Microteaching

Microteaching is organized practice teaching. The goal is to give trainee teachers confidence, support, and feedback by letting them try out among friends and colleagues what they plan to do with their students. Ideally, microteaching sessions take place before the day of class, and are videotaped for review individually with an experienced teacher/supervisor. Microteaching is a quick, efficient, proven, and fun way to help teachers get off to a strong start.

The goal of each microteaching activity is to provide the teacher with an opportunity to design and facilitate a lesson using a specific method of teaching covered in class. The micro teaching activities offer an opportunity for demonstration of organizational skills, communication skills, application of educational theory and understanding of the course standards.

As many as six teachers from the same or similar courses can participate in a single microteaching session. Department heads, and a few experienced teachers, are usually invited to serve as facilitators. While one person takes his or her turn as teacher, everyone else plays the roles of students. It is the job of these pretend pupils to ask and answer questions realistically. It is the job of the pretend teacher to involve his or her "class" actively in this way.

Such a scenario typically runs for five to ten minutes. When finished, the person conducting the class has a moment or two to react to his or her own teaching. Then everyone else joins in to discuss what they saw that they especially liked. Finally, the group may mention just a few things that the practice teacher might try doing differently in the future.

Those not presenting will listen and participate as students, and, when the teaching segment is finished, they will offer constructive feedback. The teaching segment and the feedback session will have to videotaped. This may at first seem a little awkward, but participants will quickly become accustomed to the camera. Usually, a seven-minute of teaching easily generates thirty minutes or so of discussion (forty-five minutes, when we count the time needed to review the video of the teaching segment). Because time goes very quickly, facilitators will enforce time limits strictly, so that everyone has an equal chance to teach and to receive feedback.

Participants leave microteaching workshops with a clearer and more positive sense of their teaching, with a greater appreciation for the teaching styles of others, and with an enlarged sense of the possibilities offered by the classroom.
Videos of these sessions are for the benefit of those taped and will not be seen by anyone else without the explicit permission of the practice teacher. Session tapes can even be erased immediately if the practice teacher wishes. Nearly everyone, however, finds it extremely helpful to make an appointment to view and discuss their tape together with a head teacher/supervisor.

Most department heads provide microteachers with scenarios to prepare in advance. If not, teachers should think of a few minutes of material that they especially would like to make sure their students understand by the end of their next class. As always, teachers should not only plan out how to treat the subject matter, but also give some thought to how they are going to present themselves, manage the class, and involve the students. There are, of course, many different ways of teaching a given lesson well. That is why participants find that, along with what they learn from their own experience practice teaching, they can also pick up many helpful ideas from observing fellow microteachers.

Teachers learn from feedback on their own teaching, from being “students” while others teach, and from the conversations about these experiences. The basic premise of microteaching is that there are many different ways to be an effective teacher and that we can expand our effectiveness by observing other teaching styles and strategies and by discussing shared issues of teaching and learning, no matter our discipline, unique style, or years of experience. In fact, we try to make sure that each small group has a wide diversity.

Microteaching was developed in the early and mid 1960's by Dwight Allen and his colleagues at the Stanford Teacher Education Program. The Stanford model emphasized a teach, review and reflect, re-teach approach, using actual school students as authentic audiences. The model has been adapted for college and university teaching where it has been used most often for graduate teaching assistants. It often offers a concentrated, focused form of peer feedback and discussion. A very similar model called Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) was developed during the early 1970s by British Columbia’s Education Ministry as a training support program for all college and institute faculty in British Columbia and has now spread throughout Canada, the US and internationally. While there are significant differences between the two models, they both share some commonalities and were designed to enhance teaching and promote open collegial discussion about teaching performance.

A micro lesson is an opportunity to present a sample “snapshot” of what/how you teach and to get some feedback from colleagues about how it was received. It is a chance to try teaching strategies that you may not use regularly. This is a good, safe time to experiment with something new or to get feedback on a technique a teacher has been trying but is not sure about its effectiveness.

The core of the experience is the presentation of the micro lessons by each participant. When one participant presents the lesson as the teacher, the other
participants become the students for that lesson. A timer is used to keep to the strictly enforced time limit. It will be necessary to keep to the time limit so that everyone might participate fully. Because this time limit is strictly enforced, it might be very helpful to practice and time oneself before one arrives. This is designed to provide a quick snapshot into the teaching methodology. The goal is to provide a sample of a teaching method or style in order to get a fresh perspective on it from learners.

The teacher has several decisions to make concerning the preparation of your micro lessons:

1) The language point: The teacher chooses a teaching point that he/she is comfortable with in order to focus on a particular teaching method or element.
2) The lesson objectives: The teacher thinks about and is able to articulate what he wants his/her students to learn from his/her lesson (e.g., facts, concepts, skills, and/or values) and how his/her teaching methodology might work to fulfill his/her objectives.
3) Feedback: The teacher can specify to the group what he would like them to focus on. For example, he/she may wish to have overall, general feedback or perhaps he/she might wish for the group to simply attend to a specific issue, such as how he/she uses questions or reinforcement with students.

When the teachers are in the role of students, they should combine the role of student and observer, striving to create as natural a classroom setting as possible. Teachers should not feel like they must role play specific student behaviors, but they should feel free to ask questions and comment as a learner in the classroom environment. They should also focus on what is happening during the micro lesson.

Rules
1. Respect confidentiality concerning what you learn about each other.
2. Respect agreed-upon time limits. This may be hard, but teachers should understand that it is necessary.
3. Stay psychologically and physically present and on task.
4. Respect others’ attempts to experiment and to take risks.
5. Listen and speak in turn, so everyone can hear all comments.

For each microteaching lesson teachers will:

- Design a lesson appropriate to the assigned skill and method
- Submit a completed lesson plan that adheres to the lesson plan format
- Each lesson shall include lesson goals, objectives, assessment, resources, and a detailed description of events of the lesson and time frame for each event
- Provide a post reflection that explains the teaching/learning process the teacher experienced as a part of the microteaching activity
- Integrate specified media and technology into the lesson to enhance the teaching and learning processes
Attend to the details unique to each microteaching assignment
Facilitate the lesson on the assigned day
Video tape the lesson as it is being implemented
For each lesson, trainee teachers submit for evaluation:
  - a completed lesson plan,
  - videotape of the implementation of the lesson,
  - media and materials utilized in the lesson,
  - evidence of learning, e.g., tests, summaries of test results, other products generated during the lesson, and
  - reflection

EVALUATION CRITERIA:
Each microteaching is evaluated on the following criteria:
  - Design of the lesson
  - Development of the lesson
  - Implementation
  - Evaluation of learning as a result of the lesson
  - Integration of media and technology into teaching and learning

References:
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http://www.otl.wayne.edu/GTA_Orientation/microteaching/microteaching.html
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