

An Introduction to Core Practices

What do we mean by *Practice* and *Core Practices*?

- *Practice* in complex domains involves the orchestration of understanding, skill, relationships, and issues of identity and power to accomplish particular activities with others in specific environments.
- Practices refer to routine activities teachers engage in devoted to planning, enactment, or reflection that are intended to support student learning (Windschitl et al., 2012, p.882).
- *Core practices in teaching* are identifiable components fundamental to teaching that teachers enact to support learning. Core practices include both general and content-specific practices and consist of strategies, routines, and moves that can be unpacked and learned by teachers. Their enactment occurs within the complexities of teaching and thus cannot be decontextualized from the histories and policies of schooling, where teaching occurs, or who students are. Core practices must be grounded in principles for high-quality, equity-centered instruction. (This conceptualization of core practices is based on content formerly found at the URL <https://www.corepracticeconsortium.com/core-practice>).

Core Practices are instructional practices that:

- Occur with high frequency in teaching
- Are research-based and have the potential to improve student achievement
- Teachers can enact in classrooms across different curricula or instructional approaches
- Preserve the integrity and complexity of teaching
- Novices can actually begin to master

Core Practices are NOT:

- A checklist of competencies
- Techniques divorced from principles and theory
- Teacher behaviors that fall farther away from a teacher's central instructional mission:
 - Taking attendance
 - Administering standardized tests
 - Cleaning up after a lab
- Practices that students learn very little from:
 - Using curriculum without adapting it to the current understanding of students
 - Having students memorize lists of facts
 - Providing written or oral feedback to students in the form of “correct” or “incorrect”

(Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Grossman, 2018; Windschitl et al, 2012)

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All authors have contributed equally. For more information about our work, contact Dan Hanley, hanleyd@wwu.edu.



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Programmatic Discussions about Core Practices: Things to keep in mind

- “High leverage practices (HLPs) should be few in number to reflect priorities of equitable and effective teaching and to allow significant time for novices to develop and receive feedback on approximations of each of these practices” (Windschitl et al., 2012, p.883).
- The intent of core practices is not to prescribe the same set of core practices for every teacher preparation program (McDonald et al, 2013).
- The benefit is in having discussions about what’s most important for preservice teachers (PSTs) (Windschitl et al, 2012).

Foundational Work in Core Practices

The learning most impactful on instructional practice is learning embedded *within* practice. The selected references illuminate how educators learn and take up complex, relational, and ambitious instructional practice.

- Ball. (2011). Building a Common Core for Learning to Teach.
- Ball & Forzani. (2009). The Work of Teaching and the Challenge for Teacher Education.
- Darling-Hammond. (2014). Strengthening Clinical Preparation: The Grail of Teacher Education.
- Grossman, et al. (2009). Teaching Practice: A Cross-Professional Perspective.
- Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald. (2009). Redefining Teaching, Re-Imagining Teacher Education.
- Grossman (Ed.) (2018). Teaching Core Practices in Teacher Education.
- Forzani. (2014). Understanding “Core Practices” and “Practice-Based” Teacher Education
- Lampert. (2009). Learning in, from, and for Practice: What Do We Mean?
- Lampert et al. (2010). Using Designed Instructional Activities to Enable Novices to Manage Ambitious Mathematics Teaching.
- Lampert et al. (2013). Keeping It Complex: Using Rehearsals to Support Novice Teacher Learning of Ambitious Teaching.
- Lampert & Graziani. (2009). Instructional Activities as Tools for Teachers’ and Teacher Educators’ Learning.
- McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh. (2013). Core Practices and Pedagogies of Teacher Education: A Call for a Common Language and Collective Activity.
- McDonald et al. (2014). Practice Makes Practice: Learning to Teach in Teacher Education.
- Windschitl et al. (2012). Proposing a Core Set of Instructional Practices and Tools for Teachers of Science.
- Teaching Works (Ball, Forzani, Shaughnessy, et al. University of Michigan): <http://www.teachingworks.org/work-of-teaching/high-leverage-practices>
- University of Washington’s Teacher Education by Design (TEDD.org) project (McDonald, Kazemi, et al.): <https://tedd.org/>
- Ambitious Science Teaching (Windschitl, Thompson, et al., University of Washington): <https://ambitiousscienceteaching.org/>
- Learning to Teach In, From, and Through Practice Project (LTP; Lampert et al., 2013)
- Core Practice Consortium: <https://www.corepracticeconsortium.com/>

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Example Sets of Core Practices

TeachingWorks' High Leverage Practices (19 general practices): <http://www.teachingworks.org/work-of-teaching/high-leverage-practices>

Core Practices of Teaching: A primer. (9 general practices): https://coetedd-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/core_practice_primer.pdf

UW Teacher Education by Design: <https://tedd.org/>

Windschitl et al. (2012, p. 899) Four science core practices: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/sce.21027>

Kloser (2014, p.1197-8) Ten science core practices: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/tea.21171>

TEDD 7 Math core practices: <https://tedd.org/mathematics/>

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