “that I changed this lesson completely in response to what students have said.” The instructor does this so that her students understand the necessity for educators to continuously elicit feedback from their students in order to improve their instruction. This is a powerful lesson coming from a faculty member with over thirty years of experience teaching at the college.

Not only do faculty model specific feedback, but they also teach their students how to give and receive quality, actionable feedback, in both coursework and fieldwork. One example is through observation and analysis of videotaped candidate lessons, as illustrated in the box “Learning by Giving and Receiving Feedback.”

In this vignette, the candidates are directing their own learning and reflection. The Alverno instructor provided the necessary structures to give the candidates agency over their learning through her clear expectations for the assignment, for giving feedback, and for self-reflection. The instructor’s experiential lesson models the types of preparation and tools required to support learning opportunities driven by students. The lesson also helps candidates ask the types of questions that will help them continue to improve throughout their career. Candidates’ experiences providing feedback during their preparation at Alverno support their ability both to continually self-assess and to provide feedback to their students to help them grow.

Learning by Giving and Receiving Feedback

It is the last day of class in ED 225, Literacy in Early Childhood. In this course, candidates learn about emergent literacy, oral language, reading, writing, and literature. This course is the second of four field experiences for Alverno undergraduate students. It is an opportunity for candidates to observe and practice literacy teaching in an elementary school setting.

Candidates practice making sound decisions, teaching literacy learning strategies, selecting appropriate materials, and designing developmentally appropriate learning activities and assessments.

Before the class begins, six students are gathered around the back of the room, sharing a potluck feast of Oreos, pepperoni pizza, cheesecake brownies, hummus and pita chips, pastries, and caffeine. They are about to celebrate their progress in teaching literacy, but first they will each share a fifteen-minute video of themselves teaching a literacy lesson in their field placement. Candidates observe themselves and each other, and then give each other specific feedback based on the theories and pedagogies they learned in this class and in prior Alverno coursework and field experiences. As the syllabus describes, the goal of this activity is to "share and reflect on video-clips to build a deeper understanding of effective literacy lessons in relation to student learning and theory."

The instructor has prepared a variety of materials to support the teacher candidates during this class. She has printed PowerPoint slides for her students that include helpful notes, such as

Key Questions for Teaching and Learning: (1) What do we want our students to know and be able to do? (2) How do we know the effect of our program on student learning? (3) What can we do to facilitate learning?

The instructor's notes also outline a helpful approach to scaffolding:

Teacher	Student
I do . . .	You watch
I do . . .	You help
I help . . .	You do
I watch . . .	You do

The instructor provides many tools to support the candidates' learning during the video activity:

- A self-assessment framework.
- Criteria for evaluating candidates' fieldwork lessons, which are informed by the Wisconsin teaching standards and Alverno's educational standards.
- A rubric for evaluating candidates' self-assessments. For example, when considering a candidate's effectiveness at "observing the entire teaching performance" during a lesson, a *beginning* or *emerging* rating would be "Identifies the strengths and weaknesses and provides accurate observations as evidence for strengths and weaknesses"; whereas an *advanced* or *distinctive* rating would be

"Applies disciplinary concepts and frameworks to observations, showing creative judgment in their individual or combined use."

- Prompts or "thinking frames" for the candidates to help them give each other feedback that connects to theories about teaching and learning, such as "I noticed the student(s) when you (the teacher). ____ This reflects ____ theory because ____."

After the instructor begins class with a brief overview of the goals for the day, the six students split into groups of three, in separate classrooms. They spend fifteen minutes observing one candidate's videotaped lesson and another fifteen minutes giving the candidate feedback on her lesson. This feedback includes "Glows" (i.e., the effective teaching strategies that the candidate adopted in the video), "Evidence of Student Learning," and "Grows" (suggestions for changes). As the candidates review each other's videos, they notice tools and resources that the mentor teachers use in their classrooms. For example, in one video, a teacher illustrates a classroom management technique for getting students' attention—saying "one, two, three" and having the students clap. Through the videos, teacher candidates can observe multiple classrooms and multiple approaches to teaching literacy and organizing a classroom.

During one video, a candidate presents a vocabulary lesson that she provided in her first-grade field placement. As the video plays, the candidate presenting the video acknowledges that the reading she selected for the lesson "is too complicated" because "the sentences are too long" for first graders. The candidates provide each other feedback and note observations through the video clips. The instructor takes notes during the candidates' videos and discussions. She rarely joins the candidates' conversation and does so only to ask a clarifying question.

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS OF PROGRESS

The contexts for feedback and reflection in coursework and clinical work are many and varied and constitute a range of formative assessments from faculty, instructors, supervisors, peers, and candidates themselves. The value of this constant iterative process is that it is rooted in a range of authentic assessments of candidates' practice. These include regular supervisory evaluations of practice in candidates' clinical placements; formal benchmark assessments at the university that evaluate progress on specific skills and may determine continuation in the program; and culminating assessments that often determine graduation and even licensure.

Supervisory Evaluations

Formal observations of candidates in their placement classrooms are common at regular junctions, bracketing many informal observations with feedback from supervisors and mentors in between. SFTR's approach is