# TEP-2 RESEARCH BRIEF #14

PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT IN FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD YEAR TEACHERS

Prepared for the O-QAT Title-II Initiative 3.1 Continuing Licensure Design Team

March 6, 2002

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By

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Synopsis 14

Questions Addressed

• What are TEP-2 teachers telling us they are working on to improve?
• Are the areas in which they are working to improve consistent with CTL Proficiencies?
• Does any relationship exist between the areas in which they are working to improve and their self-ratings of competence on the CTL Proficiencies?

Measures Reported and Teacher Sample

Focus groups with 60 second year teachers; Continuing Licensure Proficiency Self-Assessment open-ended question, “working to improve”; and Proficiency ratings for:

• First-year teachers
  75 open-ended survey responses;
  73 ratings on proficiencies.
• Second-year teachers
  59 open-ended survey responses;
  58 ratings on proficiencies.
• Third year teachers
  37 open-ended survey responses;
  40 ratings on proficiencies.

Key Findings

• Teachers are working on improving day-to-day, classroom based practices.
• Teachers are working most on improving classroom management and organization.
  o Meanwhile, teachers feel most confident in their ability to create a classroom climate conducive to teaching.
• Teachers are working on improving language arts and reading instruction skills, and general modeling and instruction skills.
  o Meanwhile, teachers rate themselves proficient at implementing instructional plans.
• Several teachers are working on areas related to designing instructional plans; the types of lessons they teach, dealing with different learning levels on the part of students, and aligning instruction to standards and benchmarks.
  o Meanwhile, teachers rate themselves proficient to expanding in designing instructional plans.
• Teachers feel least confident in the ability to collaborate to improve schools and use emerging research to improve their practice.
  o Meanwhile, teachers do not report working toward the improvement of these proficiencies.
• Teachers report most improvement in classroom based practices, in communicating and collaborating with parents and other school staff.
• Across the beginning three years of teaching, teachers have focused primarily on improving 3 of the 10 CTL Proficiencies.

Potential Implications for CONTINUING Licensure

• Early career teachers seem to be focusing their improvement efforts on only a few of the proficiencies they will need to demonstrate for Continuing Licensure.
• Early career teachers seem not to be working to improve the two proficiency areas in which they report greatest weakness working with colleagues to improve instructional programs and using research to improve practice.
• Greater clarity and understanding needs to be given to early career teachers about CTL Proficiencies, how they can best be developed, and the nature of evidence that will need to be presented in support of their demonstration.

Potential Implications for INITIAL Licensure

• Students working toward INITIAL licensure need to understand the connection between proficiencies to be demonstrated for initial and CONTINUING licensure Proficiencies and the path from initial to continuing licensure clearly mapped.
**Introduction**

This is the 14th in a series of briefs describing the work being conducted and reported through the TEP-2 Project (*The Longitudinal Effects of Teacher Preparation on the Practice and Beliefs of New Teachers and the Learning of Their Students*). The central objective of this project, as more fully described in Research Brief #1, is to determine whether exposure to selected emphases within teacher preparation makes a difference in the practice, beliefs and thinking of new elementary school teachers and the learning of their students in Oregon's standards-based schools.

Within this broad area of inquiry one set of questions focus on better understanding the experiences and development of these beginning teachers in Oregon's standards-based design for schools, and what contributes to their development as professional educators (McConney & Schalock, 1998).

This brief is a companion to TEP-2 Research Brief #12: *Self-assessment of Competence on Continuing Licensure Proficiencies and the Evidence Used in Making these Ratings*. In this brief, we will be focusing on TEP-2 teacher reported development as related to the Continuing Teaching Licensure Proficiencies. As part of the first cohort of Oregon teachers practicing under the CTL requirements, how these teachers are developing in the profession could have implications for teacher preparation programs, policy makers, and the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission.

Many TEP-2 teachers have expressed to members of the research team their lack of understanding around what the proficiencies and requirements for Continuing Licensure are. Our teachers have reported they were expecting to gain clarity about these matters from CTL program faculty once they enter a CTL program. Until recently, however, TEP-2 teachers have not had much specific knowledge of how they are expected to develop and then demonstrate the proficiencies they are expected to demonstrate when time comes for licensure. The data reported in the pages which follow need to be viewed with this lack of clarity in mind.

As a consequence in this brief we report data primarily from the vantage point of what is intrinsic to the needs of these early career teachers in their development, and what may have influenced this development early in their careers. The data could have taken somewhat different form if the teachers studied had had a clearer picture of the CTL proficiencies to be demonstrated in mind, and thus able to monitor their own development in relation to them.

**Research Questions**

Among the primary questions driving the TEP-2 project are those focusing on the longitudinal aspects of teacher change and development. Here we are concerned with describing what personal and professional development activities our sample of early career teachers pursued. The specific questions addressed are:

- What are TEP-2 teachers telling us they are working on to improve?
- Are the areas in which they are working on to improve consistent with CTL Proficiencies?
- Does any relationship exist between the areas on which they are working to improve and their self-ratings of competence on the CTL Proficiencies?

**Data Sources and Methods**

A mixture of methods have been used to describe how TEP-2 teacher participants see their development during their first three years of teaching.

**Sources.** The data presented here have been collected from two cohorts of first year teachers. Cohort one, consisting of 68 beginning teachers, began their first year of teaching in the 1999-2000 year and cohort 2, consisting of 9 teachers, began their first year of teaching in the 2000-2001 year (see TEP-2 Research Brief #2 for related details).

In each year of the project teacher participants were asked to provide open-ended comment on a self-assessment instrument as to what they were working on to improve. Additionally, each year they were asked to assign self-ratings as their current proficiency on each of the 10 CTL Proficiencies to be demonstrated. During their first year of teaching both sets of data were collected in...
February and March of 2000 from the first cohort of teachers, and in December/January 2000-01 from the second cohort of 1st year teachers. The same measures were readministered in December/January, 2000-01 and 2001-02 to the cohort one teachers, and in 2001-02 to the cohort two teachers.

Following their first year of teaching, teachers attended focus groups during which they were asked to reflect on things they felt had most improved in their teaching. These focus groups occurred in December, 2000 for the first cohort of teachers, and in November, 2001 for the second cohort.

Methods. A content analysis using a classification scheme and two variable statistical analyses were applied to the open-ended portion of the Self-Assessment instrument. Similar statistical analyses were applied to the self-ratings of proficiency. The proficiencies rating scale ranged from: Missing capacity (1) to Advanced proficiency (6). Following from Brief #12, we have categorized results into three levels: Missing/Developing (1/2); Beginning (3/4); Expanding/Advanced (5/6). A rating of 3 or 4 is expected of a first or second year teacher. A rating of 5 or 6 is definitely edging toward the level of performance expected for Continuing licensure. A 1 or 2 is a level of performance lower than expected in a beginning teacher. For a more in-depth presentation of self ratings around CTL Proficiencies, see TEP-2 Research Brief #12.

The sample of teachers represented in data presented in this brief is as follows:

First-year teachers:
- 75 open-ended survey responses;
- 73 ratings on proficiencies.

Second-year teachers:
- 59 open-ended survey responses;
- 58 ratings on proficiencies.

Third year teachers:
- 37 open-ended survey responses;
- 40 ratings on proficiencies.

Results

Areas in which TEP-2 Teachers are Working on to Improve their Teaching

One open-ended question on the self-assessment asked, “Are there any areas that you are working on to improve as a teacher?” Teachers responded for the most part by listing things that pertain to the day-to-day operation of the classroom and the learning of their students (see Table 14.1 below for a summary of their responses). Generally, it was difficult to tell from what was written if teachers were reporting what they were currently focusing on at the time the instrument was administered, or if these foci were ongoing or changing. A number of teachers, however, reported the same focus of improvement for 2 or 3 years consecutively. For readers preferring bar graphs to tables, the data reported in Table 14.1 are repeated in bar graph form in Figure 14.2. Findings reported in both forms are discussed briefly under selected topic headings below. Several teachers, however, reported an area for two years or more consecutively. Findings reported in Table 14.1 are discussed briefly under related topic headings below.

Table 14.1. TEP-2 Teachers Across the Beginning Years: Areas Working on to Improve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am working to Improve…</th>
<th>1st Year Teacher</th>
<th>2nd Year Teacher</th>
<th>3rd Year Teacher</th>
<th>Across 2-3 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…classroom management/organization skills</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…in all areas</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…the types of lessons I teach</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…how to deal with different learning levels</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…instruction/modeling skills</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…time management skills</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…how to deal with student behavior</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…aligning with standards/benchmarks</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…language arts/reading instruction</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 14.1. TEP-2 Teachers Across the Beginning Years of Teaching: Percent Working on Areas to Improve

Classroom management and organization. As a group, TEP-2 teacher participants most frequently reported they were working on classroom management and the organization of their classroom. Across the three years, 33% of first year teachers, 25% of second year teachers, and 30% of third year teachers reported working on this aspect of their teaching. Sixteen percent (16%) of the group reported working to improve in this area for 2 or 3 years consecutively. This is an interesting finding, since, as reported in Research Brief #12, the proficiency area in which our teachers reported feeling most capable was creating a classroom conducive to learning—safe, organized, well managed. Figure 14.2 below (also in Research Brief #12) shows the distribution of ratings for CTL Proficiency 3.

As seen in Figure 14.1, almost no teachers view themselves as seriously lacking in this proficiency even as 1st year teachers, and a large proportion view themselves as very proficient. One inference that can be drawn from these somewhat contradictory findings is that although these teachers feel they are generally proficient in this aspect of their work it is so essential as a condition of learning that they strive for continuous improvement. In other words, this area may be one of consistent engagement in the early years of teaching, but when faced with assigning a self rating, is an area in which they feel they are doing well. One teacher illustrates,

“[I am working on…] Class management and general knowledge. I am already very good at management, and I
want to take it to a higher step. Both of these areas will be constant learning experiences for the rest of my teaching career.”

Additionally, several teachers described having “difficult” populations in their classrooms, requiring management strategies specific to the changing needs of the group. They also report a desire to have more “tools” to assist in classroom management; that they are “trying on new strategies,” and feel “overwhelmed” by the amount of time and energy they invest to do a good job of it.

In sum, for TEP-2 teachers classroom management appear to be an area in which expanding proficiency becomes the norm. Maintaining a particular level of proficiency is not enough; one can become ever better at managing difficult situations and bringing efficiency to one’s work.

**Language arts and reading instruction.** This is another area in which teachers reported they were working on to improve, with 7% of the total group of TEP-2 teachers reporting this area for 2 or 3 years consecutively. Teachers in nearly every elementary grade level responded to either or both language arts (including writing, conventions, grammar) and reading instruction, as areas they were working on to improve. Related details included:

- A desire for programs or strategies to raise student enthusiasm about reading and writing
- Bringing students to grade level reading
- Teaching writing to reflect the state’s rubrics used to score writing samples.

Twelve percent (12%) of teachers in their first year report focusing on improving in one or both of these instructional areas. This increased to 29% of second year teachers, and decreased the third year to 16%. The rather dramatic increase in focus during the second year of teaching is likely to reflect a growing awareness of the complexities involved in these areas of instruction, the importance they carry in a school’s curriculum and, very probably, having an opportunity to review, assess, and reflect back on the strengths and weaknesses in their first year of teaching and the learning of their students.

**Designing Instructional Plans.** Up to 16% of first year teachers reported working to improve their proficiency in designing instructional plans. For example, 16% of first year teachers made comments about working on the types of lessons they teach, while 15% spoke of working on designing and planning instruction for the various learning levels of their students -- primarily accommodate low skilled/low performing students. Some first year teachers, (4%), spoke of designing their instructional plans around district and state benchmarks and standards.

Teachers working on these areas represent a fairly small percentage of TEP-2 participants, which is reasonably consistent with the ratings they provided around CTL Proficiency 2: designing instructional plans that incorporate understanding of students’ developmental levels, interests, abilities, and learning accomplishments consistent with state and district standards. Even first year teachers rated themselves as being ‘proficient’ on this aspect of their work, and their sense of proficiency increased with each year of experience. The mean scores for these self ratings are shown in Figure 14.3.

**Figure 14.3. Self-Assessment of CTL Proficiency 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designing Instructional Plans: Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st year Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>0.97</th>
<th>0.94</th>
<th>0.76</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>+.28</td>
<td>+.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Beginning Proficiency 3/4**  
**Expanding Proficiency 5/6**

**Working to improve in all areas.** Another common response of teachers was described as, “all areas”— “Where do I begin? Everything!”; or “I am constantly trying to improve in all areas.” Seven percent (7%) of all TEP-2 teachers gave this response 2 or 3 years consecutively. Teachers who
indicated they were working to improve in all areas also described specific focus items.

**Area of least proficiency reported.** Among all the CTL Proficiencies rated our teachers viewed themselves as least proficient in “Participating in groups to improve teaching and learning in schools,” and “Using research to enhance practice.” Neither of these proficiency areas were not addressed in their answers to the open ended question regarding areas ‘working on to improve.’

**Areas in which TEP-2 teachers feel they have improved the most.**

In late Fall following their first year of teaching, TEP-2 teachers attending focus groups were asked to reflect on areas where they felt they had improved the most. The various responses provided spoke most frequently to daily classroom operation and practice, but also included responses that were largely missing in the self-assessment information provided for areas in which they were working to improve. In the focus groups reference was made to areas beyond the classroom, such as parent communication, more productive work with peers and grade level teams (and in a few cases, more tolerance for grade level teams and opposing school-staff views).

At least 3 teachers attributed the reason for most improvement around collaborating and working with colleagues as “a change in the group or team”, and another attributed the reason as “working with another teacher” different than in the previous year. Two teachers also spoke of looking to the whole school community. One remarked, “I broadened my view and matched up my room with fifth grade reading buddies.”

At the classroom level, one remarkable comment came from a teacher who said she was “more intentional” about what she did; more intentional about her teaching. Several teachers in her particular focus group reflected on this statement and agreed they were doing the same. Some teachers mentioned they better understood and/or were better aligning instruction and assessment with state benchmarks and standards. The various areas of improvement cited most frequently in the focus groups around daily classroom operation and practice included:

- assessment;
- aligning instruction with standards/benchmarks;
- integrating subjects;
- dealing with different learning levels;
- designing inclusive instructional plans;
- dealing with ESL learners;
- classroom management;
- setting up my classroom as a center for learning;
- dealing with student behavior;
- consistency;
- planning; organization; time management and scheduling.

Many teachers also spoke about their improvement in

- reading instruction;
- math instruction;
- language arts instruction.

Some teachers also addressed improving in the management of their personal lives. For example, several spoke about obligating themselves to personal time, when previously they had been giving their lives largely to their students and their practice: “For me, this year, I am better at not taking work home. I do not let my teaching and my students [take] so much of my life.” Other comments pertaining to improvements in their personal lives included

- reflection on my practice;
- patience;
- backing away from pathos;
- reliance on self; more confidence in ability;
- balancing work and personal life.
Aligning Year 3 Proficiency Levels and Focus of Improvement Efforts

Table 14.2 (page 14.7) provides an overview of this alignment. Using the 10 CTL Proficiencies as an organizer for much of the data already reported it will be seen that most of these early career teachers report working to improve in only 3 of the 10 proficiency areas. From the self-assessment responses across three years, teachers seem to be most occupied with what is happening with the ‘right now, right here’ aspect of their practice— their classrooms and their students. This picture is broadened, however, by focus group responses which indicate improvement occurring in other dimensions of proficiency they are expected to be able to demonstrate by no later than their 6th year of teaching.

Summary

When asked to describe areas in which they were working to improve, TEP-2 teachers most frequently reported working on classroom management and organization. This was somewhat unexpected since they had rated themselves as most proficient in “Creating a classroom conducive to learning,” CTL Proficiency 3.

Another CTL proficiency area teachers reported as a focus for improvement in which they already viewed themselves as reasonably proficient was “Designing instructional plans that incorporate understanding of students’ developmental levels, interests, abilities, and learning accomplishments,” (Proficiency 2). No improvement efforts were reported for the CTL Proficiency areas where they felt least proficient (Proficiencies 8 and 9): “Participating in groups to improve teaching and learning in schools,” and “Using research to enhance practice.” As discussed in Brief #12, many teachers reported little opportunity to develop in these areas.

Teachers also reported working on improving skills and strategies for teaching language arts and reading. A dramatic increase occurred in this regard during their second year of teaching. This occurred even though a related CTL proficiency (#4) received ratings by the teachers which increased slightly during the second and third years of teaching.

Teachers in focus groups also identified areas in which they had improved the most. These included many of the areas reported in the self-assessment as ‘working on to improve.’ Focus group responses included areas not discussed in the self-assessment, such as communicating with parents, looking for help from and collaborating with other educators, and working with grade level teams.

When aligned with all 10 proficiencies required for a Continuing License to teach in Oregon, teachers report working on areas related to 3 of the 10 proficiencies.

References


Table 14.2. Alignment of Year 3 CTL Proficiency Level and Focus of Improvement Efforts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CTL Proficiency</th>
<th>3-year Mean Proficiency Level</th>
<th>I am working to improve…</th>
<th>I have improved…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I know about and am skilled in assessing knowledge and skills of students in relation to long-term content goals, state and district standards, and in determining the knowledge and skills students need to accomplish them.</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>…assessment</td>
<td>…assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I know about and am skilled in designing instructional plans that incorporate understanding of students’ developmental levels, interests, abilities, and learning accomplishments consistent with state and district standards.</td>
<td>Expanding Proficiency</td>
<td>…aligning with standards/ benchmarks</td>
<td>…aligning with standards/ benchmarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…the types of lessons I teach</td>
<td>…integrating subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…how to deal with different learning levels</td>
<td>…dealing with different learning levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…designing inclusive instructional plans</td>
<td>…designing inclusive instructional plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…dealing with ESL learners</td>
<td>…dealing with ESL learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…classroom management</td>
<td>…classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…setting up my classroom as a center for learning</td>
<td>…setting up my classroom as a center for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>…classroom management/organization skills</td>
<td>…dealing with student behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…time management skills</td>
<td>…consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…how to deal with student behavior</td>
<td>…planning; organization; time management and scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I know about and am skilled in establishing a classroom climate conducive to learning; e.g., a safe and developmentally appropriate environment, efficient organization of time and materials, and effective transitions.</td>
<td>Expanding Proficiency</td>
<td>…instruction/modeling skills</td>
<td>…reading instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>…language arts/reading instruction</td>
<td>…language arts instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I know about and am skilled in implementing instructional plans that employ knowledge of subject matter and research on how students learn, individual differences, diverse cultures, and that encourage parent participation.</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>…communicating with parents</td>
<td>…communicating with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I know about and am skilled in collaborating with parents, colleagues, and community members to provide internal and external assistance to students and families.</td>
<td>Expanding Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I know about and am skilled in evaluating student progress in learning, refining plans for instruction, and establishing alternative learning options when necessary.</td>
<td>Expanding Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I know about and am skilled in documenting and reporting the progress of students in achieving state and district standards.</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I know about and am skilled in using emerging research on teaching, learning, and school improvement to enhance my practice.</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I know about and am skilled in participating with groups that design, evaluate, and improve opportunities for teaching and learning in an educational institution.</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I know about and am skilled in collaborating with my colleagues to enhance job performance and advance teaching as a profession.</td>
<td>Expanding Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 10 potentially</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intra personal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14.5