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## Chapter X

# Lessons Learned Modeling "Connecting Teaching and Learning"

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## Abstract

*While designing a Web-based simulation to provide practice for teacher education students as they sought to master the complex skills expected of them as they produce work samples, the authors learned eight important lessons during the development of Cook School District. Work samples are a methodology for helping students learn to analyze their teaching by seeking connections between their work and student achievement. Cook School District serves as a site where teacher candidates begin the arduous process of learning to determine which strategies of instruction and assessment will result in greater student growth. The four years required to develop the simulation brought home eight lessons, often painfully acquired, that are shared with readers.*

# Introduction

*Learning and teaching are not inherently linked. Much learning takes place without teaching, and indeed much teaching takes place without learning.* (Wenger, 1998)

Many of us know too well the experience of sitting in a classroom listening to a lecture and having only a vague idea of the intended learning outcomes. Wenger's quote conjures images of the fluent professor behind the lectern dispensing information with little regard to student learning. Unfortunately, in the minds of many teachers, learning is the onus of the student, while teaching is what the teacher does. Though it may seem obvious that these two acts should be related, all too often, they are not. This chapter describes a project in which we diligently sought to connect teaching and learning in the minds of our teacher preparation candidates.

Perhaps more than ever before, student learning and the teaching that facilitates it are at the fore of conversations in education. Increasing societal diversity, economic instability, high stakes testing, and teacher shortages are significant factors driving this focus on student learning. Teacher preparation becomes, inexorably, central to the debate.

Research is clear that good teachers help students learn (Sanders & Horn, 1998). The question becomes, how do we prepare good teachers—teachers who can systematically establish connections between their actions and the learning of all students? This quest is an essential goal of teacher preparation and is at the heart of our chapter.

# Current Context of Teacher Education

Heightened by the No Child Left Behind legislation, pressures for increased student achievement have dominated policy and practice conversations in pK-12 schooling. Teacher preparation has not been immune to this pressure, as teacher effectiveness has been targeted as a direct route to increasing student performance. As a result, the teacher preparation community is working harder than ever to prepare teachers who can affect learning in all students. Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) have characterized this shift as one from thinking about teacher preparation as a knowledge problem (emphasis on analyzing teacher knowledge and problem solving) to one of a policy problem (emphasis on constructing policies and practices that analyze and make decisions about teacher effectiveness). The result has been a convergence of attention upon teachers and their abilities to teach in ways that facilitate the learning of all students. This "connecting teaching and learning" (Girod, 2002) has become galvanized through policy. For example, one standard that must be met for the accreditation of teacher preparation programs (see National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001) calls for prospective teachers to "advance learning" (Elliott, 2004, p. 5), and teacher educators across the country are struggling to meet that call.