

Perceptions from a University Field Supervisor's Perch



Barbara A. Phillips, Ph.D.
Central Washington University

ABSTRACT

The face of teacher supervision has changed tremendously in the past decades. That, of course, has impacted the supervision of student teachers as well. Supervision has evolved from a relatively unimportant role to a major one that assists in the school improvement process.

A veteran student teacher supervisor chronicles student teacher assignments that have been amended, created, or deleted to meet changing needs. These changes have been fashioned by multiple sources: the needs of student teachers, the teacher education program, district and state requirements, as well as a shift in educational paradigms.

Supervision is crucial to the improvement of teaching and learning. In the next years, the evolution of supervision will dictate whether its evolving precepts create a solid foundation, especially at the pre-service stage, where teaching and learning can be enhanced or simply become another divergent path.

INTRODUCTION

Supervision of teachers and teacher candidates has undergone many changes since the 1970s. Supervision was considered a rather mechanical process in the 1970s and did not seem to have much importance. In the early 1980s, supervision began to take on a more important role and more research in the field was available. The beginning of moving from a checklist assessment to using more research-based teaching strategies in the classroom had begun. In the late 1980s, the topic of supervision had become very popular with legislatures and school districts (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002).

Many states, for example, began to mandate increases in supervision and evaluation of teach-

ers. These mandates ranged from required "training" in the techniques of supervision and evaluation of principals and supervisors to the provision of comprehensive and standardized state systems of supervision and evaluation. Many of these systems were based on a body of research associated with the teaching effectiveness and school effectiveness movements. This research noted that "effective schools" were characterized by principals and other supervisors who exercised strong instructional leadership. It noted further that one best way to teach could be identified, provided for, and evaluated (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 2002, p. xiv).

A number of prominent journals began to be published that highlighted supervision. Supervision was no longer on the back burner. In the early 1990s, supervision changed from evalu-

ation of teachers to the professional development of teachers. Administrators were considered instructional leaders and more responsibility was given to teachers for providing instructional leadership.

In the Instructional Paradigm learning revolved around teacher instruction in a teacher-directed classroom. This focus on teacher behavior began to change to a focus on student learning. Thus, the Learning Paradigm focused on student-centered ideas and activities and emphasized how the student learned, rather than how the teacher taught (Barr & Tagg, 1993).

However, in the late 1990s, it was recognized that the emphasis must be placed on teacher quality in order for teachers to lead students to construct their own knowledge. Many states set higher standards for the preparation of teachers and teacher evaluations were used to assist in school improvement. The focus of professional development changed to development that was grounded within the classroom rather than without (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002).

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

At Central Washington University (CWU) field supervisors place the student teachers who have requested the supervisor's geographical area. This arrangement allows a university supervisor to get to know the district personnel who help place the teacher candidates. If the district gives the responsibility to the principals, to place student teachers in their buildings, then working relationships between the principals and the university supervisor can be more readily established. Giving the principals this responsibility is generally done in smaller districts.

The job of a university field supervisor is multi-faceted, exciting and challenging. University supervisors are expected to maintain excellent public relations with the school districts, principals, cooperating teachers and student teachers, while molding their candidates into the best teachers possible, through observations/conferences, modeling and seminars. Often, the public relations component can be stressful. Not only does a university supervisor need to assist student teachers but they also conference with

the cooperating teacher and principal which can take considerable time and public relations expertise. In addition, the changing requirements of the institution and state standards must be incorporated into the student teacher's lesson plans, as well as the district standards.

Throughout the years educational perspectives have changed on many issues. Sometimes the change was brought about by self-revelation or reflection and other times it was imposed from without. At the end of every quarter, my student teachers and their cooperating teachers are surveyed to find out how supervision can be improved, what was done successfully, which assignments were helpful and which were not. Also, what could be added to the CWU program to make it even more effective?

Initially, student teacher seminars were held every week. It became evident that the students needed more time to spend in their classrooms planning and teaching. While changing seminars to every two to three weeks made it easier for the student teachers, it also had its drawbacks. It was easier for student teachers to let assignments slide and get behind if the next seminar was two or three weeks off. If student teachers got behind, then university supervisors could be deluged with many journal entries and/or assignments to review at once.

Student teacher assignments were heavy at the beginning of the quarter with the assignment load lessening as the quarter progressed and the student teachers became involved in full-time student teaching. The rationale for the assignments is to have the student teachers become as involved as possible in the total school community and to have a well-rounded and rich experience in as many school-related areas as possible. CWU requires student teachers to reflect on their experiences and self assess throughout the entire student teaching experience.

A number of assignments have been amended, instituted, or deleted to meet the changing needs of the student teachers, cooperating teachers, state standards and the education curriculum. Once student teachers wrote a number of short essays on information about the district and school to which they were assigned. Now, they read and highlight important infor-

mation, much of which was obtained from district websites, and simply hand that in.

As the Internet became more popular, the Internet assignment was dropped. The assignment required the student teachers to locate ten websites that they found important to student teaching. A compilation of the combined annotated websites was published in a booklet and presented to the principals of the student teachers for use in the school's media center. However, that assignment is no longer relevant because of the widespread use of Internet browsers and sophisticated websites, not only by student teachers, cooperating teachers, but by students as well.

Because of the shift from the instructional paradigm, where the teacher is the focus, to the learning paradigm, where the student and student learning is the focus, traditional supervision has changed (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Once the university supervisor blended into the background while observing the student teacher. Now, the university supervisor will interact with students, without disrupting the learning, to see if they really understand the objective/s of the lesson. The university supervisor will observe the activities and learning of the students more carefully, rather than focus primarily on the student teacher's teaching. This is a more proactive stance than has formerly been taken by university supervisors.

A weekly list of student teacher and cooperating teacher assignments is included in Figure 1. Student Teaching Assignments Checklist. Being highly organized, with a checklist of week-by-week assignments has been of great help to student teachers, cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Cooperating teachers, principals and student teachers each receive a Student Teaching Handbook. Additional information is given to both cooperating teachers and student teachers. Supplemental information in the form of notebook with examples of other student teachers' work, has helped student teachers stay focused and on track.

For CWU student teaching documents: Log, Constructivism, Observation, Video Critique, Attributes Scale, Final Evaluation see <http://www.cwu.edu/~currsupv/stdtch.html>

The State of Washington required student teachers to fill out a daily log of hours, including both observing and teaching hours for each day of their experience. That form has now become obsolete, as the state moved to performance-based standards.

Student teachers were asked to write daily, reflective journals for the entire quarter; this proved to be taxing during full-time teaching. Now, journals are written for the first seven to eight weeks and student teachers are then asked to transition to writing a performance reflection about their progress during the quarter. The journal entries serve to acquaint the university supervisor with problems or concerns facing the student teachers. The entries also give the student teachers a chance to reflect on the happenings of the day and pose questions to their university supervisors. From the entries, the university supervisors get to know the student teachers and their situation's much more rapidly. This has proved to be a very helpful exercise for both parties.

Weekly schedules, noting times and room numbers and highlighting subjects taught, are handed in periodically until teaching has become full-time. Each time the schedule is submitted, the areas in which the student teacher is doing some teaching, including housekeeping duties, the subject block is highlighted to the degree that the student teacher is working with the class. So, each weekly schedule shows more highlighted areas until all subjects are acquired.

At the first seminar after the student teacher orientation, student teachers sign-up for an initial conference. This conference takes about thirty minutes with the cooperating teacher, student teacher and university supervisor. Student teaching requirements are reviewed and any special student problems are discussed. Cooperating teachers are always encouraged to use their expertise with students that are having challenges, whether those challenges are academic, social, physical or otherwise. Students may be removed from the class so the cooperating teacher may work with them in a one-on-one setting if that is deemed the best way to help the student.

Student teachers are asked to download and

FIGURE 1

Student teaching assignments checklist

Week 1	Begin Daily Reflective Journal		
Week 2	Initial Weekly Schedule Sign up for Initial Conference School/Community-Multicultural Information Download school and district information from District web site. Get school annual report from office including WASL test data. <i>Read, highlight & initial each page.</i> Time line for assuming teaching responsibilities worked out with your cooperating teacher Reflective Journal for Week 1		
Week 3	Note: Take over at least 1 class this week and every subsequent week until you are teaching full time. Discipline Management Plan Comment on <u>District, Building & Class policy & rules.</u> List your <u>own future rules.</u>) Completed Classroom Observations 1 _____ 2 _____ Reflective Journal for Week 2 Survey student interests one-on-one or on paper		
Week 4	Reflective Journal for Week 3		
Week 5	Reflective Journal for Week 4		
Week 6	#1 Video Critique Midterm Self-evaluation with Comments Full-time Weekly Schedule Reflective Journal for Week 5 Constructivist Document (Briefly describe projected constructivist activities & your implementation of them during student teaching..) COOPERATING TEACHER ITEMS: Cooperating Teacher #1 Video Critique Sign Constructivist Document Cooperating Teacher Midterm Evaluation with written comments (sealed) Cooperating Teacher-Student Teacher Attributes Form #1 (Share with student.)		
			Midterm Conferences begin!
		Week 7	Reflective Journal for Week 6 Your typed Unit Overview: Abstract, Goals, Theme, Constructivist Activities, Accommodations, Parental Involvement, Community Resources, Culturally Responsive Teaching & Student Assessment (Reviewed in Seminar today)
		Week 8	Reflective Journal for Week 7
		Week 9	Note: Completed/Bound Unit Plan due at Final Conference • Begin Performance Reflection Return Loaned Materials Reflective Journal for Week 8 (Last week)
		Week 10	Note: Continue with Performance Reflection Continue finalizing Unit
		Week 11	#2 Video Critique Final Self-evaluation (No comments necessary) Performance Reflection (Date and sign) Parent/Teacher Conference Form Student Teacher Comments for Supervisor Have students evaluate your teaching Bound Unit Plan due at Final Conference Building Principal Visit / Letter- of Reference- Optional Collection of 20 Teaching Ideas COOPERATING TEACHER ITEMS: Cooperating Teacher #2 Video Critique Cooperating Teacher Final Evaluation w letter or comments (sealed) Cooperating Teacher Comments for Supervisor Cooperating Teacher-Student Teacher Attributes Form #2. (Share with student.) Final Conferences begin!
		Week 12	Copies of your 10 favorite teaching ideas for your peers Last Week's Schedule (List district, school, and time of visits.)

then read and highlight important information from the school and/or district website about their assigned school and its community. This information includes state scores on student performance and offers an opportunity for student teachers to then, use that information to enhance student scores by creating lessons and units that emphasize areas of concern. This information is also used by student teachers to be more culturally sensitive in their teaching.

The timeline chart for assuming teaching responsibilities was created because some co-

operating teachers put off deciding when the student teachers would begin teaching specific subjects. This simple form, a chart indicating number of weeks across the top and subjects in a left, vertical column, helped both cooperating teachers and student teachers organize the flow of teaching and the timeframe in which the student teachers would assume teaching duties.

A very important assignment is the four-part discipline management plan. The district and building policies must be reviewed, as well as the current classroom rules. In addition, the stu-

dent teacher creates rules that they will use in their own, future classroom.

Before student teachers begin teaching, they are required to observe other teachers and note the strengths and weaknesses of what they observe. Student teaching is done in four stages (The Student Teaching Handbook, pp. 10-11). The first stage (Week One) is the observation phase where the cooperating teacher models teaching strategies for the student teacher and the student teacher eases into becoming familiar with the students, the school, books, grading, some mini teaching and housekeeping duties. In stage two (Weeks Two to Four) student teachers begin to assume more teaching responsibilities. In stage three (Weeks Four to Ten) full-time teaching is assumed. Student teachers assume all teaching activities during this phase. Stage four (Weeks Eleven to Twelve) allows student teachers to ease out of full-time teaching and observe in other situations.

Recently, an assignment was instituted in order for student teachers to establish rapport with students more quickly. Student teachers conduct one-on-one interviews (typically with elementary school children) or give a student survey designed to assist student teachers to be culturally sensitive to the needs of the students. Knowing more about the students' families and experiences helps the student teacher to be aware of individual issues so they may be handled with care.

Student teachers make two videos of their teaching, one to be made before midterm and one to be made before finals. The videos should be about an hour in length and include several minutes before and after the lesson to assess transition time and behavior. Student teachers are asked to watch each video twice; the first time they watch their performance and critique their lesson presentation on a standard form (The Student Teaching Handbook, pp. 46-48). The second time they watch the behavior and participation of the students. The cooperating teacher also critiques the student teacher's performance on the standard form and then they discuss the merits of the presentation and areas that could be strengthened. The written critiques are turned in to the university supervisor. The video re-

mains with the student teacher. However, if any portion of the video is used publicly, in a video presentation or as a video clip in an electronic portfolio, parental permission must be obtained.

In order to have cooperating teachers understand the conceptual framework of the CWU Teacher Education Program, student teachers are required to discuss constructivism (In Clinical psychology and personality: The selected papers of George Kelly. Maher, B. (1969) New York: Wiley. In The Student Teaching Handbook. (2003); Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978) with their cooperating teachers. Both student teachers and cooperating teachers are given information on constructivism (Barr & Tagg. 1993; Brooks & Brooks. 1993) and a list of topics to discuss. Student teachers are then required to write a description of how they will incorporate constructivist activities in the classroom.

As student teachers begin their experience, cooperating teachers are required to complete The Student Teacher Attributes Scale. This is often reviewed before midterm and, subsequently, the cooperating teacher is requested to complete a second, identical form before finals. This form may be found at <http://www.cwu.edu/~currsupv/stdtch.html> under Attributes Scale.

At midterm, the final evaluation (The Student Teaching Handbook, pp. 54-62) is used as a progress report. Both student teachers and cooperating teachers give their midterm reports to the university supervisor and the university supervisor then meets with them in a midterm conference to discuss the progress of the student teacher. The ten learner outcome areas are: 1) Use of Constructivism, 2) Use of Foundational Knowledge, 3) Instructional Planning for Effective Teaching, 4) Classroom Management and Discipline, 5) Assessment of Student Performance, 6) Diverse Populations, 7) School, Home and Community, 8) Professionalism, 9) Technology, and 10) Communication. These ten areas are divided into subcategories that are rated on a five-point rubric by the university supervisor, the cooperating teacher and the student teacher as a self-assessment, both for the midterm and final evaluation.

Student teachers and cooperating teachers also submit written comments that will help the

university supervisor create a dynamic and rich profile of the student teacher's performance for the narrative, on the last page of the Final Student Teacher Evaluation.

Student teachers must write a thematic unit (The Student Teaching Handbook, pp. 2-3) and implement it during student teaching. This unit is a pivotal component of the student teaching experience. The unit shows the abilities of student teachers in planning, creativity, positive impact on student learning, aligning the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements available at <http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/default.aspx> with district curriculum, and many other facets of teaching. This unit is often used in job interviews to illustrate the expertise of the interviewee.

Throughout the student teaching experience, student teachers collect at least twenty ideas on creative teaching, classroom management strategies, sponge activities and student activities that can be added to their repertoire of materials. The ideas are obtained from staff members and at exit seminar, ten of those ideas are shared, both verbally and in handout form, with each grade-level group (primary, intermediate and secondary) of student teachers.

Student teachers are advised to start their Performance Reflection, as they submit their final journal entries. That way, they will not be so pressed for time at the end of the quarter. The Performance Reflection is comprised of the student teacher's reflections of the ten learner outcome areas (The Student Teaching Handbook, p. 54) included in their midterm and final evaluation.

The Performance Reflection is added to their document file that is housed at CWU in the Department of Curriculum and Supervision. The document file tracks each student's progress through practica, the Pre-autumn Experience and Student Teaching. Each course requires certain documents to be completed in order to show progress in observation, pedagogy, reflective writing, lesson planning and implementation, including constructivist strategies the student teacher will use in the classroom. The Final Student Teaching Evaluation, including a narrative summary of the student teacher, is also included

in the file.

Student teachers have their students evaluate their teaching, in addition to their cooperating teacher, university supervisor and building administrator. The student teachers also evaluate their progress at midterm and again at the end of the quarter. The Final Evaluation document is used at midterm as progress report and at finals as a summative evaluation. A building administrator is invited by the student teacher to observe the class in action. A letter of reference is requested from the administrator to add to the other evaluations. These five types of evaluation yield a rich profile of the student teacher's performance.

Successes and areas of growth are noted at the final conference and a growth plan for the first year of teaching is created through collaboration with the student teacher, cooperating teacher and university supervisor. The State of Washington's Professional Certificate Standards are used to create a three point growth plan. These standards may be found at: <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/institutions/profgrowthplan.aspx>

The Professional Growth Plan creates a foundation for the new teacher to work on during the first year of teaching. Also it gives the principal and/or the district staff development director information on needed professional development as the new teacher is hired.

In reviewing nine years of both the cooperating teacher comments and student teacher comments, a majority of both groups felt that a formal, independent course on classroom management would be very helpful. Currently the classroom management content is articulated through existing courses, Educational Psychology and Curriculum: Methods and Materials, but that approach does not give the education students the grounding they want and need. Currently, the Department of Curriculum and Supervision is in the process of getting a classroom management course approved by the university and will be including it in the education sequence. Also, more of an emphasis on grading has been noted as a need and a course on "the teacher as actor" has been suggested as a possible elective.

While the load of the student teachers is

heavy, when student teachers and cooperating teachers are asked what should be omitted, their reply is, "All of the assignments are valuable and none should be omitted." A few student teachers feel that the journal entries are not helpful, however, CWU is preparing reflective educators and omitting journal entries is not an option.

The most recent major change in the supervision of student teachers in the State of Washington has been the piloting and field-testing of a state pedagogy assessment. The State of Washington Performance-Based Pedagogy Assessment of Teacher Candidates (June, 2003) can be accessed at <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/profed/pedagogy.aspx>. The entire document is thirty pages in length, however, the conceptual framework, directions for the Instructional Plan Format, the observation, scoring rubric for the pedagogy assessment and a glossary are included. The standards in this document are quite inclusive but do focus on several crucial issues: multicultural education, culturally sensitive teaching, problem solving, a democratic and caring classroom and a family action plan. By stressing these components, it is hoped that the achievement gap between the majority and minority groups can be bridged. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Washington Association of Colleges of Education (WACTE) in conjunction created this document with the Washington teacher education institutions giving continual input as the document is used in the field. At the insistence of OSPI and WACTE, the legislature agreed to the creation, piloting, field-testing and refinement of the pedagogy assessment. This pedagogy assessment was created to comply with the federal law "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001."

All teacher preparation institutions in Washington are required to field test the Pedagogy Assessment at least two times for each student teacher during the student teaching field experience. The pedagogy committee will amend the Pedagogy Assessment with the feedback from the participating institutions. The instrument is planned to become law in Fall 2004.

Using the instrument presents new tasks for the university supervisor. The student teacher

submits the required, written, instructional plan for the observation and then the university supervisor watches the lesson and notes on the Pedagogy Assessment whether the student teacher includes the instructional plan components. Also, the student teacher is rated on whether teaching performance is At Standard or Below Standard for all Washington Administrative Codes (WACs) listed. All standards must be met by the end of student teaching, in order to be recommended for a teaching certificate.

The Center for Teaching and Learning at CWU is taking steps to introduce beginning education students to an electronic portfolio system. This system will ultimately encompass the work they have done during their education classes and field experiences. The day of the huge portfolio notebook is fading away and interviewers will be given a website to refer to the interviewee's materials, including course documents, audio segments, video clips and/or eye-catching graphics. Technology is changing the face of teaching for the student teacher and the student, as well as the interviewer.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Supervision has continued to evolve over the years. While it is a challenge to implement the requirements of the teacher education program, stay within district guidelines and meet state and federal mandates, supervision is moving in a positive direction. Teachers are being prepared to be more culturally sensitive to their students and have a better grounding in multicultural education. They give student ideas more importance in the classroom and involve students more deeply in learning through the use of hands-on activities. Students have become active participants in their learning and that leads to better understanding of content. Parents are involved in the learning of their children through various techniques. The standard methods are used, progress reports, reports cards and calls home. However, some student teachers have class websites that are updated daily or voice mail that lists assignments so parents can easily be aware of required student work. Student teachers correspond with parents by news let-

ters, personal conferences and email as well.

Supervision is crucial to the improvement of teaching and learning. Only through carefully documented teacher behaviors and their impact on student learning will educators be able to help answer the questions that surround the latest paradigm shift. In the next years, the evolution of supervision will dictate whether its evolving precepts are a solid foundation, especially at the pre-service stage, where teaching and learning can be enhanced or is this simply another fork in the road that diverts educators from assisting students in attaining more effective learning (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 2002)?

REFERENCES

- Barr, R. B., & Tagg, J. (November/December 1995) "From teaching to learning – A new paradigm for undergraduate education." *Change*.
- Brooks, J. G., & Brooks, M. (1993) *In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Department of Curriculum and Supervision. (2003) "The Student Teaching Handbook." Ellensburg, WA: Central Washington University. For CWU student teaching documents: Constructivism, Observation, Video Critique, Attributes Scale, Final Evaluation [On-line]. Available: <http://www.cwu.edu/~currsupv/stdtch.html>
- Maher, B. (1969) In *Clinical psychology and personality; The selected papers of George Kelly*. New York: Wiley.
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2003). "Professional growth plan." [On-line]. Available: <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/institutions/profgrowthplan.aspx>
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2003). "Washington state essential academic learning requirements." [On-line]. Available: <http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/default.aspx>
- Piaget, J. (1970). *Genetic epistemology*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sergiovanni, T., & Starratt, F. (2002). *Supervision A Redefinition*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (A Project of) Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in Collaboration with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (June 2003). "State of Washington Performance-Based Pedagogy Assessment of Teacher Candidates." [On-line]. Available: <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/profed/pedagogy.aspx>

Dr. Barbara A. Phillips is an associate professor of teacher education in the Department of Curriculum and Supervision, Central Washington University, Ellensburg, Washington 98926. Email: phillips@wolfenet.com. She is also the current president of the Northwest Association of Teacher Educators and a member of the consulting editorial board for this journal.