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2019

## Supporting Novice Teacher Enactments in the Field Class

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### Recommended Citation

Salmon, Diane; Matsko, Kavita Kapadia; McCarty, Ryan; Veselovsky, Aleksandra; Mozer, Lisa; and Han, Xue, "Supporting Novice Teacher Enactments in the Field Class" (2019). *NCE Research Residencies*. 14.  
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## Supporting Novice Teacher Enactments in the Field Classrooms

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### Abstract

Teacher preparation programs at NLU are developing practice-centered approaches to teacher education that entail a core set of teaching practices and intentionally designed field-learning opportunities. One addition to prior practice with this approach is the inclusion of a video coaching context where candidates receive feedback from field supervisors on their teaching videos. This study investigated candidate and supervisor perceptions of the feedback in the video coaching context affords in addition to the traditional contexts of face to face field visits and competency appraisal surveys. The findings point to a unique self-regulatory benefit to the video coaching context. They also suggest the need to carefully prepare teacher candidates and field supervisors to effectively utilize each coaching context to ensure they complement one another to best support teacher candidate learning.

### The Problem of Practice in Teacher Preparation

Attention to teacher quality has increased nationwide, in particular, to the manner in which new teachers are prepared for the complexities of work in schools. Teachers must respond to a broad range of cultural and linguistic diversity among their students, manage new learning technologies, and effectively implement curricula to ensure students achieve dynamic learning standards. In addition to these issues of complexity, Colleges of Education have also long been challenged by the “problem of enactment” (Kennedy, 1999), which refers to the gap between what novices know about teaching and what they can actually do. This gap is often exacerbated by teacher preparation curriculum that tends to cast a wide net prioritizing exposure to a range of knowledge about teaching rather than a focused, coherent vision of the skills involved in effective teaching and what teacher candidates can realistically learn to do. The problems of complexity and enactment in learning to teach pose a tension in the design of initial teacher preparation that sets up competing demands. Preparation for the complexities of work in schools suggest a dynamic learning environment where novices explore critical issues in educational communities and among diverse learners, while preparation for fluency in executing effective instruction suggests a more stable learning environment where novices can focus on mastering specific skills. Resolving this tension presents a significant challenge that requires thoughtful balancing of exposure to varieties of teaching contexts while holding features of these contexts constant, so novices can gain fluency with the mechanics of specific instructional skills. Learning designs overly focused on one side of this equation do so at the expense of the other side.

One concept emerging in the field that may address this challenge is *optimal corridor of adaptability* (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005). This concept refers to learning designs that achieve a balance between stability/consistency for efficient skill mastery and variation that reflects the complexity of teaching and allows for innovation and problem solving (Bransford, et. al, 2005; Schwartz, Bransford, & Sears, 2005). Initial preparation programs that offer teacher candidates an optimal corridor of adaptability are more likely to foster their *adaptive expertise*. This would entail a level of proficiency to know how to analyze and adjust instruction to learner needs/circumstances and an appreciation for complexity to ensure a willingness to continuously expand their knowledge and skill base. Indeed, initial teacher preparation needs to foster the skills and habits of mind that enable teacher candidates to learn through their teaching (Hiebert, Morris, Berk, & Jansen, 2007).

To this end – teacher preparation at NLU embarked upon a redesign of its teacher preparation programs focusing on a core set of teaching practices and intentionally designed field-learning opportunities that allow candidates to examine and adapt core practices to the demands of diverse teaching/learning settings. The aim of this re-design is to achieve an optimal learning path for novice teachers by integrating pedagogies of enactment, reflection, and investigation (Ball and Forzani 2009) while effectively supporting adaptive mastery of core teaching practices (Ambrose, Bridges, Lovett, DiPietro, & Norman, 2010; Ericsson & Pool, 2016). Drawing from the literature in teacher education and research on learning, we articulated three design principles to guide NLU’s teacher preparation practice-based improvement efforts.

1. **Teacher candidates develop a deep knowledge of teaching through a practice-centered curriculum focusing on a limited set of core practices that maintains the complexity of teaching contexts.**
2. **Teacher candidates grow and learn to improve through teaching opportunities that entail cycles of deliberate practice, reflective analysis of practice, and targeted feedback.**
3. **NLU teacher candidates acquire an adaptive stance to teaching through situated learning opportunities in prek-12 learning environments.**

These principles serve as a “local theory” informing ongoing design research on NLU’s practice-based teacher preparation reform efforts. A dual focus on “practice” is central to our local theory. We aim to strengthen the teacher preparation curriculum through a focus on a small number of high leverage teaching practices, ensuring that candidates have opportunities to see multiple representations and to decompose each practice into the essential features that promote learning (Grossman, Compton, Igra, Ronfeldt, Shahan, & Williamson, 2009). In concert with representation and decomposition of practice, we aim for candidates to have multiple opportunities to enact these practices. Ericsson and Pool (2016) show the importance deliberate practice across domains for the development of expertise. Similarly, teacher candidates need repeated opportunities for focused practice of specific instructional skill sets, including feedback and refinement – all essential to the learning process (Hattie & Timbeley, 2007).

In this investigation, we focused on teacher candidate and field supervisor perceptions of feedback provided during the field practicum experience. In addition to traditional contexts of field visits and competency appraisal surveys, the program added a video coaching context that focused on one core instructional practice, discussion facilitation. Specifically, we investigated perceptions of the types of feedback the three different coaching contexts seem to afford to understand how best to support teacher candidates’ development of instructional skills. While focusing on the nature of feedback, the overarching aim was to inform the structure and distribution of opportunities for teacher candidates to enact core teaching practices in the preparation program.

### **Context of the Investigation**

The context in which the field coaching/feedback occurred was the graduate (M.A.T.) program practicum course required prior to student teaching. Candidates enrolled in this course prior to student teaching and were placed in the classrooms where they would complete their final student teaching. The assigned field supervisor typically visited at least twice during the quarter and completed a competency appraisal on the candidates’ teaching. In the fall of 2018-19, field supervisors provided additional coaching/feedback through a newly designed video coaching approach in a cloud-based software, Livetext. While the coaching and feedback provided in the traditional contexts was broader, the focus of the video coaching was on one particular core teaching practice, discussion facilitation. Candidates were asked to submit in Livetext a video of their discussion facilitation with students in their

practicum classroom. Field supervisors provided feedback by annotating the video in the Livetext applications. Candidates reflected on their video using the same annotation process.

### Research Questions

How do the practice-based coaching/feedback contexts in NLU graduate teacher preparation support candidates through their enactments of core practices in field classrooms?

- How do candidates perceive the feedback they receive from different field coaching contexts (face-to-face, traditional competency appraisal surveys, and video coaching)?
- What feedback do supervisors feel they are able to provide through the different field coaching formats (face-to-face, traditional competency appraisal surveys, and video coaching) ?

### Participants

Participants were recruited initially from both the B.A. and M.A.T. teacher preparation courses scheduled to be offered during the fall and winter of the 2018-2019 academic year and in which candidates have opportunities to enact core practices and in which coaching/feedback tools are used. Candidates were recruited to participate through an email during the final week of the fall and winter practicum quarters. Due to low enrollment in the undergraduate program, the focus of this report is on the graduate students' experience. Thirty-five M.A.T. candidates participated by completing the survey on the quality of the feedback they received in the different coaching contexts in practicum. Thirty-three field supervisors completed the corresponding survey on the feedback they believed they were able to provide in the different contexts.

### Data Source

The research questions were addressed through an electronic survey administered at the end of the practicum 2 experience. The survey contained 14 questions, including both Likert type items and open-ended questions. The Likert scale items asked candidates and supervisors to rate the degree to which certain types of feedback occurred in each coaching context. These feedback types were derived from Hattie and Timberley's (2007) framework and included the following:

- General encouragement

#### Task level feedback

- Targeted feedback on a specific practice
- Actionable feedback (useful, timely)

#### Process level feedback

- Discussed strategies for effective learning environment
- Explained specific instructional practices

#### Self-regulatory feedback

- Posed questions to think
- Supported goal setting to improve specific practice
- Supported goal setting for general growth

Open-ended items probed the participants definitions of coaching, the benefits of each of the three coaching contexts, and how each context might be improved.

## Findings

A practice-based orientation to teacher preparation focuses on how teacher candidates *learn by doing* core practices and invites inquiry into the qualities of effective coaching of these practices. To inform its approach to coaching, one question on the survey invited participants to provide their definition of coaching. These definitions were compiled and analyzed by identifying key words in each definition.

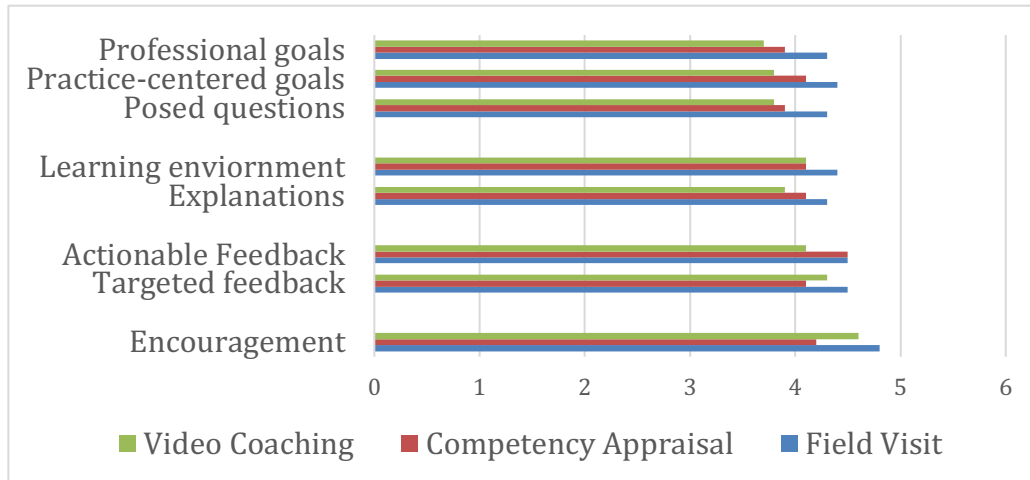
Table 1 contains key words in the definitions provided by teacher candidates and field supervisors.

Both candidates and supervisors recognized the need for coaching to involve a supportive and encouraging relationship that involved modeling and feedback. While candidates emphasized nurturing support, supervisors saw coaching as much more. Collectively, definitions recognized a continuum of coaching practices ranging from assisting self-reflection to providing advice. Supervisors frequently highlighted the role of seasoned experts who can facilitate and guide and also provide direction, instruction, advice, and leadership. Supervisors recognized the relational complexity of the practicum setting in their references to mediation, advocacy, and liaison work. Interestingly, they also brought in a reference to the potential for situated learning by entering a partnership and co-teaching as a possible coaching action.

**Table 1. Key Terms in Coaching Definitions of Teacher Candidates and Supervisors**

Teacher Candidates		Field Supervisors	
High Frequency	Also Mentioned	High Frequency	Also Mentioned
Support Encourage Feedback Modeling	Accessibility, Motivation, Instruction, Informational, Mentorship, Constructive, Criticism, Guidance, Compassion, Interest, Challenge, Assurance	Mentor Liaison Support Observation Suggestions Feedback Encourage	Support person; Veteran teacher; Partnership; Leadership role; Advocate; Mediation; Coordination; Facilitator; Role model; Guidance; Advice; Instruction; Assist self-reflection; Listen carefully; Instructional advice; Critique; Co-teach

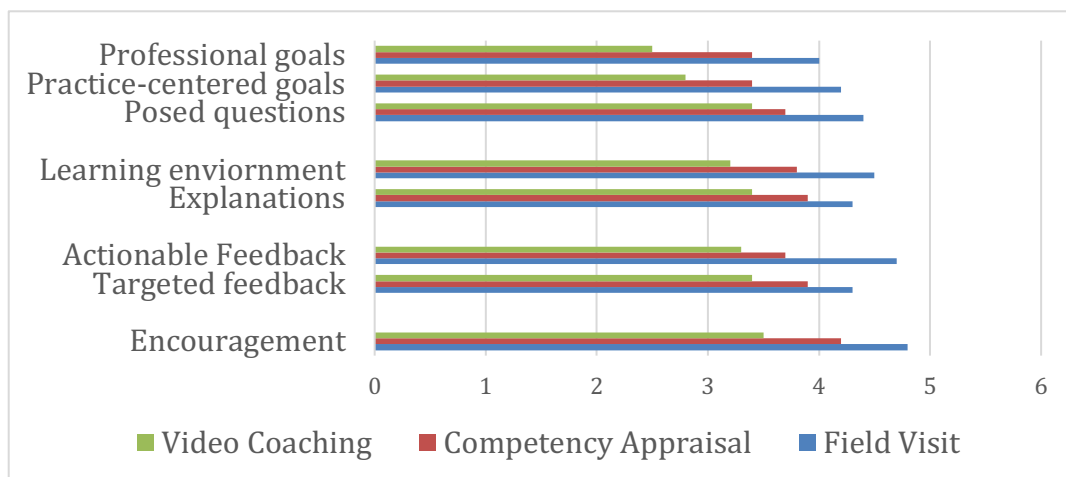
Feedback is an essential element of learning and a core feature of any practice-centered approach. Likert type items on the survey probed for participant perceptions on the types of feedback provided in three coaching contexts: face-to-face field visits, competency appraisal surveys, and teaching video annotations. Figures 1 and 2 depict the mean ratings of the participants' perceptions on the types of feedback that they perceived each practicum coaching context to afford. The feedback type items are clustered on the graph according to the feedback levels in the Hattie and Timberley (2007) model. Self-regulatory-oriented feedback items are at the top of the figures, followed by process-oriented feedback items, and the task-oriented feedback items. The general encouragement items fall outside of the informative feedback framework.



**Figure 1. Mean Ratings for Feedback Types: Candidate Perceptions**

Teacher candidates perceived the types of feedback they received across the three contexts fairly similarly (see Figure 1). It is noteworthy that candidates rated each feedback type lower in the video coaching context with the exception of targeted feedback and general encouragement. However, all these differences were quite small. It may well be that candidates did not distinguish between these different types of feedback.

Field supervisors' ratings are depicted in Figure 2. Interestingly, supervisors rated each feedback type higher for the field visit context. This may suggest they feel more confident about this coaching context and/or that it affords more flexibility in communicating with the teacher candidate. Their ratings of each type of feedback were lowest in the video coaching context, perhaps due to the novelty of this new coaching context. Interestingly, supervisors rated the self-regulatory-oriented feedback somewhat lower than all other types of feedback.



**Figure 2. Mean Ratings for Feedback Types: Supervisor Perceptions**

For this report, we focused our qualitative analyses on the newest component of the field learning model, the video-coaching context. All participant responses were analyzed for key words and

thematically organized. Interestingly, both participant groups pointed to a theme of *self-regulation* in the video coaching context. Under the theme of self-regulation, candidates highlighted the opportunity for self-awareness and self-assessment. One participant suggested it was an opportunity to “*dissect my teaching.*” Another suggested it afforded the opportunity to “*re-watch and study over and over.*” Candidates also mentioned the benefit of feedback from their supervisors in the video coaching context, stating “*my advisor gave some good points.*” Interestingly, candidates also recognized video review context as an opportunity to further analyze their students’ needs: “*I could see which students behave or misbehave;*” “*See who needs more one-on-one.*”

Supervisors similarly recognized the self-regulatory learning opportunities afforded in the video coaching context. They commented that “*seeing themselves on video can help correct presentation habits.*” Through the video coaching context candidates “*see themselves in action*” and “*see themselves in a new way.*” The comments referencing self-regulatory themes from supervisors stood in contrast to their ratings of the self-regulatory feedback items on the survey (i.e., asking questions, assisting in setting specific goals to improve a practice) which they rated much lower in the video coaching context. In addition to the self-regulatory theme, supervisors also saw the video coaching context as an opportunity to help candidates to “*focus,*” “*pinpoint a practice;*” and “*provide immediate feedback.*”

Both candidates and supervisors perceived the need for additional technical support and training around the video coaching context. Both groups also indicated that the video coaching should be better integrated greater into the program, for example, introduced in the methods course and built upon in practicum field learning experiences. Both groups also desired greater clarity regarding expectations and communications in the video coaching context.

## Discussion

Practice-based approaches to teacher preparation have been identified as a means to address “problems of enactment” experienced by many teachers entering the field. NLU’s teacher preparation programs have taken on this challenge seeking ways to ensure candidates have opportunities to enact core teaching practices and to receive targeted feedback on these enactments. The introduction of video coaching context for purposes of supporting *discussion facilitation* was one step in this process. The program continues to refine a shared set of core teaching practices across certification areas and to design tools to support their candidate enactments, including feature guides for each core practice. This design process is poised to consider additional meaningful ways to integrate practice-based teaching and to utilize video coaching.

The findings of this study highlight the benefits and current challenges of integrating the video coaching tool. A key benefit of video coaching was the potential for *self-regulated learning*. Both teacher candidates and supervisors recognized the potential for the candidates to direct their own learning simply through the video review and annotation process. At the same time, both groups needed additional information, especially greater clarity for the learning expectations in this context. Efforts to design core practice feature guides will prove useful in this regard. By helping to clarify what to look for and how to identify ways to improve, supervisors will have greater confidence in the targeted feedback they provide and candidates more information for their own self assessments and self-regulation. In addition, supervisors may need more guided support in recognizing and providing self-regulatory types of feedback, such as asking questions and prompting goal setting. These types of coaching moves enhance the learning environment by scaffolding candidates to identify their own strengths, what worked about a particular teaching move and ways to improve it, and can help them set goals for their next lesson. In this way, teacher candidates learn to learn from their own teaching, a powerful way to prepare for their future as classroom teachers.



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