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### Title

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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0x0373sh>

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### Publication Date

2020

### Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are within the manuscript.

## SUPERVISION ACROSS UC TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS: HOW DATA FROM STUDENT TEACHERS AND SUPERVISORS CAN INFORM PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

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This study was inspired, in part, by new state level requirements for Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) to collect program wide data that measure student teacher (ST) progress on the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs). One consequence of this requirement is that TEPs must ask themselves what types of ST level data make sense to gather across the program that will be meaningful and what types of data will measure individual ST's progress and growth over time? A secondary goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of supervision practices across the UC TEPs.

### Background

When student teachers (STs) are in their clinical practice settings the primary person who provides them with ongoing feedback is their supervisor. The quality and nature of this feedback plays a fundamental and significant role in the growth and progress candidates make

(or not) while in a credential program (Johnson, 2007; Kilminster & Jolly, 2000). Supervisors also play a vital role in translating program content and values to the K-12 clinical practice context. There is limited research to guide teacher education supervisors in adopting approaches and feedback models with STs in their clinical practice settings (Milne, Aylott, Fitzpatrick & Ellis, 2008). There is also little agreement on what constitutes good practice in fulfilling the supervisor role (Stimpson et al., 2000, p. 5). Many programs use some form of a gradual release model of student teaching where candidates take on more and more responsibility and teach more complex lessons and supervisors expect more and more of STs over the course of the clinical practice experience. Many programs include observation and evaluation tools that measure progress or mastery of a set of adopted performance standards at different points of the year. In California these standards are the TPEs.

It is often the case that supervisors base their practice largely on their own experiences as former STs and teachers, or from observing lessons with other supervisors. Given their significant role in guiding new teachers, supervisors should receive adequate training that includes effective theory, research, and practice (Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall, 1988). In the few documented cases where the training that was provided to supervisors was examined there were statistically significant differences in the manner in which trained supervisors facilitated and managed their roles (Gürsoy et al., 2013). A strong and trusting relationship between the supervisor and ST is at the forefront of available supervision frameworks (Stimpson et al., 2000). Another factor found to increase levels of student teacher performance is providing targeted feedback that is directly related to observed teaching practice that is rooted in theory and supported by university course work (Kilminster and Jolly, 2000).

Effective feedback is defined as: individualized, specific and focused, objective and nonjudgmental, having a positive tone and a sensitive manner, regular and ongoing, consistent, timely, providing an opportunity for the recipient to respond, reflect and contribute (Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano, 1987; Galea, 2012; Zeichner and Liston, 1987). Building a trusting relationship between the university supervisor and STs is at the foundation of creating the context for feedback to result in growth and progress (McBride & Skau, 1995).

It is important to examine evidence related to the effectiveness of supervision in guiding clinical practice and consider what is being done to address areas

where current practices may be ineffective and/or successful in instilling the underlying principles and guiding values of the preparatory program. With an increased emphasis on accountability and using evidence to inform program improvement teacher preparatory programs are being challenged to contextualize and unpack clinical teaching and supervision experiences (Hollins, 2015). A common issue and problem in clinical teacher education is uneven mentoring and the under-resourcing of clinical experiences (Zeichner and Bier, 2015). In addition, it is the case that very little preparation and support is provided for program supervisors (Grossman, 2010; Hamel & Jaasko-Fisher, 2001; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009). The work of the STENT Grant is to make clinical experiences a more central aspect of teacher education and examine ways to support program supervisors as appropriate based on the evidence we gather across our programs.

This study examined the types of feedback and guidance STs and supervisors describe as most meaningful to their work together and how teacher education programs communicate values and expectations to supervisors. The goal was to uncover what, in many cases, are the hidden practices of supervisors working with STs and to identify some common challenges and successes in supervision of STs across our programs. An additional goal was to gain a deeper understanding of what supervision looks like across our programs (supervisor's prior professional experiences, years as supervisors, etc.) and identify some professional learning needs of supervisors and provide opportunities for cross-program collaboration and learning.

## Research Design

The Student Teacher Evaluation Network Team (STENT) included directors and supervisors from eight UCs. Our work was guided by a network improvement community (NIC) process (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow & LeMahieu, 2017) to examine current supervision practices and identify common challenges. As part of the improvement science process STENT created a driver diagram to consider what factors contribute to ongoing challenges in our TEPs related to supervision. The driving problem of practice that emerged from the NIC work was the following: We (UC TEPs) are not able to consistently provide feedback and evaluation that supports learning and development that also shows progress and growth over time and informs program improvement. STENT then looked more closely at the various drivers and factors contributing to this problem of practice and agreed that across the eight participating UC TEPs we wanted to gain more knowledge of what effective supervision and feedback to student teachers looks like and entails. STENT focused on the following questions, and the scope of this research brief focuses on the third question.

1. How will our TEPs respond to new state level standards regarding student teacher evaluation data?
2. How will our TEPs address and interpret the CCTC requirement encompassing the production of evaluated TPE data that can be aggregated and disaggregated?
3. What are current student teaching evaluation tools and processes used

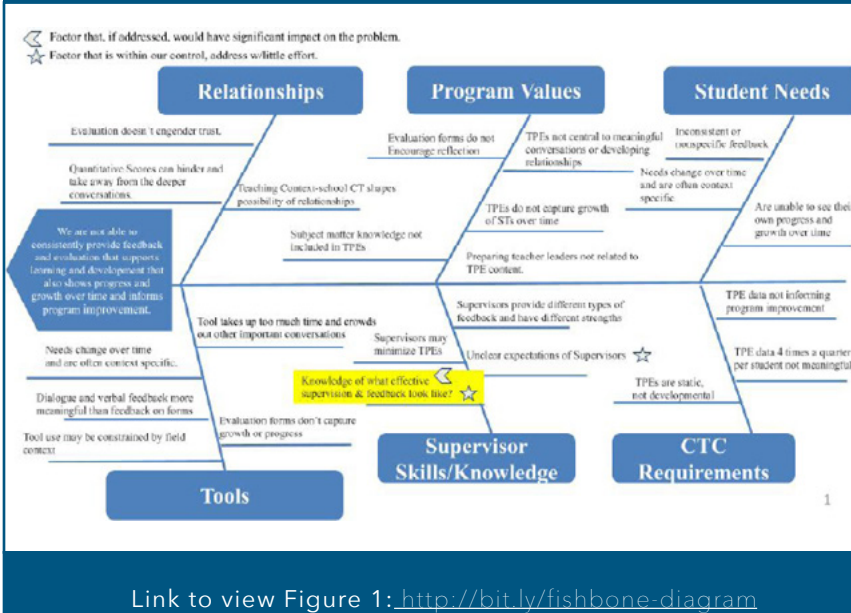
across our eight UC campuses and what are some common challenges and successes?

## Analysis

In order to gain a deeper understanding of what effective supervision and feedback to student teachers looks like STENT examined the current practices that guide supervision and then reviewed student teaching observation and evaluation protocols at each institution. STENT documented closely what each of our TEPs was doing. STENT then conducted focus groups with student teachers (N=65) in year one and supervisors (N=45) in year two from across our TEPs and surveyed all supervisors in our programs (N=79). All focus groups were transcribed and two cycles of coding was completed. The first cycle of coding consisted of assigning data chunks looking for regularities or patterns. The second cycle of coding included condensing the large amounts of data down into smaller analytic units, laying the groundwork for cross-case analysis by surfacing common themes and directional processes. In year one, analysis of the focus groups with student teachers led to the following fishbone diagram being generated during the STENT summer meeting.

As indicated in the Fishbone Diagram (**Figure 1**), STENT determined that focusing on what effective supervision is and what supervisors might need to be effective had the potential to make the largest impact on TEP improvement. In terms of context, across the University of California system there are approximately 100 supervisors working with approximately 900 STs. These supervisors have a wide range of experience from 1 year to 20

**Figure 1: Fishshbone Diagram generated during the 2018 summer STENT retreat.**



years and also work with anywhere from 2 STs to 14 STs. The table below describes some details about the supervisors represented in this project and how they work in the TEPs.

**Table 1: Supervisors sampled from the 8 UC campuses participating in the STENT Project.**

**Table 1**  
*Breakdown of supervisors sampled from the eight UC campuses participating in the STENT research project.*

Campus	Supervisors Sampled	Role in TEP Besides Supervision			# of Candidates Supervising			# of Years Supervising			Years of K-12 Experience			Role Prior to Supervision	
		L/F <sup>a</sup>	GS <sup>b</sup>	None <sup>c</sup>	1-3	4-10	11+	0-3	4-10	11+	1-3	4-10	11+	T <sup>d</sup>	Admin. Other <sup>e</sup>
UCB	4	3	1		1	3		2	2		1	1	2	3	1
UCD	21	8	2	11	9	10	2	7	9	6	8	13	14	3	4
UCI	13	4	9		3	9	1	6	5	2	1	12	9	3	1
UCLA	18	13	1	4	2	2	14	5	5	8	4	9	5	7	11
UCR	6	3	3		2	4		3	2	1		6	2	4	
UCSD	7	7			6	1		2	1	4		7	6	1	
UCSB	7	7			7			2	2	3		2	5	6	1
UCSC	2	2			2			1	1			2	1	1	

<sup>a</sup> Lecturer or faculty member of TEP  
<sup>b</sup> Graduate student of TEP  
<sup>c</sup> Only role in the TEP is supervision  
<sup>d</sup> K-12 teacher  
<sup>e</sup> Non-teaching and administrative position in K-12 education

Link to view Table 1: <http://bit.ly/table-uc-supervisors>

**Findings**

The results of the focus groups and surveys revealed that collecting meaningful data on ST progress is complex and messy. Both STs and supervisors reported

that the conversations and dialogue they have together and the relationships they build are the most important contributing factors to ST growth and progress. Supervisors described how nuanced their work with STs is and emphasized the importance of providing support and guidance that is individualized for each ST while recognizing the value of program level data. Some STs reported that receiving additional data on their progress would give them specific information that might help them have a clearer understanding of how they can improve their practice.

**“73% of the sixty supervisors surveyed indicated they would like to receive additional professional development around the practice of supervision.”**

The focus groups with STs across our programs revealed the following primary themes: STs valued conversations and relationships with supervisors and opportunities for change and progress are founded in trust; the primary form of feedback given is during debriefs (verbal); STs valued ongoing, immediate, formative feedback; videotaped observations provided additional sources of information and opportunities to reflect.

Four primary themes emerged from analysis of the supervisor focus groups: needs and recommendations, challenges and tensions, successes, and feedback and observation strategies.

The area of needs and recommendations is what we will focus on here.

Supervisors from across all eight of our programs reported receiving little or no professional guidance in their role as a supervisor and the training they did receive was described as informal. An exemplar quote is: *"I don't think I've ever received any credential program training on supervision. It's all been my own interests or my own reflections and trying things out that have led to where I am now."* Another example of this is, *"The program did not have a plan for onboarding me to provide field support. There was no one in a leadership position who said this is what we're going to do to make sure that we have a consistent, cohesive approach to field support..."*

In terms of recommendations, supervisors specifically reported that they would like to have opportunities to learn about current research on teacher education and learn from others in the field. For example, one supervisor said: *"Yeah so I think the professional development piece, whether it's by sharing what's going on in the greater department or just additionally, what's going on in the state of California. There isn't a funding source right now allotted to provide in-service for supervisors. Yet we're expected to be on the pulse of what's going on."*

**"I don't think I've ever received any credential program training on supervision. It's all been my own interests or my own reflections and trying things out that have led to where I am now."**

**"There isn't a funding source right now allotted to provide in-service for supervisors. Yet we're expected to be on the pulse of what's going on."**

Supervisors also provided suggestions about professional development and how to make it engaging and valuable such as, *"I do feel like it would be beneficial to consider engaging in some professional development with our student teachers where we did some co-learning together... I think doing some work around universal design, or trauma informed practice, or something where we were sharing that experience with them, could really help focus some of the things that we want to be working on within supervision."* Another example of a specific area targeted for professional growth is technology as illustrated by this quote, *"I feel like technology is moving very quickly in education, and I feel like, as a supervisor, I would benefit from some additional training in educational technology."*

Another consistent theme under the area of needs and recommendations was that supervisors wanted more opportunities to collaborate, learn from one another and establish professional relationships with other supervisors. An exemplar quote is: *"I would like more meetings with the supervisors... we need some way for us all to get together and talk more often."* Another example is captured by a supervisor who wanted to feel like there was a 'standard of experience' for STs: *"I mean, I hope I'm doing this job right, but I would like to feel more kind of confident, like we're all on the same page."*

## Implications

The implications of this study are that both student teachers and supervisors reported that they feel they would benefit from more specific guidance and support in order to maximize the impact of the feedback and mentoring provided by supervisors. Supervisors across our programs reported that they would like more professional development, access to current teacher education research, and more evidence based tools to guide their practice. Developing tools and resources that allow supervisors to communicate specific areas for improvement and areas of growth that also generate program wide data would be beneficial to the field. Supervisors also identified a desire to collaborate with other supervisors regularly in order to share knowledge and learn. This study, which involved collaboration with supervisors from across our programs, was a first step in this direction.

Our findings informed program improvement efforts that were tailored to each of our TEPs. For example, one TEP created a new observation tool that adapted the TPEs into a continuum that captured growth for STs more meaningfully across time. Our findings also encouraged us to extend our work beyond this study and organize a statewide University of California supervisors conference: Building a Community of Supervisors for Equity and Justice. Over 70 supervisors from the eight participating TEPs contributed to and participated in the conference. The supervisors conference provided an opportunity for supervisors from across our TEPs to share best practices and think deeply about their role in providing critical feedback to candidates.

The focus of these discussions was on how supervisors can support candidates in creating race conscious classrooms that are spaces that promote equity and justice. We plan to advocate for statewide and national collaborations amongst supervisors to build on the success of this initial gathering and develop a professional learning community of supervisors from across TEPs.

## Acknowledgements

This work was made possible by the collaborative efforts of our fellow STENT members (alphabetically listed): Heather Ballinger (HSU), JerMara Davis-Welch (UCR), Cheryl Forbes (UCSD), Victoria Harvey (UCSB), Soleste Hilberg (UCSC), Emma Hipolito (UCLA), Jane Kim (UCLA), Virginia Panish (UCI), Elisa Salasin (UCB), Johnnie Wilson (UCSC), and Evelyn Young (UCI).

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### **Connections to CTERIN Aim 1:**

Develop a statewide data system from preservice to profession.

This project collects data on supervisors and supervision practices from across the UC system in order to gain a clearer understanding of the role supervisors play in teacher education programs.

### **Connections to CTERIN Aim 2:**

Conduct research to inform California policy in teacher education.

This information and data collected as part of this project has the potential to inform teacher education policy related to clinical practice and supervision. The data from student teachers and supervisors is valuable in illustrating how state level data impacts the practices of supervisors and the quality and level of support they provide to student teachers.

### **Connections to CTERIN Aim 3:**

Research teacher education practice in UC network and beyond.

This project relates most closely to teacher education practice in the UC network and has the potential to answer questions such as: What types of training and ongoing professional development do supervisors receive? What are supervisors' prior experiences? How many student teachers do supervisors work with? What tools and resources do supervisors use to provide feedback to student teachers?

### **Connections to CTERIN Aim 4:**

Prepare doctoral scholars for teacher education research and practice.

Doctoral scholars have played an important role in this project by conducting all of the focus groups with supervisors from across our teacher education programs.



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