

TEACHING DISCIPLINARY LITERACY

USING VIDEO RECORDS
OF PRACTICE TO IMPROVE
SECONDARY TEACHER
PREPARATION

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Foreword by Karen Wixson

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The Importance of Video Records of Practice in Teacher Education

Developing Core Literacy Practices

Imagine a university multipurpose space. Three teaching interns in a secondary teacher preparation program are gathered in a brightly colored booth facing a large computer monitor. They are preparing to share video records of practice that represent their early teaching practice. Lynne, who is in her first month of student teaching at a local high school, begins to introduce her video, saying, “This is my world history class.” She goes on to provide more background:

Right now we’re finishing up watching a movie called *Invisible Children*. It’s a documentary that came out in 2005 about college-age students who went to Sudan to document the travesties going on. They found out about another issue in Uganda, kids being forced into being child soldiers. As a bigger theme of this class, we’ve gone through how individuals in the different movies that we’ve watched throughout history have been able to make a difference. . . . In this video they are supposed to be having a substantive conversation. I wanted them to connect private research they’d done on Uganda to what is happening in the film. I started them in small groups to get them warmed up and then we attempted a whole-class substantive conversation.

Lynne also describes her “focus question,” or the aspect of her teaching that she wants the group to discuss:

My focus question is: What else could I have done to create more meaningful conversation by students in small groups? One of the things I’ve pulled out from our other video discussions is that when I was doing group discussions with the class, only about four or five people were talking. So in this situation I broke them out into small groups of four randomly wherein each person was supposed to talk—instead of just four or five people talking in the class, all 35 were talking for at least some point. But even with this, some people were just asking questions and looking for answers and I wanted them to

have discussions. They're almost adults. I feel like they should be able to talk about what they think and what they see and make connections.

Lynne taps the laptop's keys and a video begins playing. The group watches the video in silence, with each member jotting notes occasionally. After the video finishes playing, Raina indicates a specific time marker: "Starting at 5:18 is where I pulled out something relevant to this." Lynne sets the video to that time marker and replays a brief portion. Raina goes on:

What you did there is, you were trying to reframe what they were doing—you described some of the things they could talk about in order to create discussion. And it seemed like you already knew that George had a good response to the idea that you had posed. So you called on him, knowing what he would say. I thought that was good because he was sort of like a plant. I guess a suggestion for stimulating more conversation in the whole class is to work one-on-one with a student while you were observing the group and kind of say like, "What did you do? How do you think your research relates to the movie?" After him telling you what he knows, you can call on him and have him repeat it to stimulate more discussion with the whole class. That's especially good to get kids who don't usually talk to talk.

Lynne then notes that she had created a graphic organizer template that students could use to prepare for the whole-class discussion. She wonders aloud how she could have used it more effectively to stimulate meaningful conversation. Bob responds:

Your graphic organizer, like you said, is good in terms of your organizing information, but I think you need to include something that allows them to express an opinion. Like, is this argument valid? Does this research match what we're talking about regarding Uganda and the movie? What you're doing is, you're having them relate the movie and their research, which is higher order of thinking, right, because they're applying their knowledge. But then I think there needs to be another step where they sort of apply the knowledge into a deeper conversation.

The interns then discuss how the use of an overarching question might stimulate substantive conversation among the high school students:

Bob: A question like, given what you know about this topic and what you know from the movie, is being a child soldier necessarily bad? They can draw on their research on how kids in Uganda live. Maybe as a child soldier they're guaranteed to eat, right?

Raina: Maybe it's better than this other option of dying.

Bob: They're able to protect themselves because they're trained and they have weapons.

Lynne: So would I be providing this overarching question for the small-group work or would I use it when we start the whole-class discussion?

This vignette illustrates the kinds of video-based discussions of novices' own teaching that have become a central feature of our teacher education program. After 10 intensive years of studying and researching video-based discussions of teaching, we are convinced of the power of novices' study of "records of practice" as part of their teacher preparation. By records of practice, we mean documentation and artifacts drawn directly from teaching and used to support video discussions. Documentation includes authentic recordings of classroom interactions, particularly the video representations of teachers' work with students in classrooms that have become the central focus of our teacher education program. Artifacts include such materials as lesson plans and notes, student work, and curriculum materials—concrete items that are part of teachers' work in classrooms. This book articulates what we have learned through our efforts to incorporate the study of video records of practice, supplemented by relevant teaching artifacts, to support interns' learning of core literacy practices in a master of arts in education with secondary certification program.

The lessons we share here regarding implementation and pedagogy will, we hope, be useful to other teacher educators seeking to use video records of practice in an ongoing way to support novices' learning to teach disciplinary literacy. In the following sections, we provide the background for our work with video records of practice, describe the theoretical framework that shaped our efforts, and discuss the chapters that follow.

A TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOCUSED ON VIDEO RECORDS OF PRACTICE

Our work with records of practice is situated in larger efforts to reform the teacher education curriculum. The quality of teaching in pre-K–12 classrooms is a prominent issue in the education discourse, highlighted in part by research confirming that teachers are a critical factor in students' achievement (Rowan, Correnti, & Miller, 2002; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). As a result, teacher preparation programs have come under scrutiny and are often perceived as outdated and inadequate (Rich, 2014). In one instance of such criticism, commentator George Will (2006) argued that schools of education fail to address pre-K–12 students' true needs by focusing not on effective teaching skills and strategies, but on fuzzy aspects of teacher preparation such as "professional dispositions" and the development of "child-centered" philosophies. This focus on the teacher education curriculum—or lack thereof—is a regular complaint. The "confusing patchwork"

of the teacher education curriculum (Levine, 2006) includes variable approaches (Hiebert, Morris, Berk, & Jansen, 2007), uncertain outcomes (Zeichner, 2006), and no shared language to describe its most important elements (Grossman & McDonald, 2008).

Several prominent teacher education researchers have positioned records of practice to play a key role in the reform of the teacher education curriculum (e.g., Ball & Cohen, 1999; Lampert & Ball, 1998; Stigler & Hiebert, 1997). Records of practice have multiple potential benefits for novices' learning to teach. They can represent multiple aspects of the work of teaching, from planning to instruction to assessment, and provide a common space for preservice teachers to jointly examine issues related to these aspects. At the same time, studying records can help novices develop the understanding that pre-K–12 teaching is a complex, multifaceted practice. The implementation of a strong teacher education curriculum focused on the use of records of practice engages novices in systematic study of the work of teaching, as opposed to approaching teaching in a piecemeal manner. Within a supportive instructional framework, records of practice can provide access to ways of doing teaching (ways of moving, speaking, organizing, and so on) as well as the “know-how”—the principles, judgments, and understanding—that is essential to teaching. As they engage in such study, novices can develop dispositions of professional inquiry that they can use throughout their teaching careers.

It should be noted that, among the many formats for records of practice, we focus primarily on videos of teaching and the artifacts related to their study. Video has characteristics that make it a powerful medium for records of practice. Videos can capture much of the complexity of instruction in the form of a “text” that can then be studied. In contrast with in-the-moment teaching, videos provide a lasting record; they can be collected and edited; and they enable certain kinds of interaction, including time to reflect, develop collegiality, and engage in fine-grained analysis (Sherin, 2004). Other records of practice, such as copies of lesson plans and student work, are also used in our program, but serve mainly to amplify and refine the ideas raised in video-based discussions. Our premise, which will be elaborated in this book, is that videos of novices' own teaching are particularly powerful learning tools because they focus attention on the context (including knowledge of students, subject matter, and classroom resources) that informs teachers' decisions. In our experience, videos also served as a motivating factor for the teacher education interns, who were eager to share their practice with understanding colleagues and support their colleagues' learning from their own teaching.

Over the past 10 years, we have endeavored to use records of practice, and videos in particular, in a comprehensive way in our secondary teacher education program. We had two sets of goals for this endeavor. First, we set goals related to what we wanted interns to learn through the study of videos and other records of their own practice. Those goals included the following: