Teacher Education by Design

The Teacher Education by Design (TEDD) project was undertaken by the College of Education at the University of Washington, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, in response to some of the perennial challenges of preparing novice teachers. One challenge teacher educators have faced is that novice teachers often take up relatively little of what they have been exposed to in programs of teacher education. Another concern, voiced by teacher educators and novices, is that coursework is too “theoretical” and not “practical” enough. A third issue is the lack of a substantive knowledge base within the field of teacher education with respect to its own pedagogical practices.

The TEDD project began as a series of conversations between teacher educators interested in transforming their pedagogy to embed novices’ learning in opportunities to interact with, engage in, and reflect on actual instantiations of teaching practice. Through these conversations, we came to understand what was shared across all of our efforts at pedagogical transformation and how these shared attributes were, in fact, deeply grounded in a theory of professional learning.

We developed a framework for practice-based teacher education pedagogy that reached across content areas and provided us with a common language with which to talk about our pedagogy. The Learning Cycle framework, based on our best knowledge about how professionals learn to practice, organizes novices’ learning into a staged approach that includes exposure to representations of practice, engagement in approximations of practice, and opportunities to enact and analyze practice. Aligned with this framework, we offer resources, tools, and activities for teacher educators interested in honing their craft and improving their work with teachers.

The TEDD project is an attempt to move this conversation beyond our own institution and into the field at large. We don’t pretend to know the “right answers” to any of the perennial questions of teacher education. Rather, the TEDD project is one approach to guiding teacher educators in the thoughtful answering of these questions in their particular contexts and a way for the field of teacher education to develop shared knowledge about teaching novice teachers.

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