

SECTION I

Introduction and Overview

The Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Project at the University of Georgia (UGA) began in fall, 1998, with a three year funded contract from the U. S. Department of Education to develop a Model of Excellence for Contextual Teaching and Learning in Preservice Teacher Education. The overall goal of CTL at UGA was to develop and implement a preservice teacher education model in which student (a) would complete courses, seminars, and other experiences in professional education and content areas that integrate contextual teaching and learning concepts into curriculum and instruction; (b) use experiences in community, workplace, and school contexts to inform teaching and learning; and (c) are prepared to use contextual teaching strategies.

In this introductory section of the Final and Summative Report, we provide an overview of the work on contextual teaching and learning in preservice teacher education at the University of Georgia and highlight a few conclusions to date, provide a brief description of the College of Education at the University of Georgia, and describe the purposes for this report.

Overview

The CTL emphasis developed at UGA was designed to supplement and enrich *existing* programs in teacher education. The CTL emphasis addressed concerns that too many students today do not see any purpose in school because they do not believe education has any connection or application to their lives now or in the future. CTL enables teachers to (a) relate subject matter learning to settings where it is used in “real world” life at home, work, and the community; and (b) to help students transfer knowledge and problem solving skills learned in school to other life contexts and prepare for future careers, citizenship, or continued learning.

Thus, contextual teaching and learning was operationally defined at UGA as an approach to teaching and teacher education that:

- Helps students make connections between their learning and “real world” applications;
- Includes teaching strategies that focus on students as active learners;
- Provides students with opportunities to solve complex “real world” problems in varied settings;
- Connects students’ knowledge and its applications to their lives as family members, citizens, and workers; and
- Is based on theoretical concepts derived from research and practice.

CTL began as a joint project of the School of Teacher Education and the School of Leadership and Lifelong Learning in the College of Education in collaboration with the

College of Arts and Sciences, School of Professional Studies, the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, local school systems, and local businesses and industries. The UGA-based staff initially involved 28 full-time faculty members and department heads from nine different departments within the College of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences, the two school directors, and the Dean of the College of Education. At the conclusion of the 3-year funding cycle, more than 60 UGA faculty have been involved from 15 different departments, over 1,000 preservice teacher education students (unduplicated count), at least 16 businesses and industries, and countless public school personnel.

The program model developed at UGA over the course of the 3-year project included development of some new courses and revision of many others, highlighted as follows:

Pre-professional courses: Two existing required courses for teacher education in educational psychology (Learning and Development in Education) and educational foundations (Social Foundations of Education) were revised to include contextual teaching and learning principles and applications.

Community Work Experiences: Academic Service Learning, an existing elective course involving service projects in various community agencies was redesigned to include structured field projects in business, government, and other professional work settings. Another existing elective course, Internship in Business and Industry, was offered to students interested in completing an extensive internship in the private, corporate sector. In addition, students were involved in other classes or seminars with business or community short-term internships, tours, field trips and interviews, focus groups, and other nonschool contexts to help them connect knowledge with real-world applications.

Seminars: A new series of core CTL seminars were developed to involve students in field experiences that connect education and the world outside of schools. These seminars were entitled (a) Disciplinary Knowledge: Basic Principles and Ways of Knowing; (b) Workplace and Community Experiences: Connecting Academic Learning to Out-of-Classroom Contexts; and (c) Contextual Teaching and Learning in Schools.

Disciplinary Courses: Required courses in curriculum and methods of teaching, subject matter disciplines, and student teaching were revised to incorporate contextual teaching and learning examples and concepts so that students could experience and apply CTL strategies in school and nonschool settings. Elective courses were added in some departments to enrich the preparation of teachers specifically in contextual teaching and learning. A 12-credit, interdisciplinary, freshman core course with considerable CTL approaches was introduced in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Over 50 courses in the Colleges of Education and Arts and Science have been revised to include strategies identified with contextual teaching and learning.

Course changes have been grounded in the supporting theories and literature underpinning situated cognition, constructivism, multiple intelligences, and expertise.

Illustrative teaching approaches incorporated in the teacher education and arts and science courses and thus taught to teacher education students include:

- Problem-based learning
- Project-based learning
- Inquiry-based instruction
- Work-based learning
- Service learning
- Collaborative or cooperative learning
- Authentic assessment

Four major activities were integral to the successful development of our model and have been described in subsequent sections of this Final Report: (a) UGA's literature-based and locally developed conceptual framework, (b) strong connections with local workplaces and the community, (c) professional development of faculty, and (d) department portfolios of faculty- and student-developed materials for use in implementing CTL in preservice teacher education and eventually for use in middle and high schools.

Throughout this *developmental* project, much formative data have been collected in the form of surveys, focus group interviews, observations, examination of artifacts (e.g., course syllabi, student- and faculty-developed materials, journal and report writing), and faculty-to-faculty and faculty-to-student conversations. Reports of these data have been previously sent to the federal Department of Education, are appended to this Final Report, or are posted on our web site [www.coe.uga.edu/ctl]. Data collected and analyzed are discussed throughout the next sections of this Final Report. Based on these data and our initial review of the extensive materials developed in the various departments, programs, and courses, we offer five conclusions:

1. Curriculum and instruction in preservice teacher education at UGA have changed and, for some courses and some programs, profoundly so. Faculty and students report much more use of real-world contexts, linking education and the working world, use of varied teaching methods and assessments, and creating connections with content and applications and thus facilitating students' transfer of learning. We found that contextual teaching and learning to be very different than traditional classroom teaching and--although implemented differently in different courses, departments, and programs at UGA—approaches identified with CTL became increasingly evident throughout the preservice teacher education programs over the 3-years of development.
2. Students, especially, noted and reported on the changes they were seeing, particularly in instruction, and the effects they felt contextual teaching and learning strategies would have on their subsequent work as classroom teachers. They indeed became

knowledgeable of CTL practices and planned to incorporate them into their own curriculum plans and instructional strategies when they became teachers.

3. There was a significant effect between the number of CTL classes taken on students' perceived preparedness to use contextual teaching strategies and their intentions to use these strategies in their future teaching. The more immersion students had with CTL strategies, the greater their intention to incorporate them into their work as classroom teachers.
4. University faculty professional development activities--such as tours of local business and industry sites, workplace internships, conversations and debates about teaching and learning, involvement in committee work focused on teaching and learning, seminars, and internal and external collegial networking--were very important to establish context for the work, develop a conceptual framework, and implement CTL at the University of Georgia. Further, and because of our attention to faculty development, we believe there is now greater understanding on the part of university faculty of businessperson and employee concerns about the poor quality of education they perceive some young people to be receiving and perhaps greater faculty sensitivity for different student learning styles, different education and career paths for students, and different ways of presenting and learning subject matter.
5. We did indeed create a model of excellence that can be transported to other colleges of education and, if collaboratively implemented with the College of Arts and Science, the community (including business and industry partners), professional educators, and other stakeholders should result in teacher education graduates who are well versed in and capable of delivering instruction through contextual teaching and learning strategies. Our model, of course, was developed within the context of the College of Education at the University of Georgia.

The College of Education at the University of Georgia

The College of Education at the University of Georgia is one of the largest and most comprehensive in the nation, offering 18 undergraduate degrees and over 90 graduate programs. There are 227 full-time faculty in the College, about 125 staff, and over 400 graduate assistants serving a student body of nearly 3,000 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate students. It is the largest producer of beginning teachers in Georgia and among the largest producers of undergraduate beginning teachers in the country. The College also offers a number of undergraduate and graduate degree programs that are nonschool based; e.g., in Adult Education, Recreation and Leisure Studies, Health Promotion and Behavior, and Human Resource and Organizational Development.

The 20 departments within the College are organized into four schools – Health and Human Performance, Leadership and lifelong Learning, Professional Studies, and Teacher Education. Within each department or school are sometimes separate programs

or emphases targeted to student development levels (e.g., middle grades, high school) or specialized subject area (e.g., business education, foreign language education).

The College's programs continued to be ranked among the top tier in the country. For the seventh year running, *U. S. News and World Report* placed the College solidly among the nation's leaders with a ranking of 22nd out of nearly 190 graduate programs in education throughout the country and 15th among public colleges of education. All COE departments involved with the CTL preservice teacher education project were among those ranked in the top 5: secondary education (includes, at UGA, language education, mathematics education, science education, and social science education) and vocational and technical education (titled occupational studies at UGA), OR the top 10: the department of elementary education (includes the middle school program).

The mission of the College is to provide programs of research-based teaching and learning and the environment to foster such programs. As a part of this mission, the College has a long and rich history of providing beginning teachers (over 40,000 living alumni) for Georgia's—and the nation's—K-12 school systems. These preservice teachers historically—and today—are prepared by faculty steeped in subject matter and administered in departments within the College focused on the traditional core academic areas—that is, language, mathematics, reading, science, social science—and in occupational studies.

Thus, the “context” of the CTL project at the University of Georgia includes infusion of contextual teaching and learning principles and applications into programs and courses (a) at a very large, research-oriented university; (b) with a long and successful history of preservice teacher education; (c) delivered in very subject-specific academic areas; (d) across many departments clustered into 4 schools; and (e) by all accounts, quite successfully.

Purpose of this Report

This report is a synthesis of the various components, activities, and evaluative data and information that have been amassed over the course of this 3-year project. In effect it serves two primary purposes: (a) It is a final report of UGA's work on contextual teaching and learning to the United States Department of Education (USDE), and (b) it provides those evaluative data and information USDE asked us to provide to MPR Associates, an independent contractor working with USDE, to synthesize findings--"largely based on the evaluations provided by you" [i.e., the seven contactors on CTL with USDE]. Therefore, the information and data have been prepared generally in the outline format and in answers to questions requested by MPR. Five additional reports prepared near the end of this three-year project, are appended to this final report:

- Appendix A: Schell, J.W., *An Emerging Framework for Contextual Teaching and Learning in Preservice Teacher Education*, September, 2001.
- Appendix B: *Report on Focus Group Meetings for UGA Contextual Teaching and Learning Faculty Internships*, September 2001.

- Appendix C: *Transcripts of Contextual Teaching and Learning Student and Faculty Interviews*, June 7, 2001.
- Appendix D: *Report on Interviews with UGA Contextual Teaching and Learning Core Faculty and Students*, September, 2001.
- Appendix E: Knapp, N.F., C. DiStephano, *Effects of Courses in the Contextual Teaching and Learning Program on Pre-Service Teachers' Perceived Preparedness and Disposition to use Contextual Strategies in their Future Teaching*, September, 2001.

It is envisioned, by faculty at UGA, that this final report inform and guide us in our continuing quest for excellence in preservice teacher education. Thus, we've attempted to extract and report lessons we think we've learned from our massive formative evaluative data, huge volume of product (e.g., new and revised course syllabi, course materials illustrating contextual teaching and learning, written reports of various student and faculty engagement with CLT, evaluative data, and records of written and oral publications), and review of the various components on our

journey to create a model of excellence for contextual teaching and learning in preservice teacher education.

Finally, we believe the information in this report should be helpful to other colleges of education, particularly those in large, research-oriented universities and/or who are large producers of undergraduate (i.e., preservice) teachers. Thus, we've tried to provide a record of the planning, faculty development, course development and revision, faculty and student experiences, implementation, and evaluation activities that have taken place over the past three years. It should be noted that we consider our work on CTL at UGA to be a work in progress. We are continuing to examine the materials that have been produced and the data for deeper, perhaps more meaningful information, to reexamine our theoretical development of CTL, and to expand our work into other programs and courses in our large College of Education. It is anticipated that our work will continue for at least 18 more months (i.e., through March 31, 2003). We will continue to post new work and developments on our website (www.coe.uga.edu/ctl).