

Ed 100a: Exploring Teaching in Elementary Schools
Fall, 2005

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Office hours: Wed. 2-3 and by appointment

Class meeting: Mon & Wed.
3:40-5:00, Shifman 217
Lab: Tues, Fri. morning

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Overview and Purposes

Welcome to Ed 100a: Exploring Teaching in Elementary Schools. Required for students in the teacher certification program, this course is open to students doing an Education Studies minor and to anyone interested in learning more about the nature of classroom teaching at the elementary level.

You have already spent thousands of hours watching what teachers do during your own elementary schooling. In the process you have formed many images and beliefs about teaching and learning, classrooms and schools. Ed 100a is designed to help you examine those beliefs critically as you begin to look at teaching from a new vantage point—the vantage point of a teacher. While this is not a course in how to teach, it will introduce you to useful perspectives on classroom teaching and learning and help you begin to develop skills and dispositions central to thoughtful teaching such as the skill of closely observing children, the habit of thinking about teaching in terms of larger educational and social purposes, a critical stance toward curriculum. The course will also introduce you to a variety of teachers and classrooms and help you get inside their thinking and practice.

Guiding Ideas

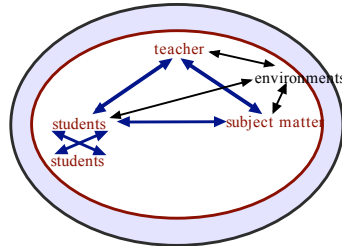
Ed. 100a reflects the central themes of the Education Program at Brandeis:

- Knowing students as learners
- Teaching for understanding
- Teaching for social justice
- Inquiry

These themes point to a kind of teaching that builds on children's interests and strengths as thinkers and doers; makes academic content accessible and gives students wider access to their world; promotes equity, contributes to children's life chances and nurtures fairness and decency; teaches to high standards and worthwhile purposes, helps children develop the skills and habits to contribute to a democratic society. Such teaching is informed by teachers' studies of children and their learning.

Many people think of teaching as something teachers do. In fact, teaching happens in the interaction of teacher and students around particular content in particular contexts. The diagram below represents the dynamic relationship among these elements.

Instructional triangle



Across the semester we will examine these elements – teacher, students, subject matter, environments-- as they interact in ways that enable and constrain learning. Some of the questions we will explore include the following:

- How do our personal histories shape our interpretations of classroom life?
- What do teachers need to know in order to teach well?
- Why is “knowing children” central to teaching? How do teachers learn about children and use what they learn in their teaching?
- What opportunities and constraints do different classroom environments afford?
- How are those differences related to class, race, gender?
- What is curriculum? Where does it come from?
- What role do children’s interests and culture, teachers’ knowledge, society’s expectations play in shaping curriculum?

Field as Laboratory

In addition to the class seminar which meets twice a week on campus (M & W, 3:40-5:00), you will spend 3 hours a week (Tues or Friday morning) in an elementary classroom which serves as a laboratory for the course. You are expected to visit your classroom at least 10 times during the semester, taking on the role of participant/observer.

Being a participant/observer means watching and listening carefully, asking questions, taking notes, trying to make sense of what is going on. You will spend some time each week in focused observation and some time assisting the teacher and students in ways that the teacher identifies. The syllabus identifies a focus for your weekly observations but you should also let your own questions guide your observations and note taking. The classroom is also the setting for your Child Study which is a major project in the course. (See description of Child Study for more details.)

At the end of the term, your cooperating will be asked to verify your attendance and comment on your participation. Remember that you are a guest in the classroom. Dress and act professionally. Always notify the school and teacher if you will be late or absent.

Readings

We will read different genres of literature, including teacher narratives, philosophical essays, empirical studies of teaching. A packet of readings can be purchased in the Education Program office on the ground floor of the Abraham Shapiro Academic Complex.

The following books (all paperbacks) are available in the Brandeis bookstore. I will distribute copies of the *Massachusetts English Language Arts Standards*.

Ayers, William (1993). *To teach: The journey of a teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Dewey, John (1943). *The child and the curriculum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kohl, Herbert (1983). *Growing minds: On becoming a teacher*. New York: Harper Row.

Meier, D. (2000). *Will standards save public education?* Boston: Beacon Press.

Paley, Vivian (1979). *White teacher*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Paley, Vivian (1997). *The girl with the brown crayon*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Carnegie Project

I have been invited to participate in an exciting new project sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The purpose of the project is to understand how teacher educators can use web-based cases of classroom teaching to support the learning of students like you. Rachel Kulick, a sociology doctoral student interested in education and video technology, will help document my efforts to use such materials in our class (e.g. by video and audio taping selected sessions, collecting assignments and student work). We will talk further about what this means for me, for you and for our class in more detail and you will have an opportunity to decide whether you are willing to participate.

[INSERT WEB ADDRESS](#)

Course requirements and expectations

Attendance, preparation, active participation: Your thoughtful participation is essential to the class and to your learning. The more energy you are willing to put into the readings, writing, thinking and discussing, the more we can all learn from one another and the more valuable the experience will be for you. Complete reading and writing assignments for each class and be prepared to contribute to small group and whole class discussions. We will discuss what thoughtful participation entails and you will be asked

to assess your participation at the end of the term and assign yourself points. Be sure to bring a copy of the assigned reading(s) to class.

Office hours: I will have regular office hours on Thursday from 2-3. If you are not available at this time, you can arrange an appointment by talking to me after class or contacting Marcie Quaroni, mquaroni@brandeis.edu to set up a meeting. I would like each student to see me at least once before the midterm. Bring your field notebook.

Written work: Formal written work should be typed, double spaced and edited carefully. Assignments are due on the dates listed unless altered in class. They may be sent to me by email or handed in after class. Late assignments will be marked down two points for each day of lateness unless you have negotiated a different due date because of special circumstances (e.g. serious illness).

Graded written work includes a take-home midterm, a paper on Dewey's The Child and the Curriculum, a Child Study. You will also have short written assignments in conjunction with readings and video analyses I will read and comment on.

Field notebook. To support your fieldwork, you will need a notebook to record observations, keep track of questions, make notes about things you want to remember. I suggest that you get a spiral or bound notebook which you can easily carry with you. You should have 10 dated entries in your field notebook by the end of the semester. Once during the term I will review your field notebook with you.

Academic accommodations. If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, you should contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, please contact Assistant Dean Laura Lyndon in Undergraduate Academic Affairs a 6-3470. Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure appropriate accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

Academic integrity. In this course, you will work jointly with other students and you will also do independent work. In all cases, I ask that you put forth your best effort to learn with integrity and to support the learning of others. If you have questions about any aspect of the course, please let me know. I am available to discuss any question, concern or interest you may have related to the class.

Academic integrity is essential to educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner without proper acknowledgement of the source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or ideas in published writing, on the Internet, or created by another student. Violations of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of Rights and Responsibilities, may result

in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

If you are working in a group that I have authorized, I will expect your answers to resemble those of your partners; otherwise I expect you to do your own work. If you have questions about the type of help you may receive from others outside of class, please ask me before you seek help.

Grading¹

Child study	30 pts
Midterm	20 pts.
Participation/preparation	15 pts
Dewey paper ²	20 pts
Field notebook	15 pts

¹ There may be some adjustments with the allocation of points.

² Revisions encouraged.

Course Outline³

Tues. 9/6, Field placements for “Tues.” group. Resource Rm, ASAC building, 1st floor (across from Heller)

If your field day is Tuesday morning, meet with Prof. Marya Levinson to learn about your field placement and fill in CORI form.

Session 1, Wed. 9/7: Getting started

Introductions; overview of course; negotiating entry into the field; review letter for cooperating teacher. Explain Carnegie project.

Fri. 9/9, Field placements for “Fri” group: Resource Rm, 1st floor, ASAC building (across from Heller) DID THIS HAPPEN?

If your field day is Friday morning, meet with Prof. Marya Levinson, Director of the Education Program, to learn about your field placement and fill in CORI forms.

Session 2, Mon. 9/12: Passion, stance and personal beliefs

Think about something you are passionate about. How could your passion be a resource in your teaching? On pages 10-16 Ayers discusses 12 myths surrounding teaching. Choose one statement about which you and Ayers disagree. Compare your reasons with Ayers. Where do you now stand? Write up for class (1 pg., typed).

Readings

Robert Fried, “The passionate teacher”

William Ayers, To Teach, Chapter 1, “Beginning: The challenge of teaching”

Field: 1st week of participant/observation: *Based on your first day in school, write up your first impressions (1 pg.) What stood out to you most? What seemed familiar? What seemed strange? What questions do you have? What would you like to learn about this classroom during the semester?*

Session 3, Wed. 9/14: Stance and personal beliefs, cont.

How do teachers enact their stance? How do our personal histories shape our perceptions of teaching? Videotape of Mrs. Ball’s 3rd grade class.

Readings

Paley, “On Listening to What the Children Say”

³ Any syllabus is a proposal not a blueprint. It is impossible to anticipate all contingencies or know in advance exactly how much time things will take. So there will probably be some modifications in this schedule as we construct our course together across the semester.

Session 4, Mon. 9/19: Creating cultures of learning

Bring write-up of 1st impressions to class (typed).

Outline the specific steps that Lester or Short take during the opening weeks of school to establish structures for learning mathematics or reading. How would you characterize the culture of learning each wants to create? What is the relationship between the particular culture and the subject matter? (Jigsaw)

Readings

Jill Lester, “Establishing a community of mathematics learners”
Kathy Short, “Creating a community of learners”

Field: Draw a map of classroom. Pay attention to how different spaces are used, how the physical environment “works.”

Session 5, Wed. 9/21: Studying classroom teaching

What do teachers do in the opening weeks of school to create a classroom community? What is “active” observation? View and analyze “The World in Claire’s Classroom” videotape.

Readings

Susan Florio-Ruane, “A guide for early field experiences”
Carolyn Frank, “Making it explicit”

Session 6, Mon. 9/26: I, thou, it: the instructional triangle

What is the significance of Hawkins’ title? Find 2 passages to support your interpretation of what he means by “it.” Compare Hawkins ideas about good education with your own, with educators you are encountering in the readings and in the field.

Field: Continue noticing how space is used. Write down the class schedule for the day. Pay attention to how time is spent.

Session 7, Wed. 9/28, The uses and meaning of classroom space

Bring classroom map (draw and label major areas in classroom) and log. Be prepared to describe and interpret your map (e.g. describe what happens in major areas of room and how that reflects the teacher’s values and priorities.)

Reading

Ayers, Chapter 3, “Creating an environment for learning”

Mon. 10/3: NO CLASS, BRANDEIS TUES. Field day for “Tues.” group

Because of the Brandeis calendar and the Jewish holidays, our class will not meet this week. Besides going to the field, your assignment for the week is to read *White Teacher* by Vivian Paley.

Field: Practice taking fieldnotes for one extended block of time or for 2 ten minute segments. Write down the starting and ending time of your observations. Try to put down as much as possible of what is going on, including capturing some actual dialogue. As soon as possible after class, fill in your notes and type them up.

Wed. 10/5: ROSH HASHANAH, No class

Session 8, Mon. 10/10: Classroom ethnography

Post fieldnotes on WebCT. Bring copy to class.

Field: What and/how do teachers learn about students? How do they use what they learn in their teaching?

Reading

J. L. Levi, "What color are the birds? Excerpt from a child study.

Session 9, Wed. 10/12: Learning about self, learning about students

In many ways White Teacher is a book about learning in teaching. How would you describe Paley's journey? What are some major turning points in her development as a teacher? What does she learn from them?

Reading

Vivian Paley, White Teacher.

Session 10, Mon. 10/17: Childhood and schooling

Introduction to Child Study investigation; reflections on childhood. What is childhood like? What is lost and gained by growing up? Be prepared to tell one vignette from your childhood that reveals something important about this stage of life. Give your vignette a title.

Readings

Ayers, Chapter 2, "Seeing the student"

Patricia Carini, Chapt. 1: "Prospect's descriptive processes," Chapt. 3: "A letter to parents and teachers"

Field: Choose your study child. See *Child Study* for more details. Note: Tues. students who miss their field day for Sukkot should arrange with their teacher to make up the time on a different day.

Session 11, Wed. 10/19:

Do some work with Carnegie cases. Details to be announced.

Reading or Webcase

Kathy Schultz, "Listening to know particular students"

Session 12, Mon. 10/24: Child study and democracy

Distribute midterm questions. Getting inside the descriptive review process. How do teachers learn about children? How do teachers learn with and from each other?

Reading

Patricia Carini, Chapt. 5: "Victoria" (written by Lynn Streib)
Dirck Roosevelt, Child study and democracy

Field: Focus on study child. Make notes about child's participation, interaction with adults and children. Pay attention to physical presence and gesture (1st heading in Descriptive Review framework.)

Session 13, Wed. 10/26 MATH CONFERENCE

The Education Program is sponsoring a conference on teaching mathematics. Details about the event will be distributed. Attending conference during classroom is required. Additional attendance is recommended

Reading

Helen Featherstone, "A call to change the teaching of mathematics"

Session 14, Mon. 10/31, Critical colleagues

Turn in midterm exam. Debrief math conference. Meet in **Child Study Groups** to talk about your study child choice, first impressions, emerging questions. See Child Study handout.

Field: Focus on your study child. Use the questions that emerged from the discussion in your child study group to focus your observations.

Session 15, Wed. 11/2: Author study (Leo Lionni)

Author study of Leo Lionni. Presentations and discussion of Lionni's stories. Comparative analysis of characters, central conflicts, themes, illustrations.

Reading

Stories by Leo Lionni (to be distributed in class)

Session 16, Mon.11/7: Analysis of student work, 1

Introduction to “analysis of student work” protocol. Guest instructor: Vivian Troen, veteran teacher, co-author of Who is Teaching Your Children. SFN away.

Reading

Karen Gallas, “Making thinking visible”

Helen Featherstone, “Teachers looking closely at students and their work

Field: Study child as learner. See questions under “Modes of Thinking and Learning.”

Session 17, Wed. 11/9: Making curriculum, making culture

How did the Lionni curriculum come about? What learning opportunities did it afford? How did the Lionni curriculum accommodate the needs and interests of the different children?

Reading

Vivian Paley, The Girl with the Brown Crayon

Session 18, Mon, 11/14: Close reading: what does it say, what does it mean

In this session, we will do a close reading and analysis of Dewey’s essay. Outline Dewey’s argument. What problem is he addressing? What is his solution?

Reading

John Dewey, The Child and the Curriculum

Field: Study child as learner. When is your study child excited about learning? What is the subject, lesson, activity? What is the nature of his/her involvement? Overall would you say your study child enjoys learning?

Talk to your teacher about collecting a sample of your study child’s work (e.g. a piece of writing, a drawing). Cover the name and make a copy to bring to class on 11/21.

Session 19, Wed. 11/16: What is curriculum?

Discussion of Dewey’s The Child and the Curriculum, cont. What does Dewey mean by curriculum? Consider Dewey’s metaphor of the map and the journey. What ideas about curriculum and learning is he trying to express? What makes Dewey’s ideas so challenging? What do teachers need to know to teach in ways that Dewey recommends?

[Draft writing on Dewey]

Reading

Session 20, Mon. 11/21: Analysis of student work, 2

Bring a sample of writing or a drawing by your study child to class. Be sure to white out the child's name. What can we learn about children as artists, writers, thinkers from their work?

Turn in Dewey paper.

Reading

Lucy Caulkins, "Integrating talk, reading and writing in a whole literacy classroom"

Field: Study child. Relationships with peers and adults. Does your study child have a best friend? What do they do together? If not, how would you describe his/her relationships with peers? How does your study child relate to adults? See questions about relationships with peers and adults (heading 3), Descriptive Review framework.

Session 21, Wed. 11/23: Standards or standardization?

What are the different meanings of "standards"? What role do standards play in teaching and learning? Can teachers help students meet external standards while developing their own internal standards? Work with Heidi Lynn case: preparing students for high stakes, performance assessments.

Reading

Deborah Meier (Ed.), Will standards save public education?

Happy Thanksgiving! Start reading Growing Minds by Herbert Kohl

Session 22, Mon. 11/28: Professional discourse: Learning with/from colleagues

What is professional discourse? What norms and practices contribute enable and constrain critical collegueship? Comparative analysis of TLC interaction and class interactions.

Readings

Revisit pgs. 109-125 in the descriptive review of "Victoria"

Field: Follow up on questions, conjectures, contradictions regarding your study child. How does your classroom take into account your study child's family and cultural background?

Session 23, Wed. 11/30: Power, culture and pedagogy

What does Delpit mean by “cultures of power”? How does Delpit resolve the debate about skills vs. process in the teaching of writing? What role does culture play in teaching? What is “culturally responsive teaching”? How does your teacher define “success”? Work with “Culture and Learning” videotape from “The Learning Classroom.”

Reading

Lisa Delpit, “The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people’s children”

Session 24, Mon. 12/5: Knowing students as the foundation for teaching

Oral presentations: This is a time to start pulling together your ideas and evidence into a coherent portrait. We will spend about 15 minutes on each child. For details, see Child Study investigation.

Field: Fill in portrait of your study child. Look for confirming and disconfirming evidence.

Session 25, Wed. 12/7: Culture, inequality & schooling

How should we educate poor children? What would Kohl and Delpit say to each other about the purposes of schooling and the pedagogy of writing? Comparative analysis of Central Park East and Westside Prep.

Reading

Herbert Kohl, Growing minds

Session 26, Mon. 12/12: The challenges and rewards of teaching

Mapping the course onto the instructional triangle. What do we know now about teaching now that we didn’t know before? What do teachers need to know and how can they learn that?

Child Study due on