



Building knowledge for teaching and learning: Documenting accomplished practice with diverse students in challenging contexts



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The American educational system is a “public” system, yet most of what goes on in schools remains unseen. Learning happens behind closed doors, inside fences, and on campuses cut off from the rest of the community. Sequestered in their own classrooms, teachers cannot see what their colleagues are doing. With few sustained opportunities to discuss their work together, they cannot learn from or build on the accomplishments of their peers. When the status quo is far from sufficient and demands for improvements in teaching are increasing, we can no longer afford the knowledge drain that exists because there are few systematic and widespread means for teachers to develop and share their expertise with their peers.



In order to address this “knowledge-drain,” faculty and staff at the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching (NCREST) are developing a web-based collection of teaching and learning with diverse students in challenging contexts in New York City and beyond. Building on work begun initially at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, these multimedia websites provide succinct and engaging ways for teachers to share what they have learned with others.



This initiative complements a number of efforts designed to use technology to support improvements in instruction. However, several aspects of this initiative are particularly noteworthy:



1. We seek to develop resources and technologies that can be made freely and widely available to faculty in both K-12 and higher education.
2. We seek to take advantage of the power of multimedia and the methods of particular disciplines to create new forms and genres of representation that are specifically designed to build and share teachers’ knowledge online.
3. While we believe that teachers can learn a lot from the practice of exemplary teachers, our materials and resources are also designed to enable many teachers to reflect on, develop, and share their own expertise.
4. The design of the tools and resources take into account the limited time for reflection and professional development currently available to most teachers; at the same time, they are designed to enhance the support that teachers may get in restructuring and reforming schools.



Publicly available websites
Twenty-five websites are available at <http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/>. These sites demonstrate a variety of different formats that can be used to make teaching public and provide access to the reflections, strategies, and images from the classrooms of a number of effective teachers.

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Latest prototypes

The initial prototypes housed on websites of the Carnegie Foundation and NCREST are designed to:

- * Engage teachers quickly in key issues of teaching and learning,
- * Offer curriculum materials, instructional strategies, and assessment approaches that teachers can download to apply in their own classrooms,
- * Provide the reflections, videos of classroom practice, student work, and other resources teachers can use to further develop their understandings either on their own or with others in structured professional development and preservice learning experiences.

In addition, these prototypes will provide models for the kinds of information that other teachers need to provide to effectively convey their expertise to others.

Making Teaching Public

Ideally, the development of an online collection of teaching will help to shatter the myth that powerful teaching depends on the heroic efforts of individual teachers and demonstrate that high quality teaching can take place in many forms, in many contexts, with all kinds of students. Such a collection can also serve as the basis for new approaches to teacher education that enable pre-service students to learn from the insights and successes of teachers from their own local areas, working with similar population of students. With widely shared examples of effective practice -- that show what diverse students are actually doing in the classroom, not just their test scores -- parents and policymakers can make more informed decisions to support students' learning.

A Friend of Their Minds: Capitalizing on the Oral Tradition of My African American Students, Yvonne Hutchinison
<http://kml.carnegiefoundation.org/gallery/yhutchinson/>

Teaching Art, Nancy Beal
<http://www.tc.edu/ncrest/nancybeal/nancy.htm>

Pio Pico Student Researchers Participatory Action Research: From Classroom to Community, Transforming Teaching and Learning, Emily Wolk
<http://kml.carnegiefoundation.org/gallery/hlyne/>