

# Effective Student Teacher Supervision in the Era of *No Child Left Behind*

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## Abstract

*This research study addresses the issues and challenges for university supervisors of providing supervisory feedback in the accountability climate of No Child Left Behind. Several findings are detailed in the case below and include the following: (a) Feedback on individual learning needs of students differed between informal written observations and the formal feedback provided on midterm and final evaluations; (b) the supervisor's perception of a teacher candidate's success influenced the degree to which the feedback aligned with performance standards; (c) within the context of culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, supervisory feedback included attention to individual learning needs when teacher candidates were viewed as successful by the supervisor; and (d) for those candidates who struggled in their teaching, adherence to specific standards took precedence over the individual needs of students in the classroom.*

## Introduction and Theoretical Framework

The *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (Pub. L. 107-110, NCLB) revised the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and has been described by some as among the most far-reaching piece of legislation affecting education in the United States in the past 30 years (Hardy, 2002). The tenets of NCLB establish standards for the evaluation of children in K–12 classrooms, the educators working in their schools, and the staff affiliated with service delivery (e.g., paraprofessionals). Attention to issues of teacher quality through NCLB has resulted, in part, on an increased focus on the preparation of teachers and the experiences they have in increasingly diverse schools and classrooms. It has further focused the efforts of teacher educators, including university student teaching supervisors, on the current reality and challenges of NCLB policies and practices as they are implemented in the public schools. Without a doubt, NCLB has had a significant impact on the practices of university supervisors, whether realized or not.

Historically, student teacher supervision has been seen as a low status, peripheral occupation within colleges and programs of teacher education, typically completed by adjunct faculty or graduate students (Slick, 1998). Additionally, the supervisor is commonly seen as an outsider interfering in the public school classroom and serving only an evaluatory role in the relationship with cooperating and student teachers (Slick, 1998). Much debate exists over the effectiveness of the university supervisor and the relative value of the role in student teacher learning (Bowman, 1979; Boydell, 1986).

Richardson-Koehler (1988) suggests that the university supervisor is in the unique position to raise the discourse of feedback provided to student teachers. Zeichner and Liston (1985) found four different types of discourse used between student teachers and university supervisors during postobservation conferences: factual, prudential, justificatory, and critical. Justificatory and critical stances allow student teachers to continue to grow beyond simply what happened to their decision-making processes and rationales for their instructional actions. These approaches encourage the development of teachers who are capable of becoming independent and thoughtful decision makers. Grant and Zozakiewicz (1995) advocate for a supervisor who will:

... listen and support their [student teachers'] work, while challenging students to think, grow, and act as multicultural educators. As with children in schools, supervisors need to accept and get to know each student teacher and their cultural background, educational knowledge, and unique experiences. (p. 271–272)

Such a personalized approach to supervision is complicated to implement but further supports the development of teachers who are responsive to student needs while modeling this process in action (Bates, 2005). However, Hawkey (1997) writes, "It is not clear whether the student teachers are learning what is intended from their interactions with different personnel" (p. 326). She goes on to write that there is little understanding of how student teachers "integrate" and make sense of the various perspectives they are given—particularly if they are receiving differing information from various personnel. Richardson (1996) found that teachers were more likely to generate alternative practices when faced with dilemmas while teaching (as opposed to isolated study of teaching). The role of the supervisor becomes particularly critical in providing preservice teachers with experiences that encourage alternative ways of examining teaching.

Like their K–12 counterparts, colleges of education and teacher-preparation programs are increasingly responsible for ensuring that graduates demonstrate adherence to performance standards established by national, state, and local credentialing bodies. A 2004 set of recommendations included in *Teaching at Risk: Progress to Potholes* encourage increased standards for teacher performance and teacher credentialing, as well as pay incentives for the teachers of high-achieving students (Teaching Commission, 2006). The pressure on colleges of education to adhere to practices that increase teacher quality is significant (Raths & Lyman, 2003).

The pull toward meeting the standards of NCLB has resulted in new policies and procedures that challenge teacher-preparation institutions to demonstrate preservice teachers' abilities to meet current accountability requirements. Under the provisions of NCLB, the characteristics of "highly qualified" teachers are delineated to include: raising standards for teacher training programs; requiring teachers to take more rigorous coursework; expanding teacher-preparation programs; increased rigor in professional development; and setting higher standards for teacher licensure, including competency testing (Hardy, 2002).

The influence of NCLB on the experiences of student teaching is obvious. One does not enter a school without hearing about NCLB and the particular school's challenges in meeting the requirements. For student teachers, the focus on NCLB is particularly prevalent as cooperating teachers are quick to inform novices of the specific academic needs and focus of their discipline, as well as the expectations that student teachers will include particular instructional activities to prepare students for mandated testing. Changing standards and mandates for practice have an influence on each of those involved in the student teaching experience, including the university supervisor, a historical outsider to the classroom/school context (Slick, 1998). The influence of NCLB and the climate of accreditation in teacher education has had a significant impact on the type and focus of the feedback that the supervisor provides to the student teacher during classroom observations and periodic formal evaluations.

One current challenge that supervisors face is the impact of NCLB on the classroom practices of many teachers. Specifically, the narrowness with which student teachers quickly accommodate to classroom practices that appear to be responsive to NCLB often takes place without considering the impact on student learning. Because different student teachers need different kinds of support and feedback as learners, the context of NCLB and teacher accreditation standards can further challenge a supervisor to differentiate types and areas of emphasis within feedback in order to meet students' learning needs. This study looks at the influence of assessment and accreditation standards on the feedback provided by a secondary supervisor to student teachers working in a diverse range of middle and high school field placement settings.

## Methodology

### *Research Objectives*

Our research question is, "What influence does the accountability context and teacher education standards (e.g., Praxis) have on the written supervisory feedback provided to secondary student teachers?" This research project looks at the feedback that a student teaching supervisor provided to her secondary education teacher candidates during a semester of student teaching. In particular, this study attempts to determine the influence of context through a focus on *No Child Left Behind* and teacher education accountability standards on the ability of a supervisor to effectively support the student teacher as an individual learner. Documentation of the written feedback provided to teacher candidates—both through classroom observations and evaluation documents—by the supervisor allows for exploration of the influence of an NCLB dominated context and the use of Praxis standards on the type and structure of feedback offered. It is critical to understand the influence of such factors on the experiences of student teachers as it impacts the learning opportunities that they are provided and the nature of the support they receive from the university supervisor.

### *The Case of Bobbi: Study Participant*

This study focuses on the case of a university supervisor of student teaching, Bobbi (further details about Bobbi's background are described in the introduction to her case). A close and careful look at the practice of a particular supervisor allowed us to focus deeply on her experiences and those of her student teachers through her feedback. We highlight the experiences of Bobbi as a supervisor who possesses what Gitlin, Ogawa, and Rose (1984) describe as an ability to provide supervisory support, which challenges teacher candidates to reflect upon their teaching in ways that extend beyond technique. Bobbi was chosen as a supervisor due to her interests, personal experiences working with urban secondary students, and her demonstrated ability to link theory to practice as a continuous process of reflection.

At the time of this study, Bobbi, a white female, was a university supervisor for secondary education at the local, large research-focused university where she was also a graduate student during this period. Bobbi had recently completed a period of working as a high school English and journalism teacher in a diverse, local, urban high school before returning to the university to work on her master's degree. The university program in which she worked is a four-semester Masters of Arts in teaching for secondary licensure students, certifying across content areas. Bobbi's supervisory support took place during the third semester following coursework in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and management. Student teachers completed a 12-week student teaching experience in ethnically and culturally diverse middle and high schools. During the school year of this study, Bobbi worked in four different urban public schools supervising 11 student teachers in placements ranging from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades and across content areas. The students in this program typically range in age from the mid-20s to early 40s and are mostly female and Caucasian. The period of this study was Bobbi's first experience as a university supervisor.

Bobbi's teaching background influenced her experiences and practices as a university supervisor. The high school where she taught in the local community serves as the English as a Second Language (ESL) magnet program for all secondary students new to the district and offered a learning environment in a neighborhood school context with students from 79 different countries. Bobbi taught basic English courses for both mainstream students and students recently mainstreamed from the ESL program. With an undergraduate degree in English from a small liberal arts university in another state, Bobbi earned her teaching certification in the focus program of this study four years prior to the study. She student taught in another of the city's diverse schools and had a focus on English language learning in her student teaching semester.

Bobbi's experiences as a teacher candidate at our university and in the local schools as a teacher increased her familiarity with the program as a supervisor and offered her some degree of comfort with expectations and student teaching program structure. Her position as a graduate of the same licensure

program, and graduate student in a master's degree program in reading, offered her students a unique view on the learning experiences of the program. As a supervisor for the department, but not as a faculty member who participated in the development of program structures and evaluation tools, she held both insider and outsider views of the supervision process. While Bobbi's status as a graduate of the program in which she is supervising might be unique, much of the work of university supervision—particularly in large programs—is done by graduate students and adjuncts. These are typically people who are outside of the departmental realm of program design and development. Ideally, Bobbi's experiences can do much to inform the design of supervisory tools, forms, and practices by those with the responsibility to document programs. Developing this comprehensive view might further help universities gain insight into the influence of accreditation measures such as NCLB on their programs and practices from the perspective of those who do the groundwork in practice.

#### *Data Sources and Collection*

We collected written feedback provided to teacher candidates by the supervisor. Formative feedback included a set of four written observation feedback forms for each of the supervisor's 11 teacher candidates. The supervisor also provided copies of the mid-semester and final student teaching evaluations. The midterm and final evaluations consisted of a Likert scale rating of the teacher's readiness on a variety of factors correlated to the Praxis standards, as well as a narrative describing the scores given in each section. Additionally, we collected formal evaluations from the Site Teacher Educators (STEs) as a source of corroboration on the supervisor's feedback for the perspectives of student teacher success. Finally, the supervisor was interviewed at the end of the student teaching semester to help us better understand her background experiences in education and teacher education, stance toward supervision, and attitudes toward assessment and evaluation in the context of student teaching. This interview allowed us to evaluate our understanding of the feedback and ask supporting questions to ensure that we were reading feedback comments in concert with the attitudes and beliefs of the supervisor.

It is important to understand the program origin of the data that were collected in this study. The university's supervisory tools that were formally used to evaluate the teaching progress of preservice teachers were developed in response to state and national evaluation criteria affiliated with *No Child Left Behind* and state-based accreditation standards. The evaluation tools were informed by Danielson and McGreal's (2000) teacher evaluation tools and align with the Praxis III standards for classroom performance described by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). The midterm and final evaluation tools are used as part of a comprehensive evaluation protocol designed to generate a profile of candidate performance. These tools were collected as a source of data for this study; however, it is important to note that they were one piece of a complex puzzle, generated by the supervisor, for evaluation that tied in the perspectives of multiple stakeholders in the process. The midterm and final evaluation ratings are used in conjunction with portfolios, formative classroom evaluations, and course performance to develop a profile of candidate performance over time. Portfolio artifacts are developed throughout coursework and field experiences.

#### *Data Analysis*

The study presented here looks at the case of Bobbi, a secondary supervisor working with students in a range of culturally and linguistically diverse middle and high school settings. This paper describes her case in detail to document the relevance of the findings in the "real world" experiences of a supervisor and her student teachers. The analysis of this study focuses on the development of a case centered on the feedback provided by Bobbi, and the difficulty she faced in tailoring feedback to an individual student teacher's learning needs in the NCLB climate of accountability. According to Yin (1994), a case study approach to qualitative research provides an in-depth look at the nuances of a particular situation or experience. As such, the use of case study methodology in this paper provides the opportunity to look closely at the influence of context and current educational climate on the day-

to-day work of a supervisor. Looking closely at Bobbi's experiences allowed us to analyze her experiences and work, teasing out the subtleties across various student teachers.

The data analysis process began with a reading of the supervisor's set of observation feedback provided to the student teachers. Initial coding categories were created based on this data and then revised by reading through the supervisor's mid-semester and final formal evaluations. These revised categories included: attention to the nature and content of the feedback as it related to the individual learning needs of the student teacher; specific references to the Praxis standards; and feedback focused on specific needs of diverse learners as related to the school context. Based on the similarities and differences between the informal and formal observation feedback, assertions were made about the data and used as guideposts for comparing the feedback with the STE evaluations and the interview data from the supervisor. These assertions are presented in the findings section below.

### Findings

This study found that Bobbi, the supervisor, was heavily influenced by the department's teacher education standards and the degree to which she felt an obligation to utilize and document specific responses to the standards used by the program within the context of the more formalized midterm and final evaluations. Several findings are detailed in the case below and include the following: (a) feedback on individual learning needs of students differed between informal written observations and the formal feedback provided on midterm and final evaluations; (b) the supervisor's perception of a teacher candidate's success influenced the degree to which the feedback aligned with performance standards; (c) within the context of culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, supervisory feedback included attention to individual learning needs when teacher candidates were viewed as successful by the supervisor; and (d) for those candidates who struggled in their teaching, adherence to specific standards took precedence over the individual needs of students in the classroom.

As a university supervisor, Bobbi demonstrated particularly tight connections to and reliance on the standards in crafting and providing feedback. As seen in the case described below, the standards provided the supervisor with an evaluation scaffold that resulted in limited feedback designed to specifically meet the needs of the individual student teacher as a learner. Possible reasons for this reliance and the outcomes for teacher preparation will be considered in the implications section.

#### *Finding One: Mixed Messages—Increased Attention to Standards at the Cost of the Individual Learner*

Increasingly, the influence of national and state standards movements has pressured teacher educators to align their feedback on student teacher performance with established criteria for success in the classroom, rather than on pupil learning. These alignment trends were particularly evident in the contrast in feedback Bobbi provided to teacher candidates working in urban middle and high schools. Bobbi developed a feedback pattern that differed based on the perceived purpose of the feedback (formal or informal). Bobbi's feedback during classroom observations was noticeably different from the feedback provided on formal observation forms in tone, content, and explicit reference to the Praxis standards. This dichotomy is described in the examples below, illustrating the differences in feedback based upon the structural frameworks of the tools guiding the presentation.

During regular classroom observations for each of her 11 student teachers, Bobbi provided written, open-ended feedback on their teaching that was generally customized to each candidate. She began each feedback session with an icebreaker that was designed to welcome the candidate into the feedback discussion. For example, comments related to hectic schedules, the weather, or general activities within the school were always a part of Bobbi's introductory feedback remarks. For most teacher candidates, Bobbi's written feedback included a range of open-ended comments addressing student diversity, assessment, and classroom management. Her feedback was consistently individualized and directed candidates' attention to specific students in their classrooms, or to previously identified goals for most of her students. Bobbi's written feedback provided clear

directives to her teacher candidates where she identified linkages between curriculum, instruction, and middle and high school students as individual learners. However, when completing midterm and final semester evaluations that required both numerical ratings and narrative text on the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher candidate, the differences in the type of feedback shared became clear. When compiling feedback for the midterm and final evaluations, Bobbi's language and tone became increasingly more focused on the nuances and rigidity of teacher education standards with an emphasis on the Praxis standards within this particular teacher education program. For example, when responding to Wanda's teaching, Bobbi wrote in her informal classroom observation feedback: Excellent incorporation of technology into your lecture, supporting learning for diverse learners and increasing engagement.... Throughout your lesson you asked important lessons and made some important connections for your students. (Wanda, #3)

This text demonstrates an interest in specific strategies that Wanda used to support her diverse learners and sought out ways to ensure that they were engaged in their learning. In another informal observation analysis, Bobbi posed questions and pushed Wanda to think specifically about strategies to make her teaching responsive to students:

... you provided a good use of descriptions to draw students into life during the Renaissance and [you] made some connections to their lives. You have made good use of visuals at some points in the lectures. Have you considered more visual material (or technology) to support your presentation? When describing Gothic style, how might a visual representation have helped students? Especially for those students who may be diverse learners? (Wanda, #4)

This example details ideas that Bobbi is sharing to encourage Wanda's development of responsive and interactive teaching approaches that clearly recognize the value and purpose of focusing on students. However, the next example demonstrates the change in tone and focus in the comments provided on a formal midterm evaluation (note that the codes like A1 refer to program standards):

You demonstrate an understanding of student skills and knowledge in your content area (A1)... Your lesson plans, which include goals and teaching strategies, are vague.... It is evident from your lesson plans that you are selecting appropriate and varied teaching methods (A4).... (Midterm evaluation for Wanda)

The two different styles of writing for feedback are noticeably distinct in tone and structure as well as specificity to the classroom environment and the needs of middle and high school students.

#### *Finding Two: Variations in Feedback and the Success of the Teacher Candidate*

General patterns in Bobbi's feedback during lesson observations included statements that positively invited teacher candidates into discussions of their teaching, highlighting the strengths she had identified during her visits. Oftentimes she included explicit references to the skills she was encouraging student teachers to develop and was able to tailor these to the specific needs of the learner. However, when she was less comfortable sharing feedback, particularly for student teachers who struggled in their teaching, her comments were more prescriptive and directive, relying much more heavily on the language of the standards without individualization to the student teacher or the context. That is, there were clear distinctions in the type of feedback Bobbi shared with teacher candidates depending upon her interpretation of their respective skill levels.

For teacher candidates who were successful in their teaching and seemed able to tackle the requirements of their placements, Bobbi's feedback was much less rigid and open-ended. Bobbi's language in the feedback to these students included terms like *fun*, *enjoyment*, and *role model*. Her comments focused on the curriculum, engagement, rapport with students, and the overall culture of

the classroom. During a visit to Bart's middle school social studies classroom, Bobbi made the following observations:

Your use of the land chart along with lecture provided reinforcement of the class content—an important component of the lesson. Excellent opportunity to provide students with feedback.... The video at the opening was a great way to capture interest.... It was fun to provide students the opportunity to ask you questions—your rapport with students is evident and your enjoyment of them is evident. (Bart # 4)

Bobbi's feedback to Bart reflected her attention to multiple factors simultaneously. In addition to the curriculum, Bobbi's feedback addressed students' interactions with the curriculum, as well as the overall feel of the classroom. For students such as Bart who were more successful in their student teaching experiences, Bobbi's attention to the Praxis standards for performance was clearly understated in comparison to the feedback provided in her midterm and final evaluations.

During Bart's midterm evaluation, Bobbi's feedback becomes much more standardized and follows a formulaic reference to the Praxis evaluation standards. While Bobbi makes some attempt to personalize her feedback, the references to a teacher candidate's performance are strictly guided by the standards and only allow for a slight reference to a candidate's content area or teaching methods. In her midterm feedback, for example, she only attended to whether a student teacher made "connections with the content knowledge" (Praxis standards A4), instead of documenting praise or concern relevant to the candidate's specific content area.

At the midterm, Bart's evaluation was quite similar to the feedback shared with his peers, regardless of their degree of success. Bobbi reiterated standards verbatim, citing the standard number, and giving general linkages to the ways in which Bart met the standard. For example, the first two standards require evaluators to rate the degree to which a candidate is familiar with students' background knowledge and experiences and whether the candidate is able to plan lessons that are appropriate for student learning. In her feedback to Bart under this category Bobbi notes:

You demonstrate knowledge of students' background and experiences in creating lessons that are engaging and interesting for students, making appropriate connections to their lives. You have an awareness of what students know and do not know that enables you to scaffold learning activities as well (A1). (Bart's midterm evaluation)

Bobbi's patterns of feedback were consistent across her students, whether they struggled within the context of their teaching. That is, while the feedback shared during classroom observation visits included fewer defined linkages to the Praxis evaluation standards for most students, her midterm and final evaluation comments were inextricably linked to the standards—to the point of allowing almost no variation across candidates. Further, the language used within each narrative to students at the midterm and final includes direct reference to the standards, with an explicit reference to the standard number.

For candidates who struggled in their teaching assignments, classroom-based feedback was much more directive and included explicit questions that were designed to focus the preservice teacher's attention back to areas in need of further development. While supportive in her approach, feedback was much more pointed, linked to procedural elements of teaching, and failed to address areas such as the curriculum. Bobbi's lack of attention to the curriculum was more evident in her feedback to those who struggled with management issues. Bobbi's comments to Natalie, a high school Spanish teacher candidate, reflect a very formulaic approach to teaching.

... you gave good directives to students while teaching the persuasive paragraph—giving them something to look for while reading. Students are responsive to your instructions. You are very

clear and they meet the standards of behavior.... The use of groups for this activity was appropriate but required too little accountability. (Observation 2/14)

Bobbi's comments are focused on management and provide praise for specific action on Natalie's part, as well as further advice for improvement. During a later observation in Natalie's classroom, Bobbi noted:

I feel you have progressed in your management strategies during the past couple of months, and you did an excellent job waiting for student attention before talking. Several times you directly addressed off-task behavior by students, effectively demanding their attention and communicating your standards for behavior.... You have a friendly approachable rapport with students that is supportive of their learning. (Observation 3/20)

While Bobbi's feedback to Natalie evolved somewhat to include a commentary that extended beyond the technical levels for Natalie, for the most part, it remained regimented and failed to provide guidance on how to improve her practice through reflection on the factors impacting decision making. This example demonstrates the tendency of Bobbi's feedback to focus narrowly on the basic requirements laid out by the standards. She paid little attention to her own expertise as a graduate student and teacher practitioner as a foundation for mentoring the student teacher.

For another candidate who struggled in his ability to adequately scaffold student learning within lessons, Bobbi's feedback again lacked a connection to the candidate on a personal level, and was very directive in nature. In observation feedback for Harvey, Bobbi writes:

I like that you explicitly addressed the concerns at the beginning of class, stating for students why you have made certain choices. You approached it in a fair way, explaining how you want to help students learn Spanish now that you have set up new policies.... You described how correcting homework in class is not valuable.... Can you let them know why it's not valuable? Can you find a way to make it more so? (Harvey's observation notes 2/21)

The feedback provided to Harvey addressed the sequencing of his lesson plan, emphasizing the importance of an introduction to the lesson, the rationale for the lesson, and the need for developing the purpose of the lesson. For this candidate, feedback was focused on weaknesses in the technical elements of his teaching, with little attention to individual student's experiences. To some extent, the curriculum was referenced in general terms, with most suggestions geared toward the delivery of the curriculum or orchestrating classroom management. As evident in Harvey's feedback, the structure of the midterm and final evaluations aligned most closely with the type of feedback shared during the classroom observations. The following is an example of the feedback on Harvey's mid-semester evaluation where the letter-number sequences in Bobbi's text refer to specific Praxis standards as included on the evaluation form.

(A1). There is little evidence that you are writing daily lesson plans, and in the lesson plan I saw, your learning goals are not clear. Write lesson plans with clear and specific goals that will direct your learning activities and assessment. You did write your learning goal for students on the board in World History when I observed you—continue to articulate these goals to students, to give them a sense of relevancy and direction as they learn (A2). Create more connections between past and current content to remind students of where they have been, and build on what they already know.... I did not see any explicit connection to what students have been working on (A3). You have a developing skill at creating lesson activities that engage students in a variety of learning approaches—including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. Attempt to engage students in more meaningful learning experiences (A4). As you

more clearly articulate your goals for learning, continue to create appropriate assessment tools (A5). (Harvey's mid-semester evaluation feedback)

The reiteration of individual standards within the context of Harvey's evaluations provided for few connections to nuances in his teaching. By focusing so specifically on the linkage between the two, it is possible for a teacher candidate to take the message that learning to teach and completing an effective evaluation on student teaching are summarized in the ability to systematically move through and check off a sequence of teaching skills.

The distinction between the feedback provided to strong teacher candidates and those with more challenges in learning to teach is noticeable. Ultimately, Bobbi's hesitancy to craft feedback responsive to the individual teacher candidate who struggles results in scripted and formulaic text that does little to instill a sense of "teacher as decision maker and critical thinker" in the process of learning to teach.

### *Finding Three: Issues of School Context and Student Diversity*

Perhaps the most dramatic differences between the content of lesson observation feedback and the midterm and final evaluation feedback were found in the narratives of those student teachers working in highly diverse classroom settings. For three student teachers working in a diverse high school, with a population of linguistically diverse students, the feedback provided during lesson observations included direct feedback linked to individual learners and their language needs. Bobbi's comments to Warren, a high school history teacher, are noted:

... I appreciate the lesson component that gave each student an assignment, including each student in the activity.... Your debriefing comments reinforced relevancy of this topic for students' lives, reflecting your goals.... It provided an opportunity for students to do research, writing, and speaking about a relevant and compelling topic. It is an excellent example of an activity that extends student thinking, broaching on a truly student-led discussion (in fact the open discussion following the formal activity was an enjoyable opportunity to hear from students). (Observation 2/28)

The feedback provided to Warren highlighted the need to move beyond the technical elements of his teaching. Bobbi's comments focused on reflection as a tool for increasing the variety in his teaching; students were clearly the center of the feedback; and the curriculum and instructional methods were highlighted specifically. The following is an example from Bobbi's final evaluation of Warren's teaching:

Warren's teaching includes thoughtful and explicit directions to students. His efforts to connect students to content are evident in the creation of authentic learning experiences. Warren demonstrated his ability to structure an activity to encourage independent discussion by students in the creation of a class debate. It was enjoyable to watch students engage in truly a student-led discussion about a relevant and compelling issue. (Warren's final evaluation)

For this final evaluation, Bobbi focused more closely on the specifics that Warren engaged in to support students in a given content area. This attention to student learning and students as individuals was evident primarily in those evaluations for student teachers who worked in diverse school settings and reflected greater attention to the context of the individual student teacher. That is, in ethnically and culturally diverse classrooms Bobbi's feedback lacked the formulaic approach to evaluating her students' teaching. She was able to use the diverse needs of students in the classroom as a platform from which her feedback evolved. She focused specifically on language differences among students, provided feedback that challenged the teacher candidate to consider whether the content was relevant to students, and purposefully asked candidates to attend to their own reflective practices.

### **Implications for Teaching and Teacher Education**

The impact of NCLB on education is far-reaching. In addition to defining standards of performance for children and teachers in K–12 schools, teacher education programs are equally responsible for documenting their teacher candidates' abilities to meet the criteria from a range of evaluation standards. On the positive side, the standards of NCLB have challenged colleges of education to identify "success" in their students' performance through demonstrable measures related to instruction, classroom climate, professionalism, and curriculum development (Raths & Lyman, 2003). Where previous evidence of success may have been in the form of anecdotal narrations and portfolio documentation, current measures are designed to specify and enumerate performance against relatively defined criteria. This process has provided a guide for teacher education programs to use when supervising student teachers in the field that ensures attention to issues of classroom and student diversity.

Alternatively, the standards-based rigor of many evaluation tools is having an impact on the degree to which supervisors are able to draw from the "teachable moments" within classrooms. The oftentimes narrow bands of many standards-based checklists force supervisors to evaluate teaching using defined criteria in ways that reinforce the notion of teaching as the culmination of a formulaic set of patterns and responses. Narrowing this view has limited the teaching and modeling of the process that we value for our student teachers—namely, paying attention to the students as individual learners with unique views, learning needs, and perspectives on the world, and helping our teacher candidates to become critical thinkers with a multicultural awareness (Grant & Zozakiewicz, 1995).

Equally limiting for university supervisors is the degree to which current standards-based movements transfer the role of supervisor to evaluator. Opportunities for getting to know students, reading the cultures of classrooms, and understanding the context of classrooms and schools are highly limited when fixed evaluation criteria are depended upon too heavily. Finally, teacher educators must evaluate the impact of the final messages sent to our students as they leave our programs. We must consciously consider whether the focus on a checklist of standards diminishes, or perhaps obliterates, any of the other feedback shared, instead of taking the opportunities described by Richardson-Koehler (1988) to raise the level of discourse between supervisor and student teacher. What message do our teacher candidates take as they leave to begin the early years of their teaching careers? What continuing internal dialogue might student teachers have or not have with their university supervisors as a result of this experience?

As our study indicated, Bobbi demonstrated differing forms and degrees of feedback to student teachers depending on the context's focus on NCLB mandates. One positive outcome of the attention to standards was an increased focus on student assessment in the content of the feedback, with less focus on isolated issues of pedagogy or management. Additionally, for a supervisor, the structure and guidelines of evaluation criteria provide a framework for providing fairly specific feedback. However, supervisor feedback in final evaluations resulted in less recognition of the individuality of the student teacher, instead focusing on global evaluation criteria, regardless of particular situations or learning needs. These outcomes suggest a need for additional attention in teacher education on the preparation and support of supervisors for the challenge of working in today's political climate. Teacher preparation programs must also recognize that developmental differences across supervisors will impact the degree to which they are bound by fairly structured evaluation tools. For the supervisor in this study, the formalized standards of the midterm and final evaluations offered a safety net or safeguard when providing summative feedback, thereby reinforcing teacher candidates' trust in and reliance upon standardized measures that appear to supersede the nuanced needs of students and classrooms. A range of evaluation and feedback strategies must be used to find the balance in preparing student teachers in this situation of high accountability. The supervisor's role has value as it addresses both the reality of the teaching experience and the individuality of the student teacher's learning needs (Bates, 2005). It is the responsibility of teacher-preparation programs to ensure that these strategies are explored and occur in supervision to the benefit of programs and student teachers.

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### Conclusion

For teacher education to continue to grow and develop to meet the needs of the diverse public schools, teacher candidates must be supported in determining how to best develop learning experiences that are responsive to this diversity. In the case of NCLB, the situation is further complicated with the increased attention to assessment and accreditation standards that influence the preparation of highly qualified teachers. Reconciling the tension between teacher education standards and the individual learning needs of a teacher candidate falls to the university supervisor who is responsible for overseeing the transition from student to novice teacher. Further research that examines the responsibilities and opportunities afforded university supervisors is necessary. Such examination allows for the professional development of supervisors and encourages supervisors' responsiveness to teacher candidates and their learning needs as they prepare teachers for the challenging reality of *No Child Left Behind*.

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