VISIONS OF TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION
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What is vision?

*Images of ideal classroom practice that reflect teachers’ hopes and dreams for themselves, their students, their classrooms and their schools.*

What is YOUR vision?
Why look at vision?

- Teachers’ visions shape their development
- The relationships between program vision and teachers’ visions can either support or impede that development;
- In order to best support development, teachers need opportunities to enact vision
Part I. Teachers’ Visions

Research on Teachers’ Visions

- 7 year study of teachers’ visions
- Surveys of 80 pre-service teachers
  - Interviews with 16 of those teachers
- Case studies of 4 teachers
  - Followed teachers over a period of 7 years
  - Nature and role of vision in their early careers
The underexplored nature of teacher’s vision

- No one has ever asked me about that before. So there is so much emotion attached to it. You sort of feel like, no one ever listens to what matters…
  -- Mari, veteran math teacher

- In my program, that word had never been used, never introduced and never ever discussed. There were always “goals and expectations” but not the idea of vision. Yet… I’ve seen in my head what I imagine the class would be for so long.
  -- Andrea, novice English teacher
Sample Questions

Please feel free to describe what you dream about or hope for even though it may be somewhat—or even very—different from your current classroom. Suppose akin to a virtual reality tour, you can imagine yourself walking around your classroom. You can look around the room, hear and see activities going on.

What do you see, feel and hear when you walk around your ideal classroom?
What are you doing in your ideal classroom? What is your role? Why?
What are your students doing in this ideal classroom?
In my ideal classroom, students and teachers are exploring scientific questions in an atmosphere of excitement, earnestness and life. I am surrounded by students who have questions burgeoning from them, and I respond with guidance, coaching and shared enthusiasm. Students are working in groups and some individually, in discussions and research, and working on problems that are real-world, practical. Students are asking one another the same questions they ask me, as they know the question is their own, not mine, thus making the answer more important to discover.
Key characteristics of teacher’s vision

Vivid and concrete

“My vision turns [my teaching ideas and philosophy] into something real”

“My vision is something tangible in a way that I can picture how my classroom will look and how my students will be and how I will be in my classroom...it’s definitely something I imagine in my mind.”
Key characteristics of teacher’s vision

Fuses emotion and understanding

“I would love to inspire young poets/writers and to encourage their place and significance in the world...we need to remember and return to the power of the word, of poetry and language and feelings, and to teach students to use their gifts and imaginations...”

“...when you talk about vision it does get to your heart”
Key characteristics of teacher’s vision

Represents something of a ‘reach’

A “consciousness of possibility” (Maxine Greene, 1988)

“I’m nervous because I don’t know if it’s going to work. I mean, I’m very hopeful, I don’t think I’ve ever been this close to making this vision come true. To being part of making the vision come true….”

“I think I’m very conscious of this as something that could happen…it happens enough to know it’s possible.”
The Role of Vision: Guide for daily and future practice

“If I know where I want the kids to go, then it’s easier for me to structure my class to get them there. … vision just helps clarify everything.”

“You think about [vision] everyday when you go in the classroom… it’s just a constant check.”

“Not matching up to a vision is better than not having a vision.”
The Role of Vision: A tool for reflection

A Measuring stick
“I need to be more precise in structuring my class.”

A long view
“In terms of vision, I see things that could be better. I’m not satisfied with saying that’s the best I’m ever going to do.”
The Role of Vision: Source of motivation

My vision keeps me going!

I don’t want to lag, I want to keep pushing us…

In some ways, I’ve been living with compromises, but the thought of me progressing towards this vision is what has kept me in teaching.
What are some of the challenges and tensions around vision?

- Clarity or fragility of vision
- Stereotypical or deficit views
- Gap between vision and reality
Problematic gap

• Too much distance between reality and vision
  • Contributes to a sense of discouragement
  • A “huge disconnect”
  • *It is so depressing I thought it was better to just work all the time and not think about [my vision]—Sarah, novice teacher*

• Too little distance between vision and reality; or no vision
Productive Gap

- Contributes to a sense of “creative tension” (Peter Senge, 1990)

- A drive to bridge the gap
  - “Vision keeps me going!”
  - “I’m learning so much about how to get further….”

- Need an appropriate reach
Additional Tensions

Static – *Dynamic visions*

High-stakes – ”*Episodic*” visions

Disconnected—*Connected visions*
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Why take vision into account in teacher education?

I keep thinking about how this [idea of vision]...would have been so helpful in my program: Just constantly thinking about this idea of vision...something to start from. Just imagining where you want to be, but also thinking about where you actually are. And how to look at that discrepancy and see, well how far do you have to get from one to the other? What can you do? What’s the process in order to achieve your vision?

--Andrea, novice teacher
How could we take vision into account to support student-teachers’ development?

- Understand the visions student-teachers bring
  - Why are they in teaching?
  - What are their purposes?
  - What are their images of good teaching?
- Help student-teachers develop a “consciousness of possibility”
  - Visions that are something of a “reach”
- Support student-teachers in developing productive visions
  - Understand the steps they need to take to get there
  - Contend with the gap between vision and reality
- Provide opportunities to enact the vision
Part II. Program visions

Shared beliefs about what graduates’ classroom teaching practice should look like; and why that is important.
Research on Teacher Education

- Evaluation and redesign of STEP program
- “Does the Pathway Make a Difference” project
- “Choosing to Teach: Enacting values in practice” project
Vision in Teacher Education in the U.S.

- Scholars argue that vision is a strong feature of powerful programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2005; NRC, 2010; Zeichner, 2005)

- Not all programs have strong, clear visions (Kennedy, 2005; NRC, 2010)

- Research in New York found few programs had identifiable sense of vision
  - Our program is dedicated to the preparation of deeply thoughtful, knowledgeable and highly effective teachers. Our commitment is to educating future professionals who will make a significant impact on the academic achievement, as well as the intellectual, social and emotional development of their students.
  - Our graduates are highly qualified teachers who respect individuals in a multicultural society, excel in academic disciplines, acquire a broad knowledge base, learn in meaningful contexts, become reflective practitioners, and engage in life-long learning.
Lack of vision (cited in an early STEP program evaluation)

- Contributed to fragmentation
  - Student-teachers encounter different messages about good teaching
  - Weak connections between schools and TE programs

- Led to a weaker connection to practice
  - No vision of classroom teaching
  - Harder to identify which practices new teachers might learn
Variation in TE Visions

- Vision of teaching as service
- Vision of teaching as social justice
- Vision of teaching as a professional practice
A powerful program vision: One example

The mission of the University of Chicago Urban Teacher Education Program is to prepare urban public school teachers of the highest caliber—professionals who engage in teaching as a highly intellectual career, and who are classroom-based, instructional leaders and agents for educational equity in their schools and the broader community. Toward this vision, we have created a program that is situated both academically and experientially in the complexities of the Chicago Public Schools. We explicitly focus on developing all domains of teaching—content knowledge, pedagogy, and dispositions—and expect our students to excel in the profession by adhering to our core teaching practices and values.
Core Practices and Values

Chicago UTEP is committed to preparing teachers of the highest caliber to teach in underserved urban schools. Our vision is that every graduate of the program will:

- Apply strong observation and data-analysis to assess student progress and support student learning
- Deliver engaging, student-centered instruction that has clear and challenging goals, and that is derived from deep knowledge of the subject matter and an understanding of their students
- Nurture respectful classroom communities by focusing on the social-emotional development of children
- Promote professional community and collaborative problem solving in their schools by opening their classroom doors to their peers and making their practice public and subject to critical feedback and reflection
- Infuse technology into their curriculum to deepen student learning
- Foster professional growth and social awareness in their schools by purposefully addressing issues of race, class, culture, and educational equity
- Support the growth of future teachers through participation in the Chicago UTEP alumni community and, ultimately, by serving as clinical instructors to new teacher candidates
Evidence of coherent, shared vision?

- Not only stated on program website or materials
- Faculty and students all know the vision
- Cooperating/master teachers in the schools know and understand the vision
- Syllabi and experiences in the program reflect the vision
- You can see the vision in practice in graduates’ classrooms
How do you get there?

- Faculty spend time articulating a clear vision
  - Not indoctrination

- Vision in design of the program (program documents)

- Vision in syllabi

- Vision in opportunities to learn
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Part III. Opportunities to Practice
Enacting a Vision of Good Teaching

Teachers not only need opportunities to learn about the vision but also opportunities to enact it in practice

- Why is that important?
- What does it look like?
- What might it look like in music teacher education?
Opportunities to *Enact* Vision

Studies of the professions revealed that preparation to teach offered *fewest* opportunities to learn that are grounded in practice (Grossman et al., 2009)
Re-imagining of teacher education around ‘core practices’
Different ideas about what a ‘core practice’ is
Qualities of Core Practices

- Occur with high frequency in teaching
- Novices can enact in classrooms across different instructional approaches
- Novices can begin to master them
- Allow novices to learn more about students and teaching
- Preserve the integrity and complexity of teaching
- Research based and have potential to improve student achievement
Possible ‘high leverage’ practices

- Leading a classroom discussion around a shared text in secondary English/language arts classroom
- Helping students come to consensus around a mathematical idea
- Developing a classroom culture
  - Discrete practices within:
    - Creating classroom routines
    - Teaching students routines to work together
    - Managing transitions
Challenges

- Developing a shared vision
- Using vision for program design
- Regular questioning and debate
- Identifying key “core practices”
- New role for teacher educators
  - Moving away from presenting principles and asking teachers to observe related strategies and practice on their own
  - More emphasis upon coaching, feedback and modeling
  - More use of artifacts of practice (student work, video from classrooms, transcripts of lessons)
Questions for Thought

- What are the vision(s) of good music teaching in your program?
- What are some of the core practices of teaching music that undergird that vision?
- What teaching practices are ‘core’ for instrumental teaching? For choral teaching? For music theory?