

Making Learning Visible: Shaping Teacher Candidates’ Pedagogical Judgment in Clinical Experiences

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Abstract

This study sought to understand how teacher educators can support teacher candidates’ development of pedagogical decision making. Drawing on Horn and Campbell’s (2015) notions of “pedagogical judgment,” and inquiry as stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), we developed a pedagogical judgment rubric (PJR) to assess our candidates’ understanding of student learning and engagement during their clinical experiences. This article describes how three of our candidates’ pedagogical judgment was shaped in response to mediated, design-based interventions informed by the criteria on the PJR. The study revealed how a common, theory-guided framework provided a clear goal for teacher educators and candidates to work towards. The study also demonstrates the significance of using candidates’ previous work to support candidates’ capacity to achieve a more sophisticated analysis. Our findings suggest that structured, iterative support, designed with competencies in mind, can improve candidate’s pedagogical judgment over time, ultimately benefiting teacher education programs in their clinical endeavors.

Keywords

teacher education; design-based research; practicum; clinical experiences

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Introduction

The persistent gap between theory and practice in teacher education has long challenged the development of pedagogical judgment in novice teachers (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009; Zeichner, 2010). Despite widespread calls for clinically rich preparation, teacher candidates often struggle to transfer conceptual knowledge into meaningful instructional choices, particularly in the complex realities of classroom teaching (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; Lampert et al., 2013). Scholars have emphasized the need for clinical experiences that not only provide opportunities for practice but also foster the conditions in which candidates can develop, reflect on, and revise their pedagogical reasoning (McDonald et al., 2013; Windschitl et al., 2012).

In response to this challenge, our social studies teacher education program has worked to strengthen the clinical experiences of teacher candidates through deliberate integration of field-based pedagogical practice and structured opportunities for feedback and reflection. Drawing on calls for improved clinical experiences in teacher education (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018; Association of Teacher Educators, 2023; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010), the program focuses on engaging teacher candidates in the practice of teaching within local classrooms, working alongside mentor teachers to navigate authentic instructional dilemmas (Klieger & Oster-Levinz, 2015; Owens et al., 2011). By continually renewing and refining clinical experiences within our partner district (Goodlad, 1994), we aim to better prepare candidates for the profession while attending to the needs of mentor teachers and secondary students (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012).

This manuscript focuses on one dimension of that ongoing effort: the design, implementation, and evolution of a pedagogical judgment rubric. Developed collaboratively by faculty and used across multiple cohorts, the rubric was created to make visible the components of sound pedagogical judgment and provide a structure for helping candidates reflect on and revise their reasoning. The study traces how the rubric was introduced, used, and revised across several semesters, offering insights into how candidates engaged with the tool and how the tool shaped their clinical learning experiences.

While the design and implementation of the Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (PJR) we developed and describe in this student were grounded in the specific needs of our program, the questions it raises—and the instructional tensions it makes visible—are not unique to our setting. Programs across the country continue to wrestle with how to help teacher candidates move from following scripts to exercising judgment in the moment. The PJR offers one model for making pedagogical reasoning a shared object of discussion and feedback within clinical practice. By tracing how this tool evolved across contexts, we offer insights that may inform similar efforts to support pedagogical judgment as a core element of teacher preparation.

Literature Review

The theory-to-practice gap in teacher education has been widely critiqued for limiting the effectiveness of clinical preparation (Grossman et al., 2009; Zeichner, 2010). Researchers have emphasized the need for teacher education programs to provide structured, carefully scaffolded experiences that allow teacher candidates to develop pedagogical judgment through authentic

practice (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Lampert et al., 2013). In these settings, the coupling of content, pedagogy, and opportunities for reflection is essential to support technical skill development and foster a disposition toward continuous inquiry and responsiveness in the classroom (McDonald et al., 2013).

Scholars have argued that early and ongoing opportunities to rehearse high-leverage practices within clinical contexts can help bridge the gap between conceptual understanding and instructional action (Lampert & Graziani, 2009). These high-leverage practices are instructional moves that have been proposed to bridge theory and practice by focusing on what matters most for student learning (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman et al., 2009). Giving candidates opportunities to practice these high-level practices in real classrooms, with real students, is the first step toward supporting their capacity to enact these practices with fluency and confidence. However, simply placing candidates in classrooms is not sufficient. Research on mediated field experiences suggests that teacher candidates require support from both university-based instructors and mentor teachers to make sense of their decisions and refine their reasoning over time (Anderson & Stillman, 2012; Ghousseini & Sleep, 2011). Supervision that foregrounds this mediated learning, particularly when supervisors frame their role as pedagogues of practice, offers a promising route to develop both technical competence and interpretive insight (Burns & Badiali, 2016; Snow et al., 2020) and is in line with a growing body of literature emphasizing that such supervision must also be grounded in a clear theoretical orientation toward teacher learning (Burns et al., 2016; Capello, 2020).

Within this landscape, our teacher education program has focused on how teacher candidates develop what Horn and Campbell (2015) refer to as pedagogical judgment, a concept that we operationalize as the ability to interpret classroom interactions and make responsive instructional decisions. This study builds on Horn and Campbell's conception of novice teachers' practice, as well as more recent scholarship that explores how supervisory structures can support efforts to make pedagogical reasoning visible, actionable, and improvable (Baecher et al., 2014; Burns & Badiali, 2016; Gelfuso et al., 2015). Additionally, research increasingly suggests that supervisory pedagogy must be intentionally scaffolded to support novice teacher educators (e.g., Capello, 2020; McIntyre & McIntyre, 2020; Snow et al., 2020).

Emerging research in clinical supervision also highlights the importance of using structured tools and sharing a common language for teacher candidates and supervisors to analyze practice collaboratively. Tools such as rubrics, observation protocols, and reflective prompts have been found to scaffold more precise attention to students' learning and to support teacher candidates in moving beyond generic reflection (Baecher et al., 2014; Janis et al., 2020; Janis et al., 2022). When these tools are embedded in iterative cycles of supervision, they help candidates develop a more nuanced understanding of their students, their instruction, and their own professional reasoning. At the same time, research continues to push for reexamination of traditional supervisory roles, calling for structures that promote reciprocal learning and professional inquiry between candidates and supervisors (Capello, 2020; Diacopoulos et al., 2024; Snow et al., 2020).

This study builds on that body of literature specifically by investigating how a tool designed to surface and scaffold pedagogical judgment, the Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (PJR), functioned within the clinical experience of a secondary social studies program. The rubric was used as a

framework for observation, reflection, and feedback across multiple semesters, offering insight into how candidates developed professional reasoning in response to both instructional demands and supervision from mentors and faculty.

Methods

This study draws on inquiry as stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and Design-Based Research (DBR) to inform our analysis and our approach to shaping three teacher candidates' development of pedagogical judgment over the course of the fall 2019 semester. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) defined it, inquiry as stance

is grounded in the problems and the contexts of practice in the first place and in the ways practitioners collaboratively theorize, study, and act on those problems in the best interests of the learning and life chances of students and their communities. (p. 123)

We understand inquiry as stance as an orientation toward practice, rather than a one-off approach to conducting a study. It reflects our ongoing professional responsibility to interrogate practice to improve students' "learning and life chances." This stance is closely related to Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1992) framework of knowledge of practice as a valuable source of insight generated by teachers and relevant at both the local and public levels. Drawing from these ideas, we situate ourselves as insiders (Schaeen et al., 2012) positioned to examine and theorize problems that arise in our work with teacher candidates.

DBR provided a structure for carrying out this study in a way that was systematic, iterative, and grounded in authentic classroom contexts. As described by Anderson and Shattuck (2012, p. 17), DBR is characterized by six features:

- Situated in a real educational context
- Focused on the design and testing of a significant intervention
- Uses mixed methods
- Involves multiple iterations
- Involves a partnership between researchers and practitioners
- Results in evolution of design principles

Our study met five of these criteria; we did not incorporate a mixed-methods approach because we used only qualitative methodologies. This decision was based on our focus on how candidates developed and demonstrated pedagogical judgment in context—questions best addressed through interpretive analysis of discourse, interaction, and reflection.

DBR shaped both the structure and focus of the study. First, it oriented our analysis toward the design, implementation, and function of the PJR tool. We adopt a broad definition of technology that includes any adaptable tool that solves problems or supports goal-directed activity. In this study, the PJR was conceptualized and examined as a tool designed to support the development of pedagogical judgment in novice teachers. DBR enabled us to study the PJR's use in real-time practice, with attention to how it functioned in a dynamic educational environment.

Second, the study involved iterative rounds of implementation and analysis. The PJR was used across multiple semesters, instructors, research team members, and cohorts of students. We tested, analyzed, and revised the tool in each round, identifying key design features that contributed to consistent outcomes across varied contexts. DBR provided a productive framework for tracking this process and understanding the tool's evolving role in teacher education.

Together, inquiry as stance and DBR supported an approach to research that was embedded in practice, collaborative in nature, and aimed at improving the preparation of future teachers. In the context of this study, inquiry as stance and DBR are not discrete theoretical and methodological components, but rather mutually informing frameworks that together shaped our orientation, design, and analysis.

In this study, the primary data source was the teacher candidates' written submissions in response to the PJR tool. Analyzing these submissions constituted our data analysis process. Each week, the research team reviewed and rated candidates' responses using a collaboratively developed rubric. These ratings were used to surface patterns and shifts in candidates' pedagogical judgment over time. Analysis occurred iteratively, with team members discussing interpretations, comparing ratings, and refining understandings of how candidates made instructional decisions. This recursive process was grounded in close reading of student work and reflection on emergent themes across the semester. Because the student work was both the subject and object of our inquiry, the act of engaging with these artifacts, as discussed in our findings section, formed the basis of our analysis.

The program under study is a secondary social studies teacher education program that prioritizes field-based preparation and sustained collaboration with a partner school district. Clinical placements begin early in the program and are closely integrated with university coursework. Instructors, mentor teachers, and university supervisors work together to help candidates develop the ability to make instructional decisions that are responsive to students, standards, and context.

To support that development, faculty collaboratively designed the Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (PJR), a tool that makes visible the components of sound instructional reasoning. The rubric was introduced in coursework and used in field-based reflections and discussions to help candidates articulate their rationales, consider alternatives, and refine their instructional decisions. The design and iterative refinement of the PJR were guided by faculty observation, candidate feedback, and ongoing analysis of how the tool was taken up across multiple cohorts. While grounded in the specific needs of our program, this context provides an opportunity to explore how tools like the PJR can support the cultivation of pedagogical judgment in clinically rich teacher education programs.

The study described here focuses on the clinical experiences of three teacher candidates, Marcus, Alice and Henry¹, who were pursuing a bachelor's in social studies education at a major research university in the American South. The research focuses on these candidates' clinical experiences

¹ The names of the three teacher candidates described are pseudonyms.

in a local high and middle school. The three teacher candidates were in a collaborative group; they all worked with the same mentor teachers and students. They also had the same clinical instructor, one of the co-authors, across a twelve-week clinical. The first six-weeks was in a high school economics classroom in our local school district; the second six-weeks was in a middle school social studies classroom in the same district. Across both clinical experiences, the candidates' teaching enactments became increasingly complex each week. Their first teaching enactment was leading the opener and closer of a lesson, and the final enactment was facilitating a three-day, inquiry-based social studies lesson (e.g., National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). In this approach to clinical experiences, the instructor worked in collaboration with the mentor teacher in scaffolding the experiences the candidates had in the classroom, whether planning and implementing lessons, engaging with learning about the students, or learning about the community and cultural context.

In addition to supporting lesson planning and implementation, the clinical instructor provided regular, detailed written feedback on candidates' reflections via the online submission system and also offered real-time verbal feedback following teaching episodes. This dual feedback structure allowed the instructor to guide candidates' professional growth both in the moment and through sustained written dialogue aligned with the goals of the rubric. These clinical experiences required the team members—clinical instructor, mentor teacher and teacher candidates—to be reciprocally intertwined with the classroom and school. Our approach intertwines the participants, the knowledge bases, and the context to ensure the coupling of practice, content, theory, and pedagogy not only for the teacher candidates, but also for the university and school-based teacher educators and the PK–12 students (Zeichner, 2010).

Findings

To assess candidates' ability to engage in pedagogical decision-making, our research team operationalized Horn and Campbell's (2015) notion of "pedagogical judgment" to create an intervention we named the "pedagogical judgment rubric" (PJR) (see Table 1) to determine candidates' ability to provide rich descriptions of students and problem-solve their practice. The PJR and its corresponding criteria help us to "articulat[e] what accomplished practice is and how to measure it" (AACTE, 2018, p. 14). The PJR and its corresponding criteria provide a framework for pedagogical judgment, including qualities that could be demonstrated through the clinical. From its inception, several semesters prior to the study described, the PJR offered us a way to describe and define sophisticated teaching decisions. However, the rubric itself did not provide "system[s] that allow[ed] teacher candidates to develop over time and under the supervision of accomplished practitioners" (AACTE, 2018, p. 14), but we still found the PJR to be lacking in several ways. In this study, through the second phase of analyzing the clinical experiences of our candidates using the PJR (see Table 1), the instructor built on the original PJR to develop a more refined strategy to support these three candidates' development of pedagogical judgment and their capacity to design and implement more complex teaching enactments of exemplary pedagogies over the two clinical experiences. These efforts reflected the inquiry stance that framed the study as a whole, positioning teaching as a site for collaborative problem-solving and reflection aimed at improving student learning.

Table 1: Original Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (PJR)

	Sophisticated	Semi-Sophisticated	Less Sophisticated
Rich descriptions of students and how they participated in and responded to the lessons	Descriptions of lesson provide specific descriptions of students learning. Recognizes that students demonstrate something that should have been accounted for by teacher. Recognizes students' positive response to task as an element of pedagogy. Students are framed as active learners, capable of exploring ideas and figuring things out on their own Draws on socio-cultural context of student learning and complexity (SES, race, gender, norms of school, etc.) to describe students' response to the lesson.	A blend of both sophisticated and less sophisticated language about their students.	Descriptions of lessons provide vague or thin accounts of student responses. Descriptions of students' responses focus only on one pedagogical moment that fails to provide insight into students' response to the lesson. Student responses are largely irrelevant in teacher's analysis of the lesson Students framed in monolithic terms.
Willingness and capacity for pedagogical problem solving	Recognizes their role in failures of the lesson. Discusses ways <i>their</i> choices shaped the success or failure of the lesson. Describes changes made "on the fly" to respond to students.	A blend of both sophisticated and less sophisticated language about solving emergent pedagogical problems.	Students' deficit and/or interest are the primary barriers to learning. Teacher does not frame their own actions and decisions as the primary source to resolve problems in lesson. Limited rationale for failure to factors outside of the teacher that constrained the learning.

The Post-Teaching Analysis Assignment (PTAA) and Revised Post-Teaching Analysis Assignment (RPTAA) were designed to elicit teacher candidates' analysis of student learning in relation to their own pedagogical decisions. Candidates were expected to respond to a set of written prompts immediately following their instructional enactments. They were asked to use specific examples to explain how students participated, what students understood, and how instruction might be improved. These prompts directly reflected the dimensions of the Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (PJR), which the candidates had been introduced to in prior coursework. For example, the expectation that candidates describe specific student understandings aligned with Criterion B of the rubric, while prompts asking candidates to reflect on their own instructional decisions aligned with Criteria C and D. In this way, the tasks were intentionally constructed to make visible the kinds of reasoning that the rubric was designed to assess.

In this second phase, the more refined strategy included attending to specific demonstrations of understanding evidenced in the teacher candidates' written analyses of their teaching and the students' learning. These moments of decision-making reflect the inquiry stance that framed the project as a whole—an orientation toward teaching that foregrounds the need to interrogate dilemmas, test ideas in action, and reflect on practice as a means of improving students' learning and life chances. By focusing on competencies, the clinical instructor deliberately attended to the kinds of understandings the candidates were able to communicate and demonstrate. Though the clinical instructor made the mentor teachers aware of the structured tasks and the PJR (see Table 1), it was not a requirement of the mentor teacher to use these exact prompts and phrases to guide the candidates. The majority of the prompting was employed by the clinical instructor. Additionally, these three candidates were exposed to the PJR during an introductory course that was the semester before this study. In that course, there was a clinical component where the candidates used older versions of the rubric to guide their written analyses of learning opportunities they facilitated with sixth grade students in a social studies class. They also analyzed examples and non-examples of pseudo-teacher candidates written analysis of student understandings using an older version of the PJR (see Table 1).

Revisioning the Criteria on the Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (PJR)

When we used the original PJR (see Table 1) to assess our teacher candidates' abilities to describe student engagement and analyze how their pedagogy influenced student understandings, we found that the teacher candidates' responses focused on the processes that they used to facilitate student participation and how their students participated in the lesson. While we determined that the candidates were focusing on important aspects of teaching and learning, the original PJR did not necessarily allow us to give our candidates credit for recognizing how students were responding through participation and for considering how to better structure the lesson. Instead, the PJR focused only on candidates' describing student understandings and analyzing how their pedagogy influenced specific student understandings.

The first criterion of the original PJR (see Table 1) was *rich descriptions of students and how they participated in and responded to the lesson*. Our team used the first version of the pedagogical judgment rubric (PJR) to analyze the data sample and found several points on the rubric that needed further elaboration. We realized that some phrases could be understood in

many ways and decided to clarify the wording of some sentences. For example, when asked to describe how one student was displaying understanding of the content, Marcus responded that a student was “able to structure her chart in multiple levels for each differ [sic] category rather than the average mind map to help her understand...” Using the original PJR (see Table 1), Marcus’ description was rated as semi-sophisticated. Even though it indicated how the student participated, it did not describe how a student understood a specific concept from the lesson. With the revised PJR (see Table 2), Marcus’ response was rated as sophisticated for *Criterion A-rich descriptions of students and how they responded to the lesson* and unsophisticated for *Criterion B-rich descriptions of how students understood the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson*. This example exposes how the revised PJR allowed us to rate the candidates’ responses for both student participation and understanding.

Table 2: Revising the Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (PJR)

	Sophisticated (3) <i>*If the TC provides (even / only) one or more references that would indicate sophistication, they should be coded as sophisticated.</i>	Semi-Sophisticated (2)	Less Sophisticated (1)
A. Rich descriptions of students and how they responded to the lesson.	Students are framed as active learners, capable of exploring ideas and figuring things out on their own. Draws on the socio-cultural context of student learning and complexity (SES, race, gender, norms of school, etc.) to describe students’ responses to the lesson. <u>Differentiates between individuals and groups in the classroom and how they are engaging in the lesson. For</u>	A blend of both sophisticated and less sophisticated language about their students as learners.	Student descriptions are largely irrelevant in the teacher’s analysis of the lesson. <u>For instance, descriptions of students’ engagement with the lesson are vague or thin.</u> <u>Students are framed as passive learners -- only capable of receiving knowledge from the teacher or sources (i.e. lecture, books, video, etc.).</u> <u>Students framed in monolithic terms. For example, the students are described in group terms (“all of the students,” “the class,” “the students,” etc.), rather than ways that show any differentiation between students and groups of students.</u>

	<u>example, the students are described in differentiated terms (“Johnny did,” “group B demonstrated,” etc.).</u>		
B. Rich descriptions of how students understood the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson.	Descriptions of the lesson provide specific references to students’ understanding related to the concepts, ideas and/or skills. Descriptions of student understandings refer to specific content, ideas and/or skills and/or students rather than generalized references to the efficacy of the entire lesson and the entire class. Frames students’ understanding of <u>the concepts, ideas and/or skills</u> in the lesson as an element of pedagogy.	A blend of both sophisticated and less sophisticated language about their students’ understandings of the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson.	Descriptions of pedagogical moments fail to include student responses that provide insight into students’ understanding of <u>the concepts, ideas and/or skills</u> in the lesson. Descriptions of students’ engagement with the concept and ideas are described in broad, generalized ways without specific examples. For example, descriptions of lessons provide vague or thin accounts of student responses and understanding of <u>the concepts, ideas and/or skills</u>. The students are framed as the primary source for their problems understanding <u>the concepts, ideas and/or skills</u>.

Note: This is only the first two criteria in the final rubric. See Table 3 for the full final rubric. The underlined sections were added after the first analysis.

Collectively revising the rubric was a necessary process to prevent the researchers from incoherently analyzing any one of three teacher candidates’ work on the written assignments. Once the first criterion was broken into two, A. *rich descriptions of students and how they responded to the lesson*, and B. *rich descriptions of how students understood the concepts and*

ideas in the lesson, the standards for being “sophisticated”, “semi-sophisticated”, and “less sophisticated” were also adjusted. To clarify the terms within each criterion, examples and counter terms were added to reduce misinterpretations. For example, we addressed some confusion in the rubric in regard to the “rich descriptions of students.” The previous version of the rubric, under “less sophisticated” of criterion A, included the following statements: “Student descriptions are largely irrelevant in the teacher’s analysis of the lesson.” and “Students are framed in monolithic terms.” In the revised rubric (see Table 2 and 3), the first statement was reinforced with the sentence, “For instance, descriptions of students’ engagement with the lesson are vague or thin.”

Table 3: Final Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (FPJR)

	Sophisticated (3) <i>*If the TC provides (even / only) one or more references that would indicate sophistication, they should be coded as sophisticated.</i>	Semi-Sophisticated (2)	Less Sophisticated (1)
A. Rich descriptions of students and how they responded to the lesson.	Students are framed as active learners, capable of exploring ideas and figuring things out on their own. Draws on the socio-cultural context of student learning and complexity (SES, race, gender, norms of school, etc.) to describe students’ responses to the lesson. Differentiates between individuals and groups in the classroom and how they are engaging in the lesson. For example, the students are described in differentiated terms (“Johnny did,” “group	A blend of both sophisticated and less sophisticated language about their students as learners.	Student descriptions are largely irrelevant in the teacher’s analysis of the lesson. For instance, descriptions of students’ engagement with the lesson are vague or thin. Students are framed as passive learners—only capable of receiving knowledge from the teacher or sources (i.e. lecture, books, video, etc.). Students framed in monolithic terms. For example, the students are described in group terms (“all of the students,” “the class,” “the students,” etc.), rather than ways that show any differentiation between students and groups of students.

	B demonstrated,” etc.).		
B. Rich descriptions of how students understood the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson.	Descriptions of the lesson provide specific references to students’ understanding related to the concepts, ideas and/or skills. Descriptions of student understandings refer to specific content, ideas and/or skills and/or students rather than generalized references to the efficacy of the entire lesson and the entire class. Frames students’ understanding of the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson as an element of pedagogy.	A blend of both sophisticated and less sophisticated language about their students’ understandings of the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson.	Descriptions of pedagogical moments fail to include student responses that provide insight into students’ understanding of the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson. Descriptions of students’ engagement with the concept and ideas are described in broad, generalized ways without specific examples. For example, descriptions of lessons provide vague or thin accounts of student responses and understanding of the concepts, ideas and/or skills. The students are framed as the primary source for their problems understanding the concepts, ideas and/or skills.
C. Willingness and capacity to recognize the way in which their choices and decisions impacted the learning experience.	Recognizes their role in the failures of the lesson that were a result of their choices or decisions (i.e. time or classroom management, grouping of students, classroom set-up, etc.). Discusses ways <i>their</i> choices about the structures and processes shaped the success or failure of the lesson. Describes choices and/or decisions they made to better manage	A blend of both sophisticated and less sophisticated language about solving the emergent management of the learning environment.	Students’ deficit and/or interest in following the management strategies or classroom procedures are discussed as the primary barrier to learning. The teacher does not frame their own actions and decisions about the management strategies or classroom procedures as the primary source to resolve problems in the lesson. Limited rationale for failure beyond factors that are outside of the teacher’s control that constrained the learning.

	the classroom “on the fly” and in response to the students.		
D. Willingness and capacity to recognize how their pedagogical decisions shape students’ understanding of the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson.	Recognizes their role in pedagogical decisions that led to failures among the students to understand the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson. Discusses ways <i>their</i> choices about the students’ opportunities to understand and engage with the concepts, ideas and/or skills shaped the success or failure of the lesson. Describes changes made to their pedagogy “on the fly” and how it influenced the students’ understanding of the lesson’s concepts, ideas and/or skills.	A blend of both sophisticated and less sophisticated language about solving the emergent student understandings of the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson.	Students’ deficit and/or interest in the topic, concepts, ideas and/or skills is discussed as the primary barrier to learning. Teacher does not frame their own pedagogies (actions and decisions) as one of the ways to develop students’ understanding of the concepts, ideas and/or skills. Limited rationale for failure to factors outside of the teacher that constrained the students’ understanding of the concepts, ideas and/or skills.

Likewise, what qualified as “monolithic terms” was not clear in the original PJR because this term has several different interpretations. We added “For example, the students are described in group terms (“all of the students,” “the class,” “the students,” etc.)”. Further clarification was provided through the inclusion of examples. To make clearer what was meant by “monolithic” description of students, the phrase “differentiation between individuals and groups in the classroom” was added as an example of sophisticated student description. To clarify the “framing of students as active learners,” the phrase “framing of students as passive learners” was added as an example of a less sophisticated student description along with examples.

Revisions were also necessary for the second criterion (see Table 1), *willingness and capacity for pedagogical problem solving*. This one criterion became two (see Table 3), C. *willingness and capacity to recognize the way in which their choices and decisions impacted the learning experience*, and D. *willingness and capacity to recognize how their pedagogical decisions shape students’ understanding of the concepts, ideas and/or skills in the lesson*. One example of how our analyses shifted because of the revisions to Criteria C and D was related to Henry’s written

responses. When asked to describe how he would adjust his facilitation, Henry indicated that he needed to “mak[e] sure that all students were understanding the material, not just the three that were closest to [him]” by “walk[ing] around the table.” Using the original PJR (see Table 1), Henry’s response was rated as sophisticated because he recognized his role in the lesson and the original PJR did not have any specific criteria about reflecting on how pedagogy influenced student understandings. With the revised PJR, Henry’s response was rated as sophisticated for *Criterion C* and unsophisticated for *Criterion D*. With the revised PJR (see Table 3), we were able to give our candidates credit for recognizing the procedural elements of teaching and also assess if they noticed how their pedagogical choices contributed to student understandings.

This revised rubric (see Table 2 and 3), with more coherent ideas and directions, allowed researchers to be more confident in analyzing the post-teaching analysis assignment (PTAA, see Figure 1). We were able to consider the PTAA “sophisticated” when students were viewed as learners who showed their own agency during the learning process, a rich description of student understanding was presented along with concrete examples, and individual students were identified in the teacher candidate’s responses. This revised rubric was also helpful when we cross-checked each other’s analyses of candidates’ work and discussed the findings. The rubric acted as a shared language for analysis and interpretation of data, and we were able to collaboratively analyze the data using these shared understandings. This collaborative approach to analysis aligns with our inquiry stance, which centers practitioner knowledge and reflection as critical tools for improving both teaching and teacher education.

Analyzing the Teacher Candidates’ Work with the Final Pedagogical Judgment Rubric (FPJR)

Following the fall 2019 semester, the research team began analyzing the three teacher candidates’ submissions to the Post-Teaching Analysis Assignment (PTAA) and Revised Post-Teaching Analysis Assignment (RPTAA) (see Figures 1 and 2) using the final pedagogical judgment rubric (FPJR) (see Table 3). To ensure consistency, we first assessed sample assignments together using the FPJR and discussed any discrepancies in our ratings. The research team then independently analyzed six total assignment submissions from each of the three candidates. Each research team member then cross-checked one another’s analyses to corroborate—or challenge, in some instances—initial ratings and to ensure consistency in the final claims. In the subsections below, we discuss some of our findings from this data analysis as it pertains to each of the three candidates’ respective work on the PTAA and RPTAA. The iterative adjustments that came from both the revised prompt and the feedback from the clinical instructor made a significant difference in the candidates’ development of pedagogical judgment.

Figure 1: Post-Teaching Analysis Assignment (PTAA)Teaching Analysis:

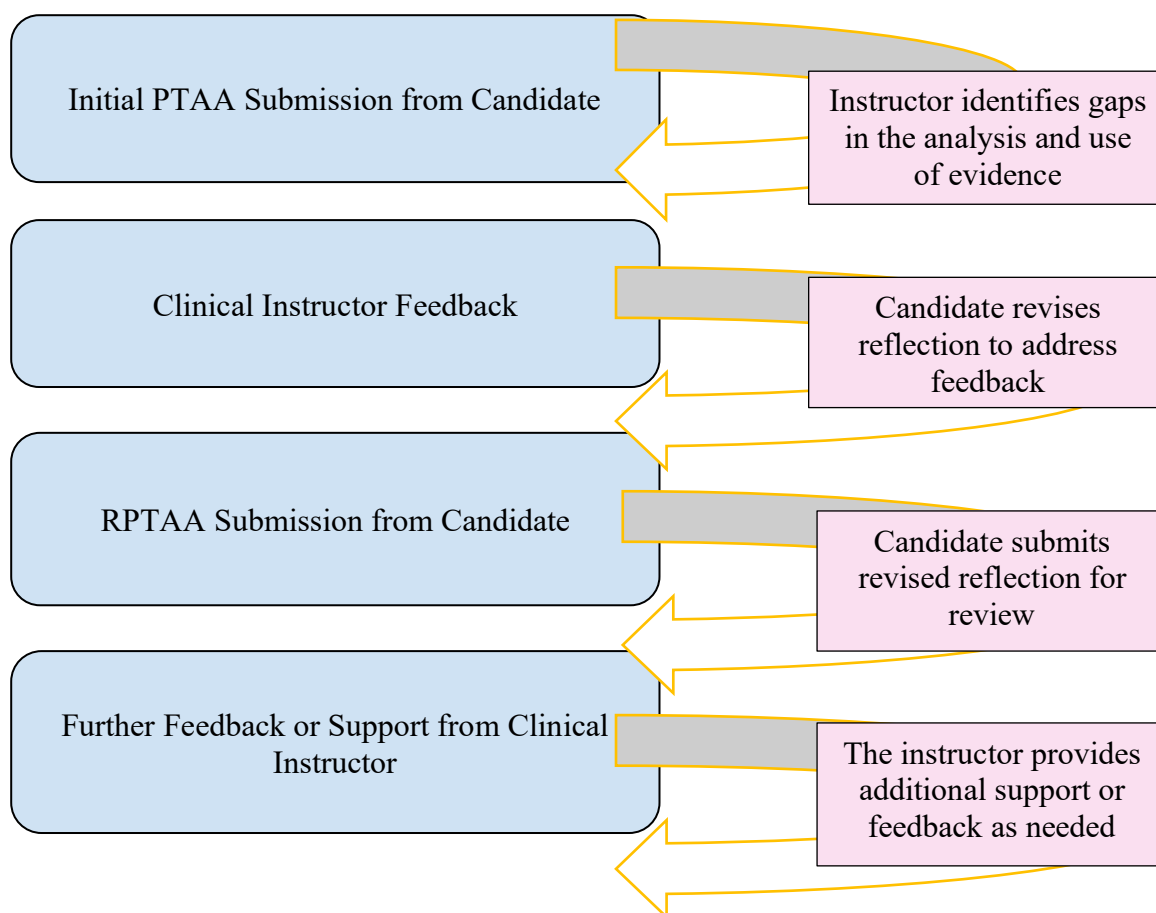
Please respond to the following questions by 11:59pm the day you teach. Be specific in your descriptions of both your actions during the Opener or Closer as well as your students' actions/responses. You should focus on your interactions with students regarding their learning—do not address interactions regarding student behavior.

1. How did your **students** participate in and respond to your leading of this lesson?
2. What challenges did you have in **your** efforts to facilitate this lesson with the students?
3. What would you adjust about **your** facilitation of this lesson to make this a better learning experience for your **students**?

Figure 2: Revised Post-Teaching Analysis Assignment (RPTAA)Teaching Analysis:

Please respond to the following questions. Remember to be specific in your descriptions of both your actions during the lesson as well as your students' actions/responses. You should focus on your interactions with students regarding their learning—do not address interactions regarding student behavior.

1. How well did the **students** demonstrate their understanding of your student understanding(s), as evidenced in their response(s) on your formative assessment(s)?
2. What was most challenging for the **students** to understand in this lesson? Why do you think that is?
3. What challenges did you have in **your** efforts to support the students in understanding the student understanding(s)?
4. What would you adjust about **your** lesson and/or facilitation to make it more likely that the **students** would understand the student understanding(s)?

Figure 3: Clinical Instructor's Feedback Phases**“They pulled out specific information” – Marcus**

When responding to the initial PTAA (see Figure 1 & 3), it was evident Marcus struggled with describing student participation in sophisticated ways. Rather than frame students as active learners, capable of figuring things out on their own, he often referred to their involvement in monolithic ways that were vague, especially when he discussed student understandings. When asked how his students participated and responded to his leading of a lesson, Marcus responded, “the students responded pretty well for it to be our first time.” There was no further discussion about what qualified his students’ responses as being “pretty well,” such as things they said, approaches they took, etc. Due to this lack of specificity, Marcus’ initial reflection responses were frequently rated as less or semi-sophisticated on the FPJR.

Once the prompts were revised, though, Marcus began to show improvement when it came to his descriptions of students and their participation. He began to note instances of engagement among his students, such as when they demonstrated their understanding “through the captioning of the comic strips... [with] key vocabulary from the circular flow chart” or when they described how a site “was something significant to the people and their culture... a famous spot where it looks like people are praying.” The RPTAA (see Figure 2 & 3) also seemed to encourage Marcus to habitually address the (mis)understandings of his students, unlike before. This was evident in several of his responses following the prompt changes, such as one where Marcus reflected on

how his “[students] can map out the flow of a dollar and understand how it flows through the economy, but they just can’t use the vocab to explain it.” In another sample he discussed his students’ ability to “pick out the information but they didn’t understand what a country like Israel would need military technology for.”

It is important to note that Marcus’ progress was not linear; some of his responses were enhanced following feedback from the clinical instructor. For instance, there were moments following the prompt change where Marcus did not provide rich student descriptions and reverted to vague descriptions of student understandings, such as “students demonstrated their understanding well through [*sic*] giving me detailed answers to the questions.... They did well....” To assist Marcus in an enhancement of this response, the instructor provided probing feedback, expressing how “this is a series of conclusions about [the students’] abilities without any reference to specific comments students said to indicate their understandings. You need evidence from the students’ responses to answer this question. Please revise and resubmit” (see Figure 3). By focusing Marcus’ attention to the elements that were lacking in his assessment of student understandings, and offering him an opportunity to resubmit, the clinical instructor played a strategic role in guiding Marcus towards more sophisticated pedagogical judgment. In response, Marcus added evidence demonstrating how he knew students had understood the lesson. He cited how “students talked about the advanced technology Israel produces and why we want it... They pulled out specific information from the text about the benefits of the Israeli-U.S. economic alliance and how it improves our quality of life.”

Overall, Marcus’ pedagogical judgment appeared to grow in sophistication over the semester. Though he encountered some setbacks, it was evident the feedback provided by his clinical instructor, along with the new prompts from the RPTAA (see Figure 2), were essential to the progress he accomplished by the close of the semester. Of the examples discussed, it is most pronounced within Marcus’ work that without these interventions, in the form of revised prompts, feedback from the instructor, and required revisions, Marcus’ pedagogical judgment might not have improved. It is also possible that his judgment could have recessed with time in the schools without accountability and criteria to guide his judgments. The interventions helped to correct his misunderstanding about how he was seeing students’ learning, so that he could evolve into a more sophisticated judge of his practice.

“It was obvious” – Alice

At the beginning of the semester, Alice responded to the PTAA (see Figure 1 & 3) in semi-sophisticated or less sophisticated ways, not satisfying the criterion of rich student descriptions. On her initial assignments, she was not able to attend to students’ understanding. She vaguely described student understandings based on how the whole class of students responded to the lesson. She made statements like, “The students answered my questions and had comments and questions of their own.” Alice did not distinguish students’ participation in the lesson from their understanding of concepts or ideas. In addition, Alice’s initial responses lacked empirical evidence supporting her analysis of students’ participation or understanding. This problem was pointed out several times through the clinical instructor’s individual feedback, with questions like “What answers did they provide that indicated they understood?” and “What kind of learning did they demonstrate during the [activity]?”

After the prompt was revised to include a question that asked for more attention to students' understanding and the clinical instructor repeatedly provided comments requesting more details, more specific answers began to present in Alice's responses. She was then able to refer to evidence of students' (mis)understanding by capturing how they addressed specific ideas and made connections to real-life examples of the concepts. She stated that "It was obvious that many of them got that their choices impacted people across the world because they said that they were more likely to buy second-hand clothes or more willing to buy more expensive clothes to reduce their negative impact on workers in developing nations." The biggest enhancement in Alice's PTAA responses is that she began describing her students' understanding of specific concepts or skills using concrete examples. She achieved the "sophisticated" level of rich descriptions of student understanding through the RPTAA and individual feedback on her PTAA provided by the instructor. Despite her responses improving in some respects, there were aspects of her responses that remained almost the same across the semester.

An area where Alice did not show improvement until the very end of the semester was her monolithic description of students and her interpretation that the students were the primary source of problems. The candidates were expected to understand their students' interaction with the lesson as individuals rather than as groups or a whole class. However, throughout Alice's responses to the PTAA and the RPTAA, students were usually grouped as a whole, and individual students' particular (mis)understandings were not detected. Her analysis always started by referring to multiple students, using expressions like "many students," "they," or "several." While student experiences and understandings of the same learning environment obviously varied, Alice's description of student learning did not differentiate between individual students.

Another area that did not seem to improve for Alice was her interpretation of students' engagement and classroom behaviors. Alice sometimes framed students as active learners capable of exploring ideas and figuring things out on their own, but occasionally she viewed them as passive learners or the primary source of their problems in understanding. For example, Alice mentioned how students refused to understand her explanation about the need for evidence to support their opinions. She explains, "Many students asked, 'Do we really have to tell you why we said this?' I explained that opinions and answers should always be backed up with facts, so people knew that you weren't just making it all up. But they still didn't want to do it themselves." Alice struggled to identify a problem of pedagogy and seemed to blame students for their challenges understanding concepts and ideas across the semester.

When provided with guidelines to demonstrate students' understanding by relying on evidence from student work, Alice developed her teaching practices and her teaching analyses centered on her practice. Had it not been for these interventions, she might never have evolved to this level of sophistication in her ability to judge her own teaching practice's influence on students' learning. On the other hand, she did not improve her capacity to attend to individual students. She also persisted in struggling to view students as active learners when she was not provided with interventions from the clinical instructor.

“My failure to specify” – Henry

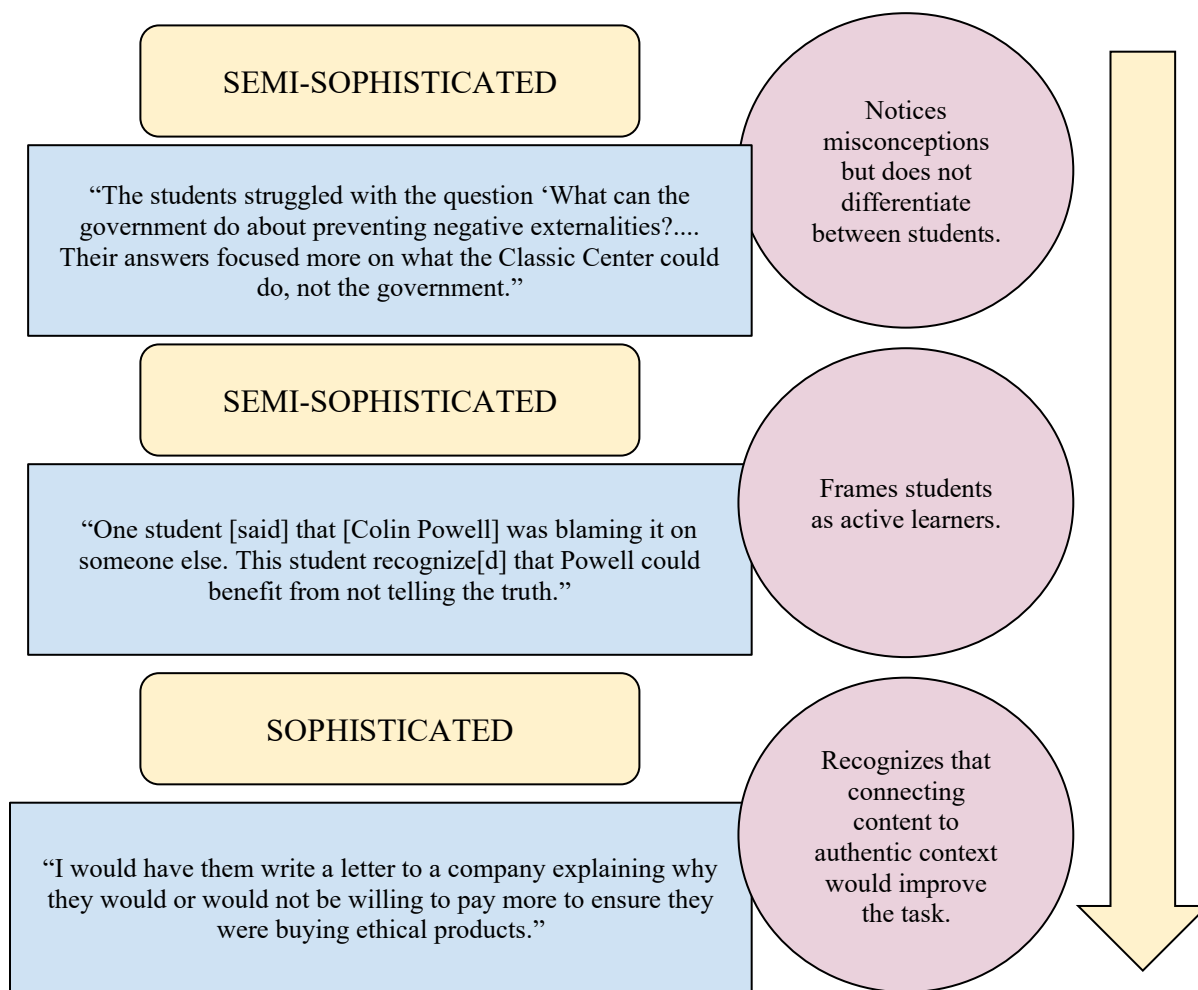
Henry began the semester describing his students in semi-sophisticated ways. Although he pointed out how his students were participating in his lessons in positively and sometimes provided examples of student understandings, he did not frame them as active learners who figure things out on their own or reference specific students' understandings. On his first PTAA, when asked how his students participated in and responded to his lesson, Henry explained that “they all participated in it by writing a response to the question posed to them. The answers that the students wrote down were thoughtful and addressed at least part of the question.” His response grouped the students together and focused on their response to a teacher-initiated question, rather than how they made meaning of the social studies content. This kind of interpretive noticing—where teacher candidates identify what students are doing and consider what it means for instruction—is central to the inquiry stance we took up in this study. During the following week, Henry's response indicated that he was able to notice student misconceptions, but he did not differentiate between specific students' misunderstandings. He wrote, “the students struggled with the question ‘What can the government do about preventing the negative externalities?’...their answers focused more on what the Classic Center could do, not the government.” As a result, Henry received feedback from his clinical instructor that both affirmed how he noticed a specific student misconception and challenged him to move beyond describing what students did in the lesson to comment on the quality of students' responses (see Figure 3 & 4).

The feedback Henry received on PTAA seemed to influence how he thought about student participation for the remainder of the semester. Henry framed his students as active learners and described how his students collaborated to decide to which role of the government a newspaper headline was referring. Henry also more thoroughly described student understandings and acknowledged how his pedagogy shaped student understandings. He described this response from a student, “They were not thinking about my question in economic terms but more of policy terms. ...One girl wrote that Trump's immigration plan could affect her parents.” He explained this (mis)understanding was due to “[his] failure to specify in the question what [he] was looking for.” Henry also continued to receive feedback that both affirmed when he cited a specific student response and challenged him to be even more specific when he described students' understandings in large groups.

Henry's responses continued to grow in sophistication after the prompts changed to the RPTAA (see Figure 2 & 3). He regularly incorporated specific student responses into his analysis of student (mis)understandings, and the responses he selected indicated that he was seeing his students as active learners. For example, he described how various students were trying to make sense of a CNN interview with Colin Powell. He stated that “one student [said] that [Colin Powell] was blaming it on someone else. This student recognize[d] that Powell could benefit from not telling the truth.” In addition, Henry continued to see student understandings as related to his own pedagogy. In describing potential adjustments, he explained, “I would have them write a letter to a company explaining why they would or would not be willing to pay more to ensure they were buying ethical products.” He noted that connecting the content to an authentic context would better facilitate student understandings (see Figure 4).

Although Henry exhibited some sophisticated thinking on his own at the beginning of the semester, his responses over the semester suggest that feedback from his clinical instructor and the prompt revisions guided him towards sophisticated thinking more consistently. These interventions not only seemed to influence Henry's descriptions of student learning but also led him towards considering how his pedagogy influenced student learning.

Figure 4: Henry's Development from Semi-Sophisticated to Sophisticated



Collectively, these findings underscore the potential of structured prompts, aligned feedback, and repeated reflection to support the development of pedagogical judgment in novice teachers. Across all three cases, teacher candidates demonstrated growth in their ability to describe student learning, analyze their own teaching moves, and identify connections between instructional decisions and student understanding. By tracing these shifts over time, we were able to see pedagogical judgment not as a fixed trait, but as a capacity that can be cultivated through carefully designed clinical structures. The process of refining the PJR and using it to assess candidates' work also revealed the importance of having shared language and criteria for guiding and interpreting candidate learning. Ultimately, what this phase of the project illuminated was

not just whether the candidates improved, but how—and under what conditions—that improvement was made possible.

Discussion

The findings of our study confirm previous literature that argues that structured and supported clinical are necessary for teacher candidates to develop the capacity to enact high-leverage practices. More specifically, we have identified three implications from this study of our program that will be useful for our continuing program improvement and clinical experiences at other teacher education institutions. First, we found that the kinds of prompts that the teacher candidates were asked to respond to are important for directing them towards writing responses that could be mapped onto the PJR and demonstrating more sophisticated thinking. Across the data on these candidates, when they were prompted to analyze their instruction using the RPTAA (see Figure 2), instead of the PTAA (see Figure 1), their capacity to engage in more sophisticated ways was advanced. The crafting of prompts was critical to creating opportunities for the candidates to represent their thinking in ways that reflect our aim of pedagogical judgment. We also found that the type of feedback that candidates are offered in response to their analyses of their own teaching enactments can also help guide their thinking. In our case, the feedback the teacher candidates received was guided by the original PJR (see Table 1) and the two criteria represented there. For the first criterion, candidates received feedback on the ways they represented their students' participation and understanding. This feedback included questions like, "What evidence from what the students said during class or wrote down on their work makes you say that?" and "How does the students' work reflect this conclusion about student understanding?"

The second criteria focused on their willingness to problem solve. For this focus, the clinical instructor provided feedback that encouraged the candidates to connect their proposed pedagogical improvements to evidence from the students' understandings. She used questions such as, "What evidence within the students' work indicates this adjustment would improve student understanding?" and "What kind of student responses might have been elicited by revising the question in this way?" Across the data, when feedback was aligned with components of the rubric, teacher candidates' later reflections were improved. If the candidates completed a less structured analyses with unaligned feedback, they might not have gained ground towards these more sophisticated representations of their students' learning. Additional time in the schools and classrooms would not ensure a shift in their pedagogical judgment, as these interventions generated.

Second, having competencies that were common among a set of teacher candidates and explicitly taught to those candidates could help the novices to understand the goal and rationale for self-analysis. If a candidate is blaming the students repeatedly in their analyses of teaching without any rationale for their inferences, it is important to provide feedback that addresses those problems in their analyses directly. One of the participants in this study, Marcus, consistently identified student behavior or knowledge as the reasons his lessons were less than successful, but this pattern was never explicitly addressed in his feedback from the clinical instructor. It should not be surprising that this was not an area of growth for Marcus. Yet, Marcus was able to

improve in areas where he was getting feedback. This is evidence that the feedback made an impact, and without direct feedback, some problematic representations of students continued.

This study does not address the impact of more time in the schools and classrooms without interventions. Based on the data we analyzed, and our encounters with multiple lengths of time allocated to the clinical experiences, we believe that more time in the schools with no interventions would have allowed those problems to persist, rather than resolving themselves on their own. We encourage others engaging with different forms of clinical experiences to have a set of competencies to work towards, but also to embark on continuous revisions of the competencies while revising the prompts that the candidates engage with post-teaching enactments.

These two areas confirm that a framework for analyzing teaching enactment—in our case, in the form of the PJR—can develop more enhanced pedagogical judgment for the candidates and clinical instructors. While it may seem obvious that better questions yield better answers and that more directed feedback is better than less focused feedback, drawing attention to these implications is important because we may not have come to these conclusions about ways to improve our program if we had not been inquiring into and systematically researching these assignments.

As such, the third implication of our study is that clinical assignments require very close attention and regular tweaking—not only to ensure alignment with intended competencies, but also to refine the prompts and feedback mechanisms in response to how candidates interpret and engage with them. This means observing patterns in candidate responses, identifying persistent gaps or misconceptions, and adjusting the design of the assignment accordingly so that it more effectively surfaces candidates' thinking and supports the development of pedagogical judgment. Further, careful development of the analysis prompts and framing feedback on teaching enactments around competencies bolster a rationale for sharing the use of a tool like the FPJR (see Table 3) more widely across the clinical instructors in our program. This rubric can aid teacher educators' efforts to support candidates in understanding the kind of decision-making we hope they can accomplish, but it would also better support clinical instructors to target the important aspects of candidates' thinking about their experiences in schools and classrooms.

Conclusion

Looking across the teacher candidates' work, it is significant to notice the growth that is possible through instructive approaches to helping novice teachers understand the ways in which sophisticated teachers think about their practice with students. Without the direct instruction in the qualities of the prompts, feedback, and revisions, what might have resulted from these clinical experiences could have been vastly different. Drawing upon what we anecdotally recall of the clinical approaches in prior semesters, we are confident this is a significant area of growth for our program, which is committed to enhancing clinical experiences to include both teacher educators at the university and in our partner schools.

Our study also provides important implications for inquiry into our teacher education program. We believe that what we learned about the structure of our clinical experiences will be helpful to

other teacher education programs. This study furthers the notion that in clinical components of teacher education, candidates need to engage in structured activities that are deliberately designed with competencies in mind (e.g., AACTE, 2018; Allen & Wright, 2014; Grossman et al., 2009). The use of this rubric and our assessment of the teacher candidates' performance against the rubric served as our structured tasks. Requiring candidates to spend more time in classrooms without qualitative assessment measures to determine the development that results from that time could result in unsubstantiated claims about the generalized impact of additional time. The prompts, feedback, and requirements to revise their teaching analyses pushed the candidates to represent their students and their practice in more sophisticated ways.

Though we did not study the impact of additional time, our research team believes that time alone would not have made that kind of direct influence on their analyses of the pedagogies—and thus, their pedagogical judgment. In this portion of our larger study, we were looking for these three candidates to demonstrate rich descriptions of students, which tends to be counter to how they would frame students' capacities and understandings without explicit prompts and feedback. Similarly, teacher candidates need to be supported by their mentor teachers, firstly, *and* their university-based teacher educators (e.g., Allen & Wright, 2014; Anderson & Stillman, 2012; Ghouseini & Sleep, 2011). Candidates also need to engage in structured activities that are designed with competencies in mind. In prior iterations, we learned that by not structuring how we assessed our candidates' competencies, we were not able to adequately assess them according to our rubric—or other indicators of understanding. Without the investment of the teacher educators in mediated clinical experiences, the possibilities for what happens in the clinical experiences could be lost in watered-down, less informed, and less effective teaching practices.

Our team seeks to advance how our work with teacher candidates can enhance their capacities as future teachers. While the small sample size limits the scope of our findings, this phase of our multi-year, design-based research project was intended not to produce generalizable conclusions, but to examine how pedagogical judgment can be supported and made visible in a particular context. Future phases of this work will continue to refine and extend the use of the rubric across varied teacher candidates and instructional settings. When our candidates enter the profession, we hope that they are more than qualified and capable of seeing and analyzing the learning that is happening amongst their students. Through our work with the PJR and its revisions, we wanted to get beyond specific teaching enactments, methods, and practices that can be read about and defined within a university seminar. We wanted to tap into the ways that the teacher candidates analyze their students' capacities, gifts, and understandings while helping them to see that their pedagogical decisions can shape their students' learning experiences. Thus, this aspect of developing our clinical experiences in our program began—and continues—to inform how we think about coursework, clinical experiences, clinical assignments, and teaching analyses. By deliberately addressing our candidates' pedagogical judgment, we believe that we have harnessed something that is transferable beyond secondary social studies classrooms and teacher candidates. Developing teachers' pedagogical judgment is something that could be a part of professional learning and development across a teacher's career. Our study expands the possibilities for the ways teachers are asked to analyze their practice regardless of the phase of their career, subject that they teach, or context of their learning environment. Enhancing teachers' pedagogical judgment—how learning becomes visible to them so that they can shape their pedagogy—is important to improving teacher candidates and practicing teachers alike.

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