

TE 801-803
PROFESSIONAL ROLES AND TEACHING PRACTICE
Fall, 2003 – Spring, 2004

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“Teaching is like a high wire act, and the wire doesn’t get thicker over time.”
Paul Ongtooguk, teacher

“From what we get, we make a living – From what we give, we make a life.”

OVERVIEW

TE 801 is the first of a two-part sequence that examines the professional roles of teachers broadly but directly related to classroom instruction with students. This course serves as a corollary to your intensive school based internship. The primary goal is to enhance your understanding of what it means to be a professional teacher. This course will guide you in asking questions about the classroom, school and community so that you can become a more effective practitioner. It will also help you develop habits of mind directed towards becoming a reflective practitioner and teacher researcher.

This is a transition year for you as you are moving from college into the professional world. For many, this is a difficult transition. We are here to support you in this transition. In this course, you will form a study group to help you process much of the work. Over the course of the year, you will develop a public-professional identity as you explore the attitudes and relationships with a range of others including; teaching colleagues, administrators, parents and other professionals such as social workers.

Through the use of case studies, and investigative research, you will examine a teacher’s ethical and political responsibilities. What types of commitments are involved in becoming a professional and serving our children in our schools? What types of theories and personal values undergird your practice as a professional? Although you will be absorbed by the day-to-day responsibilities of your classroom, we will work hard to expand your understanding of how what happens on a daily basis is embedded in and influenced by larger social and cultural forces. Through the use of reflection and inquiry, we will figure out how schools as organizations, parents and communities and larger

social forces shape our teaching practice. Through this process we will hopefully gain new insights into what seems to be a very familiar place. Our goal is to consider what factors constrain or contribute to better teaching practice and understand how to balance if the wire doesn't get thicker over time.

In TE 803, you will undertake an inquiry project that is another form of reflective teaching practice. One of the many roles of the teacher is that of teacher researcher. The inquiry project is a more formalized way of reflecting. This project is not a master's thesis nor a controlled scientific experiment but a way of looking at a specific problem or question that is of interest to you in the school community in which you are interning.

You will keep an inquiry folder/ notebook throughout your study as a way to keep track of your thinking and the data you collect during the semester. This folder should include all drafts of your research question, a timeline, all drafts of your project plan, all data collected, all notes and reflections, all doodles, all articles or other material that you read related to your inquiry. You will present your inquiry in an oral and visual format so that others can learn from your investigation along with a one page handout for your colleagues.

GOALS

These are borrowed from John Dewey who spoke about dispositions for reflective practitioners almost a hundred years ago. They include: open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness.

Open-mindedness – suggests paying full attention to alternative possibilities and recognizing the possibility of error even in beliefs that are closest to us. This includes examining rationales for what we think is natural and right in schools and asking ourselves why we are doing what we are doing. Are we playing the role of technician or reflective practitioner?

Responsibility - involves careful consideration of consequences for our actions. In our work, we need to go beyond the questions of immediate utility and look at social and political consequences for our students and society. Are we creating educative experiences for our students that will serve them in the future?

Wholeheartedness – includes examining our own assumptions and beliefs and the results of these actions. It also involves deliberate efforts to see situations from

different perspectives and be ongoing learners as teachers. Are we able to reframe situations to understand them more deeply?

Dewey wrote that; “unless a teacher is a student of education he may continue to grow in the mechanics of school management, but he cannot grow as a teacher, an inspirer and director of soul life.”

Our goal in team three is for all of you to learn how to become teachers who are students of education so that you can grow in your professional lives. We want to encourage you to develop the habits of reflection and inquiry in your own daily teaching practice.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

During the year, we will meet fifteen times. You are expected to attend all fifteen seminars (sicknesses and emergencies are excused absences if you inform the office or instructor) and actively participate in all discussions and activities. Active participation means sharing responsibility for what we are doing in class. We will try to cultivate a non-threatening community where we serve each other as critical colleagues. As a growing professional, I expect you to initiate discussion and issues that are of concern to you. We will try to have conversations rather than engage in turn taking. I expect that all of us will be respectful towards our colleagues and diverse views. As critical colleagues, try to clarify and question each other respectfully. We are all on a journey to becoming professional teachers and can help each other out along the way. Team 3 Policy statements in your handbook indicate that more than 2 absences, excused and/or unexcused is reason for concern. Plagiarism, the use of another author’s words, ideas, and thoughts and claiming them as your own, will not be tolerated. Confidentiality is essential in all our conversations and assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments are intended to refine your habits of mind – inquiry and reflection as a professional teacher.

Case Study – Each one of you will prepare a 5-7 minute oral presentation on your case study along with a 3 page summary to hand to your instructor. During the course, we will be examining cases that will assist you in thinking about how to frame and analyze your own case.

Issue Analysis Presentation – Each study group will make a 30 minute oral presentation to your classroom colleagues about a significant educational issue. Your group will be expected to collaborate, investigate and collect resources from your school community. The presentation is intended to inform and engage your colleagues in a conversation.

Commentary on cases – Each one of you will compile a set of commentaries on cases that we read during the year. You will share these with a partner. We will also write a summary and commentary in class.

School community inquiry – Each study group will investigate the community that your school resides in and share this information through a presentation to your colleagues along with an evaluation of how the group process worked.

Inquiry presentation – Each one of you will investigate a question regarding your own teaching practice and collect data during your lead teaching. You will share your inquiry with your colleagues through a poster presentation on the last three sessions of the year.

Chapter presentations in study groups – Each study group will highlight several chapters from Beyond Discipline- From Compliance to Community and engage the group in conversation.

Resume – Each of you will submit a professional resume that underscores your educational and teaching experiences.

Portfolio – Each of you will compile a professional portfolio that marks your growth as a novice teacher using the four MSU program standards. You will also present your story to your colleagues near the end of the course.

EVALUATION

Although we are all learning to teach and think like teachers, MSU asks me to evaluate you as a Masters level student. Peter Elbow has written that teacher evaluation of students' efforts may be characterized as a "creative tension." I have a responsibility to help you learn but also to pass judgment on your progress as a learner. Given this conflicting role, I will always try to be more creative than tense in the grading process.

TE 801

Class Participation – 20%

(includes case commentaries and
chapter presentations)

School / Community Inquiry – 20%

Case Study Presentation and Paper– 30%

Issue Analysis Presentation –30%

92-100 A 86-91 B+

TE 803

Class Participation –15%

(includes case commentaries and
chapter presentations)

Inquiry Presentation – 20%

Resume and Portfolio – 15%

Science – 50%

79-85 B